Why Representation Matters

The Meaning of Ethnic Quotas in Rural India

Simon Chauchard

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When members of groups that have long been marginalized finally gain access to political offices, it is expected that the social meaning of belonging to such a group will change, and that these psychological changes will have far-reaching behavioral consequences. However, these presumed psychological effects have remained surprisingly uncharted and untested. Do policies mandating the inclusion of excluded groups in political offices change the nature of intergroup relations? If so, in what ways? By drawing on careful multi-method explorations of a single case – local-level electoral quotas for members of the Scheduled Castes in India – this book provides nuanced but ultimately optimistic responses to these questions.

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Note on Terminology

This book focuses on members of various Indian subcastes (*jatis*) that are now most frequently referred to as "Scheduled Castes." I mostly use the collective designation "Scheduled Castes" rather than the direct alternatives, for two reasons: (1) it was the most commonly employed term among my interlocutors, and (2) it is the most neutral and legalistic term possible to designate that group of persons, with many of the alternatives now being connoted as patronizing (*harijans*, meaning "children of god") or frankly derogatory ("untouchable"). From this point of view, only the term *Dalit* (meaning "broken to pieces" or "oppressed," a term historically used by political activists from the Scheduled Castes) may have constituted an acceptable alternative. However, most villagers I interacted with in the state of Rajasthan in 2009 had never heard of the term, unlike in other areas of India. For this reason, I tend to use the term "member of the Scheduled Castes" rather than the term *Dalit*.

In addition, I freely use the abbreviation "SC" – standing for "Scheduled Castes" – both as a noun (e.g., *this villager is a SC*, as to mean "a member of the Scheduled Castes") and as an adjective (*this is a SC-dominated village*). When referring to multiple members of the Scheduled Castes, I sometimes use the abbreviation *SCs*. While using these abbreviations rather than the full term "Scheduled Castes" mainly allows me to save characters, their use is not inconsistent with the way many of my interlocutors in rural Rajasthan referred to the Scheduled Castes (many of them not knowing what these initials actually stood for in English): many Hindi and Rajasthani speakers used the abbreviation *SC* as an adjective, as a noun, or both. I follow this practice here.

Because this book is interested in day-to-day relations between *SCs* and other, more dominant caste groups within Indian villages, I also need to refer to villagers from that large residual category in an abbreviated manner. When speaking about members of that residual category as a whole,

I mostly refer to those "other" villagers as "non-SC". While the term *non-SC* has sometimes been used by social scientists, it was not a salient term among my interlocutors (no exact equivalent existed in Hindi or Rajasthani). Because the residual category *non-SC* does not constitute a coherent ensemble on the ground (Gupta 2005), it has in fact rarely constituted a salient ethnic category in modern India. In the Rajasthani villages I visited, as in most of India, members of *non-SC* castes are usually referred to by their subcaste (*Jats, Thakurs, Brahmans*, etc.). In certain cases, members of these subcastes were also referred to by a term referring to a grouping of a number of these subcastes together. The category "OBC," meaning "other backward castes," is the most prominent and the most numerically important of these groupings within the *non-SC* category. Although the term "OBC," like the term "SC," once was a purely legalistic category, it was at the time of this study part of the day-to-day language used by common villagers, and used to designate those subcastes sometimes referred to as "middle castes." In conversations about caste or untouchability, villagers also frequently used the terms "upper-caste" or "upper castes" (the Hindi/Rajasthani term most frequently used was *unchi jati*). The subcastes that the individual who was using that term was referring to, however, depended on that individual's own identity as well as on the context of the conversation. When specifically talking about *untouchability*, the term "upper-caste" often was a relatively close equivalent to the term *non-SC*. It may have, for instance, been meant to include groups as "dominant" as *Jats*, even though the *Jat* subcaste is classified as being part of the *OBCs* in Rajasthan. However, in many other conversations, it was meant to specifically refer to those traditionally dominant castes, which are by definition neither *OBC* nor *SC*, such as *Rajputs* or *Brahmans.* Because of this ambiguity, and because the implications of the label "upper caste" are indirectly derogatory, I usually refrain from using the term "upper-caste" in my analyses, to which I prefer the social-scientific term *non-SC*, or the more informative concept of "dominant castes". Given the caste makeup of the villages in which most of my empirical work took place (which usually counted very few villagers from the "Scheduled Tribes" or non-Hindu villagers), it should however be noted that the bulk of those I refer to as *non-SC* or *dominant* throughout the book belonged to those two groupings I have already mentioned: *OBCs* and "upper-castes" (in the more restrictive conception of the term). Finally, although my analyses refrain from using the term "upper-caste" for the reasons already indicated, it should be noted that the term appears in this volume in a number of quotes, survey items, and references (especially in Chapter 2). When I draw from academic works

on caste or caste-based inequalities, the term refers to the more restrictive category (not including OBCs). When the term appears in a quote or in one of my audio survey items, it should usually be understood to include all locally dominant subcastes, including a number of *OBC* subcastes such as *Jats*.

1   Political Representation and Intergroup Relations

1.1   The Question

On January 23, 2009, three days after Barack Obama's first inauguration, I hopped in a jeep to a relatively remote village of Jaipur district, in the Indian state of Rajasthan. My objective that day was to interview a village council president who had been described to me as being especially dynamic and active. He belonged to the *Bairwa* caste, one of the "Scheduled Castes" formerly referred to as "untouchable" in India, and he had been elected to this position after it had been "reserved" for members of the Scheduled Castes. As a result of this radical form of ethnic quota, he had become the first member of his caste group to be elected as council president in his village. As I later found out, the symbolic value of his election had been heightened even further by the particularly retrograde political context of the village. Not only was he the first member of the Scheduled Castes to serve as council president; he was also the first council president not to be drawn from the historically dominant Rajput family whose medieval fort still stood high on a hill, right at the center of the village.

I was not able to interview him on that day, as the time he had promised to allot me over the phone never materialized. When I arrived in the village council building at 9AM, he was already busy signing and stamping an impressive pile of official documents that the village council secretary kept serving him. Around 11AM, as the pile grew smaller, I started to hope that he would give me his attention. But his cell phone rang. He had been summoned to mediate a minor conflict between two villagers over a pile of branches that was obstructing the path that separated two hamlets. Bidding everyone a hasty farewell, the president hopped on a motorcycle and disappeared, much to my despair. When I reached the courtyard of his house in the afternoon, I soon realized that many villagers had had the same idea as me. The president was sitting on a plastic chair in the midst of a good dozen of his constituents, who were sitting on the floor or on cot-beds, patiently waiting their turn

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to get the president's ear. These men and women, who belonged to various communities within the village, had walked all the way to the house of a former "untouchable" in order to seek redress for their problems. The president – now freshly bathed and wearing an immaculately white *kurta* – looked regal as he listened and addressed the villagers' concerns. As the courtyard progressively emptied, I started hoping once again that my time would come. But when his cell phone rang for the umpteenth time that day, I understood that I would have to be patient. This time it was the BDO (Block Development Officer), the highest-ranking state official at the block level, calling and asking to see the council president. In a matter of minutes, the courtyard almost entirely emptied. The president excused himself, jumped into a shiny red SUV that bore a "PRESIDENT"[1] bumper sticker, and left those of us who had stayed to watch the scene in a cloud of dust.

In spite of my relative misfortune, the observations made on that day – the stunning role reversal, the pomp of power, the uncommon forms of inter-caste contact, and the new linkage between a disadvantaged group and the local authorities – left me with many hypotheses about the impact that a disadvantaged group's access to representation might have on the nature of intergroup relations. These are the basis for my explorations in this book. The empirical literature on the impact of descriptive representation has – since the landmark study of Chattopadhyay and Duflo (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004) – mostly focused on the material and redistributive impact of disadvantaged groups' access to political representation. When members of groups that have long been dominated, stigmatized, and excluded finally gain access to political power, it is however suggested that this experience will also change the social meaning of belonging to such a group, and that these psychological changes will have far-reaching behavioral consequences. Yet, these presumed psychological effects so far remain surprisingly unspecific and untested. Do policies enabling a more descriptive form of political representation change the psychology of intergroup relations? If so, in what ways?

My answer to these questions, developed in the rest of this book, is nuanced but carefully optimistic. Drawing on a detailed, multi-method exploration of a single case – local-level electoral quotas for members of the Scheduled Castes in the Indian state of Rajasthan – I show that descriptive representation can impact the psychology of intergroup relations, and that these psychological changes in turn improve the nature of day-to-day interpersonal relations. Significant changes happen to members of the newly represented group as well as to members of dominant

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[1] "*Sarpanch*" in Hindi.

groups. As important as this conclusion is, it does not imply that a disadvantaged group's access to political representation will systematically sweep away all negative beliefs and behaviors toward members of that group. Beneficial psychological effects are likely to occur in some contexts, but not others. Most importantly, changes are likely to be slow, incremental, and partial, as access to political representation should be expected to improve some beliefs relevant to members of that group while leaving others untouched.

1.2   Theoretical Focus: The *Psychology* of Descriptive Representation

Before I elaborate on this argument, and theorize about the changes that should and should not be expected to occur when members of disadvantaged groups reach elected offices, it is important to clarify the object of my interest and further define the variables which constitute the main focus of this book.

1.2.1   Policies of Descriptive Representation

This book explores changes brought by institutional efforts to enable groups who are excluded from political institutions to enter them. I refer to these institutional efforts as policies of descriptive representation. Although I borrow the idea of "descriptive representation" directly from Pitkin (Pitkin 1967), other authors have discussed the rationale for these policies. They are, for instance, similar to what Phillips refers to as "policies of presence" (Phillips 1995), and more recently, to the "policies of group inclusion" evaluated by Jensenius (forthcoming) in the context of India.

   These policies can take several shapes and forms. Quotas on party lists are not equivalent to candidate quotas, which are themselves not equivalent to reserved *seats* for certain groups (Krook 2009, Krook and Zetterberg 2014). Besides, related efforts such as majority-minority districts (Tate 2003) or other types of affirmative action policies also constitute policies of descriptive representation. These methods share one attribute: they require institutional engineering, so that members of a stigmatized group end up being chosen by parties or voters who have so far not favored them. Policies of descriptive representation[2] have been

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[2] For ease of language, I mostly use the expression "descriptive representation" throughout this book instead of "policies of descriptive representation." I refer to the consequences of policies of descriptive representation as "group access to political representation" or "a group's access to political representation."

hypothesized to have a wide range of positive and negative effects, and to affect both members of dominant groups and members of disadvantaged groups – that is, members of these newly represented groups. While my investigations lead me to explore many of these effects in the following chapters, this book's primary interest is in the impact of policies of descriptive representation on one of these outcomes: the quality of day-to-day intergroup relations.

1.2.2   Descriptive Representation and Interpersonal Relations

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a group's access to political representation *can* reshape interpersonal relations between members of different groups. Examples from different contexts illustrate the potential effects of descriptive representation:

"Since Obama started campaigning, if I go almost anywhere, it's: 'How are you, sir?' I'm talking about strangers. Calling me 'sir.'"[3]

  "Now that my nephew is the sarpanch [Village Council Head], it's like we all started smelling of jasmine! Upper-caste villagers greet us warmly in the street, and even stop by to talk to us. […] We get more respect."[4]

As hinted by these quotes from a variety of contexts, access to political power may have a transformative effect on common behaviors relevant to the quality of day-to-day interpersonal relations between members of the different groups. While these two examples suggest that access to political power can prompt more civil and respectful interpersonal behaviors, a number of *additional* interpersonal behaviors might evolve as a result of a group's access to political representation. As members of a socially disadvantaged group gain access to visible positions of power, members of dominant groups may, for instance, find it increasingly difficult to segregate members of that group or to refuse to partner with them in their economic enterprises. Concurrently, members of socially disadvantaged groups who once silently submitted to the humiliating tasks they were given may be inclined to refuse to do so now that their social status has been suddenly elevated by a fellow group member's accession to a prominent position of power.[5] The chapters that follow are generally

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[3] From a *New York Times* article on the social repercussions of the political rise of Barack Obama in 2008 ("Many blacks find joy in unexpected breakthrough," *New York Times*, June 6, 2008).

[4] From a private interview with the author, February 2009. The respondent was a *Bairwa* (SC) villager from Phagi *panchayat samiti* (Jaipur district).

[5] Examples illustrating this are frequent in press reports of inter-caste violence in rural North India. Take, for instance, the following case, as narrated in Bose (2008). The incident occurred in 2007, only a few days after Mayawati, the leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party and herself a member of the Scheduled Castes, returned to power as chief minister

interested in these – so far uncharted – repercussions of descriptive representation, and how they broadly affect interpersonal relations between members of different groups.

In exploring the consequences of descriptive representation, it should be emphasized that this book largely focuses on the *psychological mechanisms* that trigger these behaviors. Accordingly, my analyses in this book mostly focus on the effect of descriptive representation on a series of group-related beliefs. Since these beliefs causally precede behaviors relevant to the quality of intergroup relations, the book explores the various pathways through which descriptive representation may lead to substantial changes as much as it explores these behavioral repercussions.

These group-related beliefs matter for both obvious and less obvious reasons. They first matter because they play a role in the persistence of regimes of everyday hostility, segregation, and discrimination against some groups. Accordingly, changes in these beliefs can be seen as the first step toward less antagonistic interpersonal relations. Beyond the quality of interpersonal relations, changes in group-related beliefs may also have a long-standing effect on the persistence of socioeconomic inequalities across groups. As Sen (2004) and Appadurai (2004) point out, the way members of different groups think and relate to one another – as a function of their group identity – conditions the ability of members of disadvantaged groups to improve their socioeconomic condition. A range of discriminatory and hostile beliefs on one hand (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; see also Blank 2003) and of internalized barriers on the other[6] can crush the ability of members of disadvantaged groups to reduce the socioeconomic gap between themselves and members of other groups. As argued by Loury (2002) and a number of seminal models of group inequalities (Fryer and Austen-White 2005, Rao and Walton 2004, Ray 2006, Bowles, Loury, and Sethi 2009), persistent discriminatory beliefs

of Uttar Pradesh. Phulpatti Devi, a widow and a member of one of the most exploited and disadvantaged subcastes within the Scheduled Castes, decided to retaliate against an upper-caste local strongman who had duped her and attempted to rape her on several occasions (and had never been punished for it). That morning, Phulpatti Devi tricked the man into undressing and castrated him with a knife. When the magazine *Tehelka* later asked her how she – a woman from the Scheduled Castes, whose complaints and explanations would usually not be recorded – had gathered the courage to do this, she simply answered: "I thought that now that Mayawati is in power, she will save me." This case is an extreme but significant illustration of the potential behavioral consequences that access to power of a member of a disadvantaged group may generate.

[6] See Hoff and Pandey (2004) for an experiment on the effect of perceived discriminations on economic behaviors; See Crocker (1999), Steele (1997), Steele, Spencer, and Aronson (2002) for experiments on the effect of race priming in standardized tests. See Merton (1953), Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) and Ray (2006) for broader conceptual perspectives on how the social group with which individuals identify can restrict their horizons and aspirations, and how this self-limitation can eventually contribute to the "reproduction" of group inequalities.

and low aspirations and poor expectations that derive from them within the stigmatized group can be held responsible for the stickiness of racial or ethnic inequalities.

Given that group-related beliefs impact crucial outcomes in the long run, focusing on changes in the psychology of intergroup relations is arguably as important as focusing on behavioral change. Behavioral change measured *at a given point in time* may not be more valuable than psychological changes whose repercussions have yet to fully unfold.[7]

1.2.3   Cognitive Changes and Discrimination-Inducing Beliefs

While I am interested in psychological change, I am especially interested in the *cognitive* changes that derive from a group's access to representation. In my investigations, I distinguish between the emotional/affective consequences of descriptive representation and its cognitive consequences. This distinction qualifies my work both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, this distinction allows me to differentiate between instinctive reactions to descriptive representation (such as potential "backlash" effects, based on feelings of threat, danger, or resentment, or emotions such as pride or esteem) and changes based on new information acquired over time. Empirically, focusing on cognitive changes (that is, on changes in *beliefs*) allows to me measure the evolution of much more tractable, reliable, and transparent outcomes. As explained in Chapter 5, asking sensitive questions about intergroup relations is no simple matter. It remains easier, however, to measure what individuals *believe* than it is to measure what they *feel*.[8]

While this book's main area of interest is cognitive change, it also focuses on a specific set of beliefs that are best referred to as *discrimination-inducing beliefs*. Discrimination-inducing beliefs are the beliefs on which individuals rely to justify discriminatory, hostile, or unequal social relations between members of a disadvantaged group and members of dominant groups. Members of dominant groups as well as members of disadvantaged groups may harbor such beliefs.

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[7] In reverse, an absence of behavioral change in the short run may not entirely imply an absence of behavioral change in the future.

[8] I do not claim to measure these more emotional or instinctive reactions in this book. I do not, for instance, directly capture the effect of a group's access to representation on feelings of pride or esteem. While this is a clear empirical limitation of this project, and one to which I return in Chapter 8, it does not prevent me from discussing and hypothesizing about the effect of representation on these outcomes.

A variety of such discrimination-inducing beliefs exist. Some of these beliefs, such as *stereotypes*, readily come to mind. An ingrained belief that members of a stigmatized group are dangerous, lazy, or lack intelligence is known to fuel antagonistic behaviors against members of that group among members of dominant groups. Similarly, self-stereotypes – among members of disadvantaged groups – can fuel a form of self-prejudice, and eventually restrict the behaviors of individuals from these groups. But a number of other beliefs – *beyond stereotypes* – also fuel discrimination or hostile behaviors against members of disadvantaged groups. In this book, I argue that *perceived norms of interaction* – that is, beliefs about how other members of dominant groups interact or ought to interact with members of disadvantaged groups – have an important impact on the quality of intergroup interactions. Insofar as individuals look for cues in their social and legal environment when interacting with others, these beliefs play a crucial role in the reproduction of day-to-day discriminations and unequal relations. Simply put, individuals from dominant groups are more likely to discriminate when they perceive that most people in their environment discriminate or when they perceive that laws that forbid discrimination are weakly enforced (Tankard and Paluck 2016). Meanwhile, individuals from disadvantaged groups are more likely to overcome deep-seated mental barriers to behavioral change if they perceive that they live in a less hostile environment. Relying on this theoretical distinction, this book theorizes and tests the impact of descriptive representation on each of these different types of beliefs, and on common interpersonal behaviors across groups.

1.3   The Argument

How, then, does a group's access to political representation affect the beliefs that underpin discriminatory and hostile day-to-day intergroup relations? Relying on a detailed exploration of the case of the Scheduled Castes in rural Rajasthan and on intuitions from a variety of disciplines and contexts, this book proposes a novel and nuanced response to this question. While this argument is developed at length in Chapter 4, a brief summary is presented here.

The argument unfolds in two steps. The first step suggests that beneficial cognitive changes are overall more likely to occur in some contexts than in others. The second step then specifies *which* types of beliefs are likely to evolve as a result of a disadvantaged group's access to political representation, and which are not.

1.3.1   When Can Descriptive Representation Improve Group-Related Beliefs?

The existing literature on the impact of descriptive representation on intergroup relations has so far generated seemingly contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, a number of scholars have suggested that the accession of a few members of a disadvantaged group to political office should bring important cognitive changes (Mansbridge 1999, Hajnal 2001, Hajnal 2005, Beaman et al. 2009). These authors have usually reached an optimistic conclusion, as their studies have emphasized the fact that exposure to members of disadvantaged groups elected to powerful positions may contribute to *improving* intergroup relations. The logic implied in these arguments has been relatively simple: minority representation provides citizens with new information regarding politicians from that disadvantaged group. This new information, insofar as it contradicts the common stereotypes against members of a disadvantaged group, can have a revelatory function. As citizens are exposed to a prominent member of a group they are rarely in contact with in their daily lives, they learn about the ways of these politicians, and through these individuals about the ways of members of these groups. Insofar as this new information tends to be reassuring or disconfirming, they update their negative stereotypes about members of these groups and develop more tolerant attitudes. Recent evidence about the effect of Obama's victories supports this optimistic view, even though it also notes that these positive changes were often fleeting (Welch and Sigelman 2011, Goldman and Mutz 2014).

   Contrasting with this optimistic view, other works have suggested that descriptive representation should have a more worrying impact. Over the past decades, a flurry of studies in sociology, psychology, and political science has shown that access to political power by members of groups that have historically been excluded from political institutions has often led to strong negative reactions by members of dominant groups. These reactions, often characterized as "backlashes," have been described as stemming from reactions to a perceived threat. Blumer (1958) and Bobo (1983), among others, have suggested that white Americans are likely to respond negatively to black political power if they feel that it endangers the wealth and political power of the white community, or if they feel that black electoral victories may disrupt the traditional balance of racial power. Authors in this literature predict that the election of black Americans to important leadership positions should *heighten* racial tension and result in widespread "white backlash" against black

Americans. Recent evidence suggesting that the first election of Barack Obama in 2008 also generated anxiety and less sympathetic attitudes toward African Americans may, in addition, lend credit to this argument (Valentino and Brader 2011).

More generally speaking, both realistic theories of conflict (Bobo 1988, Coser 1956, LeVine and Campbell 1972, Sherif, 1966 are classic examples) and emotion-based theories of conflict (Horowitz 1985, Petersen 2002) have suggested that the implementation of descriptive representation could trigger a "backlash." In this view, antagonistic attitudes are the product of concerns about social status and the maintenance of the existing hierarchy of groups. In that sense, periods of transition in which an established group might have a lot to lose, given the assertiveness of another group, may generate antagonism and violence. According to this hypothesis, we should expect the implementation of descriptive representation to generate heightened antagonism, and even violence, as "threatened" established groups resist any change perceived as having negative consequences for their future welfare.[9]

The argument put forth in this book reconciles these seemingly opposed views. Even if negative "backlash" effects and positive changes in group-related beliefs have sometimes been seen as alternative hypotheses (Hajnal 2001), I do not consider these as radically opposed reactions. I rather treat them as phenomena of a different nature, with "backlash" effects stemming from the *affective* dimensions of prejudice (Petersen 2002, Horowitz 2001), while positive changes in stereotypes stem from the more *cognitive* dimension of intergroup attitudes. The timing of such reactions suggests that these phenomena are not alternatives: while backlash effects are seen as short-term reactions that take place in periods of transition in which information is scarce or uncertain, cognitive effects are described as the result of long-term exposure to minority representation, after citizens have been exposed to members of disadvantaged groups, and after they have had sufficient time to learn about them. Distinguishing between long-term cognitive changes and short-term emotional reactions thus appears necessary. Insofar as they are not mutually exclusive, both types of reactions may in fact happen over time, including within the same individuals. One may, for instance, *feel* threatened, angry, or anxious when they first hear that their town is about to be headed by a member of a particularly disliked group,

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[9] Note, in addition, that this hypothesis appears compatible with micro-psychological theories of conflict that suggest that grievances (Gurr 1970, Spilerman 1970) and/or certain emotions (Petersen 2002, Horowitz 2001) are the operating mechanisms in ethnic conflict.

before revising their beliefs after having *experienced* the leadership of that individual.

While these reactions are not opposed, and can happen over time within the same individuals, they are extremely unlikely to be simultaneous. When a disadvantaged group's access to representation generates intergroup tensions and violence, individuals are unlikely to receive and process the kind of information that may potentially lead them to update their hostile or discriminatory beliefs. That is, positive cognitive effects are unlikely to happen in the midst of a strong "backlash-type" reaction. Accordingly, the likelihood of beneficial cognitive effects is *conditional* on the absence of backlash effects.

When, then, should "backlash-type" reactions take place? Building on these theoretical intuitions and on observations developed in Chapter 4 of this book, Figure 1.1 provides a simple response to this question: departing from the aforementioned intuitions, I argue that a group's access to political representation should not systematically lead to a backlash, and that we should observe "backlash effects" only when a disadvantaged group's access to political representation challenges the existing distribution of resources between groups, or when it is *perceived* to. When a group's access to representation, on the other hand, does *not* credibly threaten the status quo (that is, the existing distribution of material resources across groups), backlash effects are unlikely to occur, and citizens from dominant groups are likely to go on with their lives, unfazed by the access of a new group to political representation. This peaceful acceptance of minority representation, I argue, opens the door to subtle but nonetheless beneficial cognitive effects: when conflicts about the legitimacy of the new political representatives are avoided citizens from all groups are provided with new information about members of a disadvantaged group, or about their position in society. This, in turn, enables several types of positive changes in patterns of intergroup relations.

1.3.2   Which Beliefs Does Access to Representation Change?

Where descriptive representation *is able* to change the psychology of intergroup relations, *how*, if at all, does it do it? The aforementioned distinction between *stereotypes* and *perceived norms of interaction* constitutes the centerpiece of this book's argument and the basis for my answer to this question. Each of these two types of beliefs suggests a different avenue through which policies of descriptive representation may improve the quality of intergroup relations. Relying on this distinction, this book argues that there are two types of mechanisms through which access to

Does Disadvantaged Group's Access to Representation Threaten the Status Quo? → *YES* → → "Backlash Effects" Likely/Cognitive Changes Unlikely

→ *NO* → **Is Access to Representation *perceived* to threaten the status quo?** → *YES* → "Backlash Effects" Likely/ Cognitive Changes Unlikely

→ *NO* → Backlash Effects Unlikely/**Cognitive Changes Possible**
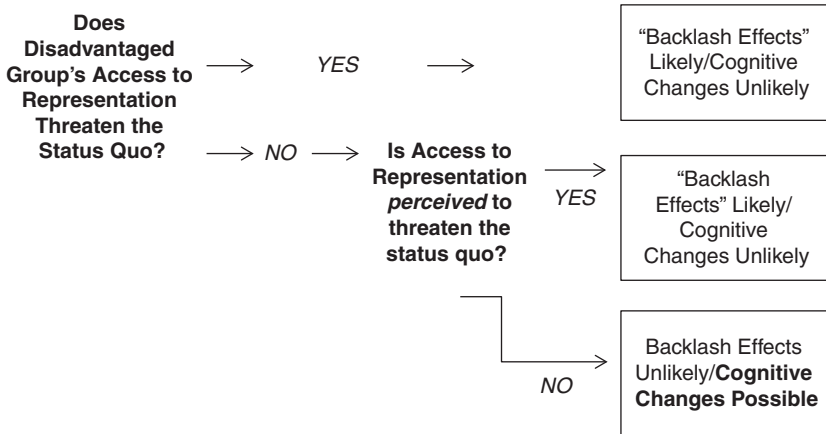
Figure 1.1. When Are Positive Effects of Descriptive Representation Possible?

political representation by a member of a disadvantaged group may limit discriminatory or hostile treatments toward members of that group.

These two mechanisms are represented graphically in Figure 1.2. First, in line with what several authors have already suggested (Mansbridge 1999, Hajnal 2001, Hajnal 2005, Beaman et al 2009, Welch and Sigelman 2011, Goldman and Mutz 2014), a group's access to representation may change what individuals believe about members of that group – that is, how they evaluate them and the extent to which they eventually "like" them. If a group's access to representation – as has often been suggested – improved stereotypes and self-stereotypes about that group, then levels of prejudice[10] against members of that group may decrease, and intergroup relations may in turn be improved. I refer to this mechanism, which implies that descriptive representation can change the appreciation that individuals have for members of a disadvantaged group, as "taste mechanism" in this book.[11]

The second mechanism through which access to representation may play a beneficial role has so far remained relatively underexplored, and constitutes the most novel part of my argument. This mechanism relates not to individuals' personal preferences or to their inner levels of

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[10] I make a distinction between prejudice and stereotypes. I see stereotypes, which are culturally shared associations linking most or all members of a group with a particular characteristic, as a component of the broader concept of prejudice. Prejudice is in turn defined as a more general type of negative evaluation of a group.

[11] Note that it is similar in many ways to what Habyarimana and colleagues refer to as "preference mechanism" in their study of interethnic relations (Habyarimana et al. 2010).

"TASTE" MECHANISM

Stereotypes ——————⟶ Prejudice

**Descriptive
Representation**

**Levels of
Discrimination in
Interpersonal
Relations**

Perceived *Social* and/or *Legal*
Norms of Intergroup Interactions

"STRATEGY" MECHANISM
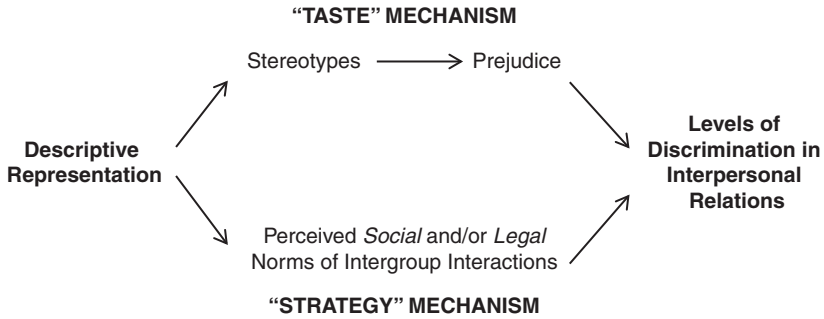
Figure 1.2. Mechanisms of Change: Taste and Strategy.

prejudice, but to the strategic considerations that also regulate their day-to-day behaviors. As mentioned earlier here and as detailed in Chapter 4, beliefs about how members of dominant groups interact or ought to interact with members of disadvantaged groups (i.e., *perceived norms of interactions*) play a central role in the reproduction of day-to-day discriminations and unequal relations. Hostile or discriminatory behaviors often persist because individuals from dominant groups believe that they might get away with these behaviors, or simply because everyone else around them engages in similar behaviors (Tankard and Paluck 2016 for a review). On the other hand, members of disadvantaged groups are likely to refrain from assertive behaviors if they perceive that their environment is more hostile.

Several types of perceived norms of interaction can influence behaviors, and this book distinguishes between two of these. I theorize that perceived norms of interaction may be *perceived social norms of interaction* (that is, perceptions of how other peer individuals are behaving) or that they may be *perceived legal norms of interaction* (that is, perceptions of how one ought to behave to avoid legal sanctions). While these are different types of beliefs, they can have the same effect on interpersonal behaviors: if the experience of descriptive representation leads individuals to perceive that their peers or that the authorities (or the state) are becoming more tolerant toward members of a disadvantaged group, we should expect members of dominant groups to strategically adapt to this new situation. They should do so because they perceive that the social or legal costs of discriminating have changed, and *not* because they have more appreciation for members of the discriminated group (as in the "taste mechanism" mentioned earlier). A parallel mechanism can exist among members of disadvantaged groups, who may engage in norm-defying behaviors because they feel that members of dominant groups are now more likely to tolerate them, or because they fee that unlawful opposition

to these behaviors would now be punished. I refer to this mechanism as "strategy mechanism" in this study.

In sum, this simple theoretical framework suggests that descriptive representation may have an impact on intergroup relations because the taste for members of newly represented groups changes *OR* because individuals strategically update their behaviors upon perceiving that norms of interaction are changing. While both mechanisms can lead to meaningful, beneficial changes in interpersonal behaviors, they have very different implications in terms of the kind of change we should expect to observe, as well as different implications as to the permanence of those changes. If changes are strategic and prompted by changing *perceived norms of interaction* – how social actors feel they ought to interact with members of a disadvantaged group in order to avoid social or legal costs – then descriptive representation should not be expected to improve baseline levels of prejudice, and changes should logically be limited to those behaviors that play out in the public realm. Their irreversibility might be further called into question, since such changes would derive from strategic considerations rather than from a newfound appreciation (or self-appreciation) of members of disadvantaged groups.

Contrary to what optimistic findings in empirical studies of descriptive representation (Hajnal 2005, Beaman et al. 2009) have so far suggested, this book emphasizes the fact that stereotypes are sticky, deeply anchored, and inherently resistant to disconfirming information (Chapter 4). It also underlines that it takes very specific circumstances for descriptive representation to generate new or disconfirming information relevant to *common* members of the newly represented group. This leads me to argue, building on qualitative evidence and on a critical review of the large social-psychological literature on belief change, that descriptive representation is much more likely to improve interpersonal relations through the "strategy mechanism" than it is to do so through the "taste mechanism."[12] Descriptive representation thus matters, I argue, *neither* because it changes what individuals perceive to be the characteristics of members of stigmatized groups *nor* because it progressively leads them to a new appreciation of these groups. Descriptive representation instead matters, more modestly but significantly, because it signals to individuals that their fellow citizens or their political institutions are becoming more tolerant, and that they should adapt to this new worldview.

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[12] While I return to this question at length at the end of Chapter 8, this does not necessarily imply that descriptive representation does not generate important "psychic benefits," often understood as feelings of pride or esteem, among members of the newly represented group.

1.4   The Case: Local-Level Political Quotas in Rural India

In order to *develop* and later *test* this argument, I focus on a single case – the case of local-level political quotas (known as "reservations") for members of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in rural India. This focus on castes formerly referred to as "untouchables" implies that I explore the psychological consequences of access to political representation for a group that remains – until today – severely discriminated against and stigmatized (Chapter 2). Untouchability – a set of hostile and discriminatory practices that have targeted groups formerly labeled as "untouchables" in the Indian caste hierarchy – has been constitutionally banned since independence in 1947, and the Scheduled Castes have been granted numerous government benefits through "reservation policies" (i.e., quotas) and various targeted schemes. Significant discrimination persists, however (Deliege 1999, Hoff and Pandey 2006, Kapur et al. 2010, Narula 1999, Shah et al. 2006). As suggested by a recent representative national-level study (Shah et al. 2006), members of the Scheduled Castes experience discrimination in most of their interactions with others.[13]

In an effort to counter this dismal reality in rural areas, the 73rd constitutional amendment, passed in 1992 and enforced in 1993, mandated that Indian states reserve seats for members of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in all local-level political institutions. In spite of initial opposition from traditionally "dominant" caste groups (Mathew 2000, Purohit, Chaturvedi, and Lodha 2002), these political quotas have now been implemented during several electoral cycles in most Indian states. By restricting (for a fraction of the seats) the right to be a candidate to members of the SCs, "reservations" have guaranteed the election of thousands of SC candidates who would almost certainly never have been elected otherwise.

Proponents of quotas suggest that they can set examples, generate "role models" that would not exist otherwise (Phillips 1995), or signal to society at large that members of such a group are now to be considered an equal part of the social body (Mansbridge 1999). While this presumption is widely held to be true, there is little evidence to confirm its validity. This lack of evidence is problematic given the popularity of political quotas across the world: policies aiming at increasing the representation of women are now extremely common, having been introduced in

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[13] Shah et al. (2006) found, among dozens of instances of daily discrimination, that members of the SCs are barred from entry into places of worship in more than 50% of the surveyed villages, denied access to water facilities in more than 45% of the villages, and denied seating among other villagers in 30% of the villages.

more than 100 countries worldwide, while policies targeting other identity groups (especially ethnic groups) are now in place in at least 40 countries (Krook and Zetterberg 2014). This lack of evidence is equally problematic because quotas have been simultaneously hypothesized to trigger "backlash" effects (Rudman and Fairchild 2004). This concern is particularly relevant to the Indian context, in which we so far have no clear picture of the overall impact that political reservations have on the welfare of members of the groups targeted by these policies. Together with the evidence forthcoming in Jensenius (forthcoming), the intuitions and the evidence contained in this book will hopefully allow for a more informed discussion of the impact that such political quotas can have on intergroup relations.

My investigations in this book focus on a specific type of reservations, namely reservations for the village-level position of *sarpanch* (village council head) in the Indian state of Rajasthan. In the rest of this section, I provide justifications for these choices.

1.4.1   Why Focus on the Scheduled Castes?

In India, several socially disadvantaged groups – the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the Other Backward Castes ("OBCs") and women – have been provided with political quotas in the postcolonial period. Why then focus on members of the Scheduled Castes as opposed to members of these other groups?

Focusing on the Scheduled Castes appears important in light of the substantial literature interested in the political rise of the Scheduled Castes and on its consequences on "untouchability." Seventy years after independence, the access of members of the Scheduled Castes to political institutions does not seem to have significantly contributed to an improvement in the day-to-day living conditions of most members of these communities (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998, Weiner 2001, Jensenius forthcoming). A number of works by Indian scholars have attempted to explain this outcome by addressing the political rise of the Scheduled Castes and the impact of policies of reservation. As noted in Jeffrey et al. (2008), the transformative potential of the new generation of *Dalit* politicians in North India has become a major topic of inquiry for political scientists focusing on the region (Pai 2000, 2002, Weiner 2001, Kohli 2001, Varshney 2000, Jaffrelot 2003, Krishna 2004, Jeffrey et al. 2008). This literature, often focused on the state of Uttar Pradesh, has investigated the extent to which the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (the party that has most explicitly claimed to represent members of the Scheduled Castes), the different tenures of Mayawati (the head of

the BSP and current chief minister of Uttar Pradesh), as well as various instances of political inclusion at the local level, through reservation, have been able to change the situation of members of the SCs on the ground. Relying mostly on ethnographic or archival methods, these scholars have pointed to a series of potential "non-material" gains for members of the SCs. In spite of important nuances in phrasing, most authors seem to agree on the point that access to political power has generated some non-material benefits in the forms of increased "cultural respect," "self-dignity," or "symbolic social change" in relations between *Dalits* and others. In addition, Krishna (2003, 2004) suggests that the rise of a new generation of *Dalit* politicians could have opened up new networks for the community, giving it the newfound ability to have its voice heard by higher authorities, which may, in turn, have increased its ability to contest discrimination on legal grounds.

While these works have extensively documented the political background and the mobilization strategies employed by SC politicians, they have not thoroughly addressed the day-to-day *consequences* of this institutional inclusion. In addition, they have rarely attempted to provide comprehensive, measurable evidence for these hypothesized "non-material benefits." Did access to political representation change the way members of the Scheduled Castes think about themselves and behave in society? Did it affect the way in which they are thought of and treated by others? Given the ubiquity of rhetorical arguments about the symbolic impact of having a *Dalit* in office in both the Indian media and official discourse, the lack of systematic research on these questions seems to be an anomaly. Focusing on the Scheduled Castes thus allows me to fill this gap in the existing scholarship on India, in addition to allowing me to produce causal evidence relevant to the broader comparative discussion about the psychological impact of quotas.

1.4.2   Why Focus on Rajasthan?

Both theoretical and methodological reasons in turn drive my choice to focus on the case of the Scheduled Castes *in the state of Rajasthan*. Rajasthan is one of India's biggest and most populous states, with a population equivalent to that of Thailand or France.[14] More importantly,

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[14] The state of Rajasthan is the largest in size and one of the most populous Indian states (68.6 million inhabitants as of 2011). The rural portion of the state is divided into thirty-three *zilla parishads* (the highest tier of local rural political institutions, whose jurisdiction roughly corresponds to the territory of a district), themselves divided in more than a hundred *panchayat samitis* (the middle tier of these institutions, roughly corresponding to a block or a *tehsil*), and further divided into thousands of village councils (*panchayats*).

focusing on rural Rajasthan allows me to measure the impact of access to political power by individuals and groups that until now have remained almost entirely deprived of access to political power, continue to be subjected to various forms of discrimination and violence, and overall remain socially excluded.

As noted in a number of recent scholarly studies focused on the state of Rajasthan (Singh 2016, Kruks-Wisner n.d.), Rajasthan has long been considered a bastion of social, economic, and political "backwardness," in part due to the fact that local feudal lords (*jagirdars*) ruled over the state for most of its pre-independence history (Narain and Mathur 1989). In part due to this inherited hierarchical structure (Rudolph and Rudolph 1966, Narain and Mathur 1989), Rajasthan has remained a comparatively poor state in India, lagging on most indicators of human development. Along with its neighbors in northern India, Rajasthan is thus often labeled a "BIMARU" – a sick or "backward" state.[15] In this picture, the socio-economic standing of members of the Scheduled Castes has remained particularly worrying, as suggested by my analyses in Chapter 2 and 9.

This social structure, built on feudal traditions, bonded labor, and other forms of economic dependencies inherited from another time (Rudolph and Rudolph 1962), has weighed on the politics of the state. It possibly explains, for instance, why Rajasthan has not witnessed the kind of radical political emancipation of the lower castes that has occurred in many Indian states over the past few decades. As shown in Chapter 2, while members of the Scheduled Castes have acceded to a number of prominent political and administrative positions at the national level and in other states, this was less true of the areas of Rajasthan in which this research took place in 2009, where the main party associated with *Dalit* interests at the national level (the Bahujan Samaj Party, or BSP) was not a relevant political force, and where most villagers are unable to name a single important political leader from the Scheduled Castes who was from Rajasthan. State-level politics in Rajasthan continues to be dominated by two national parties – the BJP and the INC – and their local clientelistic networks (Jaffrelot and Robin 2009), at the expense of the Bahujan Samaj Party or other forces identified with lower-caste groups. The general picture has not been different at the village level, where a small number of locally dominant leaders usually drawn from dominant castes (*Rajputs* but also *Jats*) have usually been seen as the most

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[15] BIMARU, which also means "sick" in Hindi, is an acronym derived from the names of four states in the Hindi-speaking belt of north India that have traditionally lagged behind in human and economic development: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

influential actors (Mathew 2000, Singh 2009, Purohit, Chaturvedi, and Lodha 2002).

As a result of these social and political trends, it should come as no surprise that caste relations in the state have also been often described as "traditional" or "feudal" (Purohit et al. 2002, Singh 2009), and that quantitative measurements of the prevalence of untouchability have often ranked Rajasthan as one of the states in which untouchability-related attitudes have remained the least progressive (Chapter 9). In that sense, Rajasthan provides me with a "least likely" case. If a group's access to political representation made a difference either way, this difference is *least* likely to manifest itself in the rather conservative and hierarchical context in which reservations were implemented in Rajasthan. From a methodological standpoint, this likely makes it harder to detect any effect of reservation in the state, given how entrenched untouchability-related attitudes appeared to be in the state before reservations were implemented. On the other hand, it possibly suggests that any effect detected could be smaller than the corresponding effects in other states.[16]

This geographical focus also allows me to make inferences relevant to the subset of ethnic groups[17] that have the following three interrelated characteristics: continuing socioeconomic "backwardness" (defined as a sizable deficit in human and monetary development, by all major indicators, in comparison to most other locally salient ethnic groups), an inherited history of stigma and social discrimination, and an almost complete exclusion from socially visible positions of power, including political power. Such groups appear distinctive by the multifaceted and tenacious stigmatization, segregation, and discrimination that most of their members endure on a daily basis, as well as by the internalization of many of these practices among members of the group itself. While most of this book focuses on this almost paradigmatic case of a multifaceted "disadvantage," it is worth noting that comparable groups exist, or at least have existed, in most countries of the world. The chapters that follow thus provide intuitions about a number of cases to be found in other latitudes: African Americans (especially until the 1970s), North African immigrants in contemporary France, and Roma communities across most of contemporary Europe are among those that readily come to mind. In that sense, the conclusions of this study may not only be relevant to the situation of groups that are specifically treated as "untouchables" within a system similar to the Indian caste system, such as the

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[16] I expand on this point and nuance it in Chapter 9.
[17] As noted earlier, I follow here Chandra's (2004) relatively encompassing definition of the term "ethnic."

Burakumin in Japan, the *Al-Akhdam* in Yemen, or the *Osus* of Cameroon. These conclusions rather speak to the larger set of disadvantaged groups with the characteristics described earlier here.

1.4.3   Why Focus on Local-Level Positions?

While other scholars (Pande 2003, Chin and Prakash 2011, Jensenius 2015) have recently studied the impact of caste reservations at higher levels of government, the dramatic power transitions at play in village-level institutions (*gram panchayats*) in rural India provide a prime opportunity to examine the aforementioned questions. The reasons for this are manifold. First, as I show in Chapter 3, the political positions now occupied by many members of the Scheduled Castes in these institutions are of direct relevance to most citizens. While Members of Parliament and state legislators (also known as MLAs in India) remain distant from the population, an overwhelming majority of villagers have personally met their village-level officials. To most villagers, the village council head (locally known in Rajasthan as *sarpanch*) is likely to be a former schoolmate, an employee, or a neighbor. This proximity and visibility ensures that the villagers whose beliefs and behavioral intentions are measured in this study were, for the most part, effectively exposed to these officials, and that they had experienced firsthand their the consequences of their rule.

Second, the status of village leader provides the *sarpanch* with a great deal of both formal and informal power. Focusing on village-level officials in no way implies that I am focusing on powerless politicians. While they each individually have fewer funds to allocate, *sarpanches* have a more direct and more frequent influence on villagers' daily lives than politicians working at higher levels of government. As many funds are disbursed through village councils (*gram panchayats*), the power that the *sarpanch* wields is real (Chapter 3), and certainly much more evident to common villagers than the power exercised at any other level of government. The third advantage of focusing on these *sarpanches* is merely practical: focusing on a lower level of representation – the village level – allows me to collect and analyze data on a large number of observations. Although a relatively objective and exhaustive assessment of Mayawati's tenures as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh[18] would probably constitute a valuable piece of scholarship, such a study would have to rely on a single data point and little time variation. Fourth, focusing on lower levels of

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[18] Mayawati is the leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party and herself a member of the Scheduled Castes.

government allows me to examine the effect of exposure to common politicians, rather than the effect of exposure to the more exceptional politicians who manage to surmount party hurdles and mount expensive campaigns to get elected at a more prestigious level of government. While most *sarpanches* served as community leaders or informal "social workers" before they ran for their position, an overwhelming majority of the officials on which this study focuses had until then no prior proper experience in office, and continued to work their land (Chapter 3).

Last, but not least, focusing on reservations for the position of *sarpanch* allows me to credibly estimate the *causal* impact of descriptive representation. Concentrating on these quotas allows me to circumvent two methodological issues. The first is reverse causality. In a system in which political competition is open to all, members of a disadvantaged group are more likely to get elected where prejudice against their group is lower and where they are more assertive. Accordingly, estimates of the effect of exposure to representatives from these groups are likely to be biased – a fact often overlooked in works focusing on African-American Representatives in the US Congress.[19] Since villages in which "minority representation" occurred in Rajasthan were not chosen on the basis of their inhabitants' level of prejudice or assertiveness, this study is better able to circumvent this issue (Chapter 5). Second, focusing on reservations for the office of *sarpanch* also allows me to avoid "selection effects." Under open electoral competition, members of disadvantaged groups only tend to get elected in districts and cities in which the group's share of the population is relatively high. Due to this fact, findings on the impact of descriptive representation may only apply to a very specific set of locations. In Rajasthan, as in other Indian states (Dunning and Nilekani 2013), district-level authorities have since the early 1990s reserved a fixed number of *sarpanch* positions within each district subdivision (*panchayat samiti*) prior to each election. In order to ensure that there would be rotation across villages in the implementation of reservation, electoral officers have used a simple list ranking GPs according to the relative size of their SC population. Since 1995 (the date of the first election in Rajasthan), they have progressed down that list, reserving GPs with increasingly small SC populations at each successive electoral period. Since the likelihood of a village being assigned to reservation for members of the Scheduled Castes depends on this simple demographic principle (further described in Chapters 3 and 5), this system provides

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[19] Hajnal (2001, 2005) uses time series data, which allows the author to circumvent this limitation and show the evolution over time of whites' racial attitudes as a function of exposure to an African-American official. Works based on cross-sectional surveys are, on the other hand, subject to this criticism.

me with the conditions for a natural experiment on a subset of the data. Insofar as "reserved GPs" with the smallest relative SC population are similar to "unreserved GPs" with the largest SC population, sampling GPs directly around this discontinuity allows me to credibly infer the *causal* impact of reservation.

1.5 Research Design

Relying on this case, this book *develops*, and later *tests*, the aforementioned argument. In the first part of this book, I follow an inductive and field-driven approach in order to make fine-grained observations on the psychology of descriptive representation. This allows me to *develop* my argument. In the second part of the book, I rely on quantitative methods to evaluate the causal effect of descriptive representation and propose credible *tests* of this argument.

1.5.1 Theory-Building

In order to define and describe the psychological changes that occur once members of the Scheduled Castes attain these political offices, I first engaged in qualitative work in a small set of villages.[20] During repeated visits to these villages over the course of nine months, my collaborators[21] and I organized discussions with villagers from all caste groups and with local officials. Besides these improvised focus groups, we also recorded observations about these officials' functions, about their movements within and outside the village, and about villagers' reactions to their actions. Most of what I describe in the first part of this book comes from these visits, and from the ensuing conversations I had about them with my collaborators. This experience provides the richly layered context to this study, as well as enables me to hypothesize about the specific psychological mechanisms through which we might expect reservation for a member of the Scheduled Castes to impact village life and discrimination-inducing beliefs.

Relying on such a field-driven approach was necessary for at least one reason: it would have been impossible to chart the various psychological mechanisms that may improve the nature of intergroup relations without immersive fieldwork. Accordingly, there was a clear comparative advantage to focusing on a single institution in a single

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[20] This first phase of my work is described in Appendix A.
[21] Shankare Gowda, to whom I simply refer as Gowda in the following chapters, accompanied me throughout 2009; Gopal Singh Rathore (i.e., Gopal) accompanied me in 2011–2012.

state. Since extremely few scholars have explored this question before me, the theoretical contribution of this book lies in its development of a typology of mechanisms more nuanced than has so far been the case. Stereotypes differ from perceived norms, which themselves differ from more intuitive or emotional reactions. Immersive fieldwork and lengthy observations were crucial to the development of this nuanced typology of psychological mechanisms.

1.5.2   Theory-Testing: The Causal Impact of Descriptive Representation

While I focus on a single case and on immersive work in a small number of villages to *develop* my argument, the second part of the book (Chapters 5 to 8) relies on quantitative methods in order to *measure* the psychological effects of descriptive representation and *test* my argument on a larger sample. To do this, the book relies on two original Large-N surveys (one of members of the Scheduled Castes, one of members of dominant castes) conducted across sixty-four reserved and unreserved villages across the state of Rajasthan. Since the likelihood of a village being assigned to reservation for members of the Scheduled Castes depends on a simple and predictable demographic principle, this reservation system provides me with the conditions for a natural experiment on a subset of the data. Comparing the "reserved GPs" with the smallest relative SC population to the "unreserved GPs" with the largest SC population, I can credibly infer the causal impact of reservation on untouchability-related beliefs and behaviors.[22]

In order to address some of the usual limitations of survey methodology and adapt it to the needs of rural India, beliefs and behavioral intentions were measured using an innovative "MP3/ASAQ" survey methodology in which respondents were asked to react privately to pre-recorded statements made by "villagers like [them]." Importantly, these statements were culturally relevant statements that had been heard during the qualitative phase of my work, and later reenacted by actors speaking the dialect of each of the districts that the survey team visited. By ensuring both privacy and confidentiality, this innovative methodology significantly increased the number of sensitive items that respondents admitted to and allowed me to measure truly *individual-level* reactions to this access to political power. This in turn allowed me to provide more

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[22] While this strategy is detailed at length in Chapter 5, a few caveats about this design should already be emphasized here. Selecting around the threshold for reservation first implies that I sample villages based on a restricted sampling frame. Second, it implies that I can only sample villages with one type of ethnic demography, i.e., villages that counted an average of 18% of members of the Scheduled Castes.

precise estimates of the various beliefs impacted by descriptive representation, and hence to generate credible and precise estimates of its psychological effect.

Drawing on these two self-administered surveys, the empirical section of the book (Chapters 5 to 8) presents a series of important empirical findings about the psychological repercussions of descriptive representation. The first one is that the experience of political power by a member of a disadvantaged group – such as the Scheduled Castes – has psychological consequences for villagers from his group (here, members of the Scheduled Castes) *and* for villagers from dominant groups. As suggested earlier, the psychological effect of descriptive representation is, however, specific and limited. Stereotypes, self-stereotypes, and prejudice remain as negative among villagers that experienced reservation as among those that did not. This is true of both sets of villagers, which implies that reservation does not activate the "taste" mechanism. On the other hand, both types of villagers that live in a reserved village perceive that members of dominant groups are more accepting and that hostile behaviors against members of the Scheduled Castes are more likely to be legally sanctioned. This, by contrast, indicates that reservation activates the "strategy mechanism."

The second major finding is that these strategic adaptations fueled by changes in *perceived norms of interaction* – however limited and partial they might be – matter for everyday interpersonal behaviors between members of the Scheduled Castes and others. Measuring villagers' behavioral intentions relevant to a number of concrete day-to-day interactions, I show that villagers of dominant groups who have experienced reservation are less hostile and more accepting than similar villagers who have not. Similarly, I show that villagers from the Scheduled Castes who have experienced reservation are more assertive and less deferential in their everyday relations with others than similar villagers who have not experienced reservation. As might be expected, given that they stem from a change in "strategy" rather than in "taste," these changes are especially likely to take place in the public realm. In interactions taking place away from the public eye, changes are less significant. These are, nonetheless, real changes, and ones that members of the Scheduled Castes undoubtedly stand to benefit from.

Besides, while the main focus of this book is on the psychological mechanisms that underpin intergroup relations, I also evaluate the more material and tangible effects of reservation. Relying on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, I show that the changes in beliefs described earlier stem from concrete changes in patterns of inter-caste contact, as self-reported by both sets of villagers. On the other hand, my

analysis of material effects shows them to be, on average, disappointing. While *some* members of the Scheduled Castes – namely members of the village council head's own subcaste – appear to benefit materially from the access of a member of the group to representation, most do not. Furthermore, these "material" effects appear to be conditional on the ability and the background of SC *sarpanches*; because many SC *sarpanches* do not manage to translate their de jure powers into de facto influence on policy, these effects are extremely heterogeneous across locations. Contrary to what most earlier findings have suggested, but coherent with some of the most recent works on the question (Dunning and Nilekani 2013, Jensenius 2015, Jensenius forthcoming), these findings thus suggest that descriptive representation constitutes a limited and uncertain device in order to redistribute resources to members of disadvantaged groups.

1.6   Limitations and External Validity

While this research design presents a number of comparative advantages – a greater attention to subtle psychological nuances and to causality – it inevitably also comes with some limitations.

A number of limitations come from the relatively narrow geographical focus required by this research design. Rajasthan differs from other Indian states on several dimensions that may be relevant to the quality of intergroup relations. It is, first, regularly portrayed as one of the most retrograde states in the country in terms of untouchability. National-level samples regularly suggest that the state is one of the most "casteist" states among the fifteen major Indian states. Insofar as this overall conservatism might influence the ability of mentalities to change, we might expect descriptive representation to have a different effect in more tolerant social contexts. Second, a number of characteristics of the Indian caste system set the context of intergroup relations in rural Rajasthan apart from other multiethnic contexts, both within and outside of India. For one, Rajasthani villages – like most Indian villages – tend to be fragmented along ethnic lines, and tend to include a large number of politically relevant groups. As a result, each of these groups, organized on the basis of *jati* (i.e., subcaste), remains small. There are several important consequences of this fragmentation. First, members of the Scheduled Castes tend to share a village (and its institutions) with members of "dominant" castes, rather than be completely segregated. As described in greater details in Chapter 2, the nature of untouchability is such that it prohibits contact with members of the SCs at the same time as it

paradoxically relies on them for a number of social functions. Both historically and in the present, there is thus a great deal of contact between members of the Scheduled Castes and others, in spite of persistent discrimination (Shah et al. 2006) and frequent humiliation (Guru 2009) when this contact takes place. Second, the small size of subcastes implies that many groups exist, both among the Scheduled Castes and in the non-SC category. This in turn implies that the interethnic coalitions that are the bases of local politics throughout rural India (Chapter 3) include a *multitude* of groups in Rajasthan. Both the fragmented nature of the caste system and the fact that members of the SCs share institutions and territories with members of dominant groups thus differentiate the context of this study from other potential contexts. Relatedly, the size of the disadvantaged group on which this book focuses differentiates this study from other potential studies on the same question. The median percentage of members of the SCs in villages of Rajasthan was around 18 percent at the time this study was run (compared to a national average that was closer to 16 percent). Insofar as group-related beliefs are often hypothesized to be a function of demographic strength, the ability of descriptive representation to change attitudes may also be different in Rajasthan and in other demographic contexts.

Second, beyond the fact that Rajasthan differs from other contexts on several dimensions relevant to intergroup relations, it should be acknowledged that much of this study – very unwillingly – focuses on the effect of descriptive representation on *men* of that state. Conservative local norms and – in the case of the large-N surveys described later – logistical difficulties usually made it difficult for me and my collaborators to interview women, or at least to interview women in a sufficiently private and trustworthy environment. As a result, many of the examples used in this book describe gender-specific interpersonal situations, and almost all the quotes are drawn from discussions with men. Logically enough, this implies that most of my conclusions derive from discussions and interactions with the male population of that state. Even if I do not expect that descriptive representation would have had a radically different effect on women, and even if it is likely that men are more likely to be influencers or opinion-makers in conservative rural Rajasthan, this is an unfortunate aspect of my research design, and one that I lament. Women are affected by untouchability as much as men are. They also reproduce untouchability as much as men do. The gender-specific focus of this book does not mean to suggest that the reality is any different.

Third, it should be noted that the quantitative part of this study (that is to say, the tests of my argument) *by design* relies on psychological

measures: beliefs, behavioral intentions, and self-reported behaviors. Insofar as my main interest lies in the cognitive mechanisms that underpin unequal social relations, this seems justified. But given my interest in the behavioral repercussions of these cognitive changes, why not go *beyond* psychology and measure everyday discriminatory behaviors?

A combination of theoretical, practical, and ethical reasons explains this choice. Collecting systematic and, most importantly, *individual-level* field data on everyday discriminatory attitudes and behaviors would be next to impossible. For one, it is almost certain that any observation of these practices would change the behavior of the individuals observed, as a consequence of a type of Hawthorne effect.[23] Besides, the position into which collecting such data would place the researcher prompts important ethical concerns. In order to collect unbiased data, the researcher would likely have to appear to condone these practices – a step that neither myself nor other researchers working on untouchability would easily be ready to take.[24] Focusing on psychological measures, in other words, may constitute the single most credible way to generate any systematic *individual-level* data about the effect of access to political representation on day-to-day intergroup relations in rural India.[25]

Although my interest is in psychological mechanisms (and hence on individual-level measures), I might have chosen to rely on *aggregate* estimates of common discriminatory behaviors, which seem a more feasible alternative (Varshney 2002, Wilkinson 2004). Even this, however, would have been in practice very challenging, and likely to generate both low-quality and noisy estimates. First, there is no reliable authority collecting data on common discriminations, including in rural India. The day-to-day behaviors that are the focus of this study are very often not the subject of formal complaints. In spite of extremely repressive laws criminalizing untouchability (Chapter 2), villagers from the Scheduled Castes almost never file a complaint after having been denied entry into a public building or after having been served tea in a separate cup – two very common

[23] This problem might be circumvented if the researcher spends months with each individual and builds a long-term relationship with the potential discriminators she/he is willing to observe, but this would clearly not be feasible on a systematic or quantitative basis.

[24] In that regard, it is important to note that in their landmark study, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) are able to collect individual-level data on discriminatory behaviors only because they observe the consequence of discrimination (in their case, the absence of a call back) and not the discrimination itself (they themselves have no contact with the discriminators). It is difficult, however, to think of such a design – measuring the *consequences* of discrimination – in this case.

[25] Both Shah et al. (2006) and Macwan et al. (2010), the two most ambitious datasets about untouchability, collect *village-level* data on untouchability. As such they do not explore the psychological mechanisms that are the focus of this book.

examples of discrimination. Second, even if complaints were made, it is unlikely that I would be able to find a reliable record of those incidents. In the case of Rajasthan, neither official nor NGO sources *systematically* record the type of incidents in which this study is interested.[26]

1.7   Contribution to Debates about Quotas and Descriptive Representation

This book contributes to the literatures on quotas and descriptive representation in two important ways. The specific psychological mechanisms highlighted in this study first prompt us to reconsider the way in which policies to include members of excluded groups – and, more generally speaking, policies to improve behaviors toward members of stigmatized groups – can make a difference. While they may not improve individuals' "taste" for members of disadvantaged groups, they may nonetheless affect their behavior through other channels. Second, these findings suggest that some of the most important changes arising from a group's access to representation may derive from changes in the nature of interpersonal relations rather than from redistributive effects. Since descriptive representation constitutes a rare opportunity to increase contact between the members of the different groups, it can have an effect on the way members of different groups perceive one another and interact, especially if these policies of descriptive representation are implemented at the local level. This finding informs our understanding of the ways in which citizens from disadvantaged groups do in fact benefit from being represented by a coethnic. The following sections develop each of these points.

1.7.1   *Mechanisms of Social Change*

The most direct contribution of this book concerns the psychological mechanisms through which policies of descriptive representation may exercise a positive influence on interpersonal relations. Building on a number of important but relatively vague intuitions implying that individuals receive "psychic benefits" when they are represented by a coethnic (Tajfel and Turner 1979, Horowitz 1985), I make theoretical observations about the impact of descriptive representation on group-related beliefs and, further, on discriminatory behaviors. Upon distinguishing between several types of beliefs relevant to the quality of interpersonal

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[26] While some – as Rajasthan's Center for Dalit Rights – do, their records are unfortunately not entirely systematic, as I explain in Chapter 2.

relations, this study measures which of these beliefs are impacted by this experience.

My findings show that the improvement in interpersonal relations that may derive from a group's access to representation owes less to changing stereotypes and self-stereotypes than to changing perceptions of the social and legal norms of interaction between members of different ethnic groups. To the best of my knowledge, this represents the most systematic, detailed attempt at understanding the psychological consequences of policies that help members of disadvantaged and underrepresented ethnic groups[27] – such as the Scheduled Castes – access political office.

Beyond descriptive representation, these results inform theoretical debates on strategies to reduce stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. In line with Allport's conclusion (Allport 1954) and a host of more recent studies (meta-analyzed in Talaska, Fiske, and Chaiken 2008), these results confirm that stereotypes of stigmatized groups do not often correlate with indices of discriminatory behaviors toward members of these groups. In line with a host of other works (Blanchard et al 1994; Paluck 2009a; Paluck and Sheperd 2012, Tankard and Paluck 2016), these results suggest that changes in perceived social norms may be a much more likely avenue through which attitudes and behaviors may change. While it is difficult to change stereotypes, it is comparatively easy to change perceived norms. In this light, institutional policies that can change perceptions of norms of intergroup interaction may be seen as particularly valuable.

1.7.2   Rethinking the Value of Descriptive Representation

Wherever ethnic differences are politically salient, a coethnic's accession to political office is often welcomed as the promise of future benefits (Posner 2005, Chandra 2004). Because of this widespread presumption of ethnic favoritism, the ethnic makeup of political personnel tends to be the object of intense scrutiny, and the relative underrepresentation of certain groups is perceived as problematic. As a result, nearly all multiethnic democracies have debated the need for reforms to help members of disadvantaged and underrepresented ethnic groups – such as the Scheduled Castes – gain access to political office. Access to political representation for members of disadvantaged groups is a recurrent theme of public debates in democracies as different as France, the United

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[27] Ethnicity is used here and throughout the book as an all-encompassing term referring to social groups differentiated by kinship, tribe, skin, color, religion, caste, language, race, and other markers of communal identity.

Kingdom, Thailand, and Kenya. At least 40 multiethnic countries have also acted on this presumption, and more than 100 have implemented some form of gender quotas (Htun 2004, Krook and O'Brien 2010). Such institutional arrangements to ensure group representation have taken a variety of forms. In the wake of the passage of the Voting Rights Act in the United States in 1965, race-conscious redistricting ensured that the territorial concentration of African Americans would translate into seats and political offices (Tate 2003). In India, Belgium, Switzerland, Venezuela, and a number of other democracies (Htun 2004, Krook and O'Brien 2010), a different institutional mechanism has been implemented, with comparable results. By restricting eligibility for candidacy to members of certain groups in a fraction of the seats, political "reservations" in these countries have allowed members of disadvantaged groups to play a role in politics that they may never have played otherwise (Krook and Zetterberg 2014). Quotas on party lists, implemented in dozens of countries to ensure gender-based descriptive representation (and in at least one country, Peru, for an ethnic minority), constitute yet another institutional solution. Efforts to ensure descriptive representation have thus spread across a variety of contexts and taken a variety of forms. Yet the premise they rest on – that members of disadvantaged groups benefit from having "one of their own" in public office – remains surprisingly unspecific, and often untested (Krook and Zetterberg 2014).

How, if at all, have members of disadvantaged groups been shown to benefit from these institutional efforts? Over the last decade, an impressive body of empirical literature focused on the contemporary United States and India has explored the consequences of "descriptive representation" for gender, ethnic, and "minority" groups. In stark contrast with pessimistic findings about power transitions between groups in other contexts, these authors have highlighted a surprising number of ways in which members from disadvantaged groups benefit from having "one of their own" in public office: public budgets and public goods provision may better reflect their needs (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004, Duflo 2005; Sass and Mehay 2003) or be increased (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004); the likelihood that group members receive private benefits from public offices may be increased (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004, Pande 2003, Besley et al 2004, Besley et al. 2005); levels of poverty may decrease (Chin and Prakash 2011); political participation may be boosted (Gay 2001); trust in political institutions may be increased (Gay 2002, Marschall and Shah 2007); pride and self-respect may be enhanced (Marschall and Ruhil 2007, Tate 2003, Fenno 2003); solidarity among members of the newly

represented category may increase (Dunning 2010); discrimination against future cohorts of political candidates from that group may be lessened (Hajnal 2001, Hajnal 2005, Bhavnani 2009, Beaman et al 2009); and crimes against members of the newly represented group may be better reported (Iyer et al. 2011).

This empirical literature has thus suggested the existence of at least four potential types of benefits of descriptive representation. The literature has largely focused on whether members of disadvantaged groups derive *material* benefits from the accession of one of their own to a political office, either in the form of public goods or in the form of targeted private benefits. Second, this literature has suggested that they may derive *psychological/emotional* benefits from this political inclusion, insofar as their pride, self-esteem, or trust may be reinforced by this symbolic achievement. Third, this literature has suggested that there may be *electoral* benefits from this access to representation, as the electability of group members or the likelihood that candidates from the group be part of a winning coalition may be increased. Fourth and finally, authors have argued that there may be gains in *linkage* between these groups and state institutions – that is, the group's access to state officials that once discriminated against them may be improved as a result of the access of a few of its members to political office.

This book suggests the existence of an *additional* and even more important form of benefit. Building on the intuitions of India scholars that the lower castes' access to public offices triggered "symbolic social change" in inter-caste relations (Pai 2002, Weiner 2001, Jaffrelot 2003, Krishna 2003, Jeffrey et al. 2008), and in line with recent contributions about the transformative impact of gender quotas in the country (Bhavnani 2009, Beaman et al. 2009, Iyer et al. 2011), the chapters that follow provide innovative quantitative evidence suggesting that descriptive representation matters for its impact on day-to-day intergroup relations. While the literature has until now largely focused on redistributive effects, this suggests that important attitudinal and interpersonal benefits may constitute a better justification for these policies. Insofar as I am providing evidence of the attitudinal and behavioral effects of "reservation," I am also contributing to the more specific Indian debate over the social value of "reservation policies" in place since the 1950s at many levels of the Indian state. Their effect on long-term socioeconomic outcomes has often been considered beneficial but disappointing (Chin and Prakash 2011). More recent work suggests that these political reservations had an even more limited effect, in part due to their original design (Jensenius forthcoming; see also Galanter 1984 on this), My results suggest that these policies

might generate very real benefits for members of the groups they target, but that these benefits have until now remained unacknowledged and undetected, possibly because they have proven harder to detect.

Furthermore, my analyses suggest that the value of descriptive representation lies as much in this impact on day-to-day interpersonal relations as in these other outcomes. Potential material benefits of descriptive representation are conditional on a host of political, demographic, and institutional factors (Chapter 4). In practice, this means that they are often limited, if they exist at all. By contrast, the psychological effects I detect are much more independent from these contextual factors. Altogether, these conclusions should lead us to cast the normative justification for quotas, reservations, and other policies of descriptive representation in different terms. Simply put, the justification for policies of inclusion – in politics and elsewhere – lies as much in their ability to trigger subtle but potentially far-reaching changes in how members of the newly represented groups are regarded and treated on a daily basis as in their ability to generate redistributive and material effects. In India as elsewhere, defending the rationale for such quotas by invoking their ability to redistribute resources would likely be counterproductive, insofar as the redistribution that derives from these quotas is often likely to be limited.

1.8   Outline

The next two chapters describe the context of this study and set the stage for the theoretical and empirical contributions made in the rest of the book. In Chapter 2, I explore the nature of relations between members of the Scheduled Castes and others. I provide a panoramic view of the socioeconomic situation of members of these castes seventy years into the life of democratic and independent India. How has this situation evolved? What were the areas that needed improvement? What progress remains to be made in order for members of these once "untouchable" castes to be treated equally? Answering these questions enables me to illustrate the multidimensional nature of untouchability and to theorize about its evolution and current state in rural India. While most of the book focuses on the effect of a single variable – the caste identity of local political representatives – on untouchability-related beliefs and behaviors, this chapter describes the various social and economic forces that have presumably had an impact on untouchability and on its evolution over the years. I make two claims in this regard. The first one is that the sites in which untouchability tends to be practiced have remained strikingly similar throughout recent and less recent history, despite major political,

legal, and sociological trends undermining the legitimacy of these prac-
tices. It is striking to note that "temple entry" and the sharing of food
with members of the Scheduled Castes have always been, and remain,
behaviors strongly affected by untouchability. It is difficult to think of
another instance of group discrimination in which the sites of discrimi-
nation have evolved as little as they have in the context of untouchability.
While this persistence bears witness to the stickiness of untouchability-
related practices, my second claim nuances this statement. Even if the
sites of untouchability have remained the same, I suggest that these prac-
tices have also evolved. Many practices have disappeared, and new prac-
tices have appeared. In the meantime, the reasons behind the persistence
of discriminations toward members of the Scheduled Castes may have
changed.

While Chapter 2 provides a description of the social context of this
study, Chapter 3 offers an additional perspective on the main explana-
tory variable of the book. Because the book explores the impact of
local political representatives from a disadvantaged group, this chapter
documents these officials' incentives, powers, functions, and connec-
tions. Given the book's focus on the key position of *sarpanch* (village
council president), this chapter addresses a number of simple but cru-
cial (and until now, unaddressed) questions about the 240,000 or so
individuals elected to comparable positions throughout India.[28] Who
are *sarpanches* and what is their sociopolitical background? How and
why does one become a *sarpanch* in today's India? What are *sarpanches*'
incentives before and after reaching office? What do they concretely do
on a daily basis? Finally, what are their relationships with villagers and
with other local authorities? I answer these questions by drawing on
ethnographic observations and interviews carried out in a small num-
ber of villages of Rajasthan since 2009. Repeated visits and discussions
in a limited number of villages allow me to provide a detailed and
original account of the specific role that *sarpanches* play in village life.
A number of critical observations regarding the characteristics and the
activities of *sarpanches* emerge from this field research. First, I show
that these officials are, in socioeconomic terms, relatively common
men. Second, I show that being elected as *sarpanch* is the outcome
of an arduous, intense, and surprisingly competitive process that sees
vying candidates create complex coalitions that transcend otherwise
rigid caste lines. Third, in spite of the similarity of the selection process
across villages, the influence of *sarpanches* on village life depends on

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[28] While village council heads are called "*sarpanches*" in the state of Rajasthan, a variety of
terms are used to refer to them in the rest of the country.

their social statuses before their election. While this may suggest that *sarpanches* from low-status groups – such as the Scheduled Castes – may not have much influence, my fourth observation is that even comparatively "weak" *sarpanches* play an important role in village life. My fifth observation relates to the modal motivations of those individuals that become *sarpanches*. I suggest that serving as sarpanch is primarily a path to upward social mobility for that individual and his immediate family.

Chapter 4 theorizes about the ways in which a group's access to descriptive representation should be expected to affect the psychology of intergroup relations. To do this, it first reviews existing theories on the effect of a group's access to representation on intergroup relations in political science, sociology, and social psychology. In the first section of the chapter, I show that contradictory theories coexist in the literatures on minority representation and group inclusion, with some authors insisting that minority representation leads to decreased stereotypes and prejudice while others warn that it might instead trigger a "backlash." The second part of the chapter reacts to this debate. Reviewing a wide array of works on intergroup relations, redistributive politics, and belief change, I argue that both "backlash effects" and positives changes in stereotypes are both conditional on a number of events, and that none of these two outcomes is in fact a likely consequence of such policies. I, however, do not argue that a disadvantaged group's access to political representation should remain inconsequential, as there are other, so far under-theorized consequences of group inclusion. The third part of the chapter draws on the case of the Scheduled Castes in rural India – and on my own qualitative work in Rajasthan – in order to explore these *other* psychological effects. Building inductively from this case, the fourth section details the aforementioned argument and lays out a number of testable hypotheses.

The rest of the book tests this argument. Chapter 5 details the quantitative research design developed in order to do so, describing the "natural experiment" at the core of my methodology and the innovative MP3/ASAQ survey methodology that was used throughout this study. Making use of various bodies of data, Chapter 6 explores the tangible consequences of reservation. In this chapter, I first establish the absence of a strong overall impact of reservations among members of the Scheduled Castes: results suggest that gains can be substantial among members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste, but that they are, on average, null for all members of the other castes among the Scheduled Castes. Second, I use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to show that reservation increases inter-caste contact.

Making use of responses to the two audio surveys developed for this project, Chapter 7 presents a series of tests exploring villagers' psychological reactions to exposure to a SC sarpanch. This chapter shows that the experience of political power by a member of the Scheduled Castes bears psychological consequences among villagers from his group (the Scheduled Castes) as well as villagers from dominant groups. Stereotypes and self-stereotypes remain as negative among villagers who experienced an ethnic quota as among those who did not. On the other hand, villagers who lived in a reserved village at the time the study was conducted perceive members of dominant groups to be more accepting, and they perceive that hostile behaviors against members of the Scheduled Castes are more likely to be penalized.

Building on the preceding chapter, Chapter 8 explores the potential behavioral consequences of the psychological changes detected in Chapter 7. Can changes in beliefs alter the nature of day-to-day interpersonal relations traditionally grounded in the practice of untouchability? To answer this question, Chapter 8 explores villagers' "behavioral intentions" with respect to a series of very common situations involving contact with members of the other group (members of the Scheduled Castes for non-SC villagers and non-SC villagers for members of the Scheduled Castes). In this section, I show that villagers of dominant groups who have experienced reservation are less hostile and more accepting than similar villagers who have not, while villagers from the Scheduled Castes who have experienced reservation are more assertive and less deferential in their everyday relations with others as compared to similar villagers who have not experienced reservation. Taken together with findings from the previous chapter, these findings suggest that efforts to enhance the political representation of disadvantaged groups matter for intergroup relations not because they change the "taste" for members of those groups, but because they signal that members of disadvantaged groups ought not to be treated with hostility.

In Chapter 9, I discuss the external validity of these findings, and their implications for institutional efforts to increase descriptive representation, both within and outside of India.

2   Untouchability in Rural India: Persistence and Evolution

On one morning in June 2009, on the journey back from Goa to his home village in the district of Bikaner (Rajasthan), Sandeep Meghwal[1] was suddenly confronted with a reality he had not been made to face in some time. A model student, twenty-five-year old Sandeep had become an "assistant junior manager" at a hotel in Goa thanks to hard work and several scholarships. He had escaped the poverty his two older brothers and parents still lived in, given the relatively small parcel of land that they commonly owned. That morning, as he woke up from a long night on the bus, Sandeep ordered tea at a roadside *dhaba* (restaurant). Unlike the other *dhabas* at which the bus had stopped on its way north, here tea was not dispensed in one of the tiny disposable plastic cups that have been increasingly replacing reusable receptacles in tea stalls throughout India. Instead, it came in a glass. As the shop owner handed him his tea, he asked Sandeep what his caste was. As soon as he answered the question ("I am a Meghwal"), the owner calmly informed him that he needed to wash his own glass after he drank his tea. Though nothing else was said, the reason for this injunction was clear to Sandeep, and would have been clear to any bystander within hearing range. Since he was a member of a caste once considered "untouchable," neither the owner of the shop nor his employee in charge of washing glasses wanted to be in direct contact with a glass he had used. Angry but isolated ("no other passenger had been asked to wash their glass"), Sandeep drank his tea, washed his glass, and got back on the bus. Although Sandeep's resentment was palpable when he told this story months later, no fight broke out and no one was hurt that morning.

Although they rarely make newspaper headlines,[2] such instances of everyday discrimination remain remarkably common throughout *most* of rural India. While observers of caste in India are optimistic about the fact

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[1] The first name was changed. From a private interview with the author, September 5, 2009.

[2] Though exceptions exist, as in this article: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-18394914.

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that caste is changing (Gupta 2004, Deliege 2010) or that its importance has been declining (Shah 2012), rural India remains the theater of scores of instances discrimination and humiliation against members of the erstwhile "untouchable" castes. This stubborn persistence of discriminatory practices despite extensive political, social, and legal changes is in and of itself remarkable.

These multiple instances of discrimination affect members of hundreds of subcastes (*jatis*) scattered across most of the Indian territory. As of the 2011 census, the category "Scheduled Caste" encompassed 16.6 percent of the Indian population (17.8 percent of the population of Rajasthan), representing a total population of more than 201 million, present in a majority of the villages of almost all Indian states.[3] Most commonly referred to as *Dalits* – meaning broken or downtrodden – in contemporary India,[4] members of these subcastes are brought together by a common historical inheritance, that of having been treated and referred to as "untouchables"[5] within the distinctively Indian caste system.

These everyday discrimination and humiliation affecting members of the Scheduled Castes constitute the social backdrop of this study. In the chapters that follow, my main objective is to explore the extent to which the access of a few members of the SCs to local-level elected positions changes these behaviors as well as the beliefs that underpin them. In this chapter, my focus is less on the psychology that supports these instances

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[3] Three important facts about the repartition of this population over the Indian territory qualify this impressive number of 201 million. First, the SC population has remained disproportionately rural: more than three-quarters of SCs live in rural areas. In addition, in most states, the population of these castes remains surprisingly scattered across villages. In the state of Rajasthan, for instance, my rudimentary estimations (based on ten districts) suggest that less than 15% of all villages had an SC population exceeding 25%. Third, most villages count multiple subcastes (Jatis) falling under the general legal category SC, hence adding more heterogeneity to what is too often described – including in this volume – as a monolithic group.

[4] See my justification for the use of the term "Scheduled Castes" throughout this book in the Note on Terminology in the front matter. While a number of additional denominations have historically been used to refer to "outcastes" or "untouchables" (as detailed in Shah et al. 2006, p. 22), the locutions "Dalit" or "Scheduled Castes" (in some cases popularly abbreviated as "SC") are today the main appellation for the group of subcastes that once fell under these derogatory categorizations. In addition, note that in some cases, or in some social situations, members of the Scheduled Castes are more likely to be designated by their subcaste (Jati) than by these broader terms.

[5] While my explanations occasionally require me to use openly or indirectly derogatory terms such as "lower caste," "upper caste," or "untouchable," it should be mentioned that my use of these terms does not entail any sort of endorsement of the claims inherent in these labels. Hence my systematic recourse to quotation marks while using these terms. By contrast, I deliberately do not place quotes around the word "untouchability," which refers not to individuals but to a social phenomenon.

of discrimination than on these discriminatory and hostile practices themselves. This chapter addresses a number of questions regarding these practices – collectively referred to as untouchability – in rural India. How can untouchability be defined and what are the practices associated with it in contemporary rural India? Why do untouchability-related behaviors persist? What explains the coexistence of an extensive system of caste-based quotas ("reservations") providing members of the Scheduled Castes with jobs and educational opportunities and the persistent discriminations and acts of violence against them? In order to answer these questions, the pages that follow draw from a variety of sources: press articles, large-N surveys, NGO reports, as well as a variety of historical materials providing descriptions of relations between the "untouchables" and others at various historical periods. In the final section of this chapter, I also rely on a number of observations and interviews made since 2009 in rural Rajasthan to speculate about the potential motivations of perpetrators.

While this chapter's primary objective is to describe the uniquely multidimensional nature of untouchability, it also theorizes about its evolution. I make two claims about its evolution over time. In line with recent takes on the question (Gupta 2005, Shah et al. 2006, Deliege 2010), I first show that there are striking similarities throughout recent and less recent history in some of the *sites* in which core untouchability-related practices occur, despite major political, legal, and sociological trends undermining the legitimacy of these practices. The fact that "temple entry" or the sharing of food with members of the Scheduled Castes have long been, and often remain, sites of untouchability is striking. It is difficult to think of another instance of group discrimination in which the sites in which discriminatory practices take place have evolved as slowly as they have in the context of untouchability.

While the persistence of some of the oldest untouchability-related practices bears witness to the stickiness of untouchability, I argue that untouchability has nonetheless changed. First, even if many extreme practices persist, *some* extreme and less extreme practices have disappeared or are progressively disappearing. Second, a number of new practices may have appeared, though gaps in data do not allow us to make this point with certainty. Collective violence against members of the Scheduled Castes may be a particularly troubling example of these new developments. While acts of premeditated collective violence have remained rare in comparison with the multiple, day-to-day instances of routine discrimination against members of the Scheduled Castes, these acts signal important changes between the former "untouchables" and

others. Third, in relation to this, I follow Deliege (2010) in arguing that the motivations behind the persistence of discrimination toward members of the Scheduled Castes have changed, moving away from ritual motivations.

2.1   The Persistence of Untouchability in Rural India

In this section, I define untouchability and highlight its persistence. What is untouchability? What are its concrete, visible, measured manifestations today? To what extent do these behaviors differ from behaviors observed a few decades ago?

2.1.1   *Defining Untouchability*

Besides the former "untouchables," India counts a diversity of disadvantaged groups. "Tribals," "members of "backward castes," and other groups within or outside of the caste system have received unenviable treatments both before and after independence. In what sense has the plight of members of the SCs been different from that of other marginalized or low-status groups?

Answering this question requires a small detour and an explanation of the nature of the caste system, and of the position of members of the SCs within the caste system. While this vision is now contested (see Fuller 1996 for a review), the caste system has historically been seen as a fixed hierarchical structure in which groups have been strictly ranked according to Brahminical principles of purity and pollution (Dumont 1966). Following Dumont, indologists have long classified the Indian society into closed and hereditary groups ranked according to their respective social statuses, and whose reproduction was ensured by the strict prohibition of intermarriage. In this view, castes solely derived their status from their relative position in a hierarchical ranking based on traditional notions of purity (at the top) and pollution (at the bottom). At one extreme of this hierarchy is the Brahman (or the most pure), and at the other stands the "untouchables" (the most polluting). In the context of this hierarchy, the caste system associated each group with a ritual occupation, which implied that individuals born into a given caste were to serve the system by entering the profession associated with their caste. In sum, the guiding principles of the caste system according to this view were strict separation and strict hierarchy among groups. Besides, groups at the bottom were usually described as largely *acquiescent* of the hierarchy in this view. As such, lower castes

were seen as ideologically participating in upholding the system as a whole (Dumont 1966).

In line with the peculiarities of this supposed arrangement, the caste system was long described in purely idiosyncratic terms, as a rather unique instance of hierarchical organization derived from religious principles. This view has now been largely contested, however, as countless studies have over the past few decades suggested that the caste system is better understood as a horizontal collection of *identity* groups rather than as a pure *hierarchy* (Beteille 1991; see Gupta 2005 for a review on this point), or as a mainly central-peripheral organization reflecting inequalities of resources and power across groups (Raheja 1988). Anthropologists have pointed at numerous instances of political competition or socioeconomic rivalries between caste groups to counter the idea that caste groups have always been ordered in a seamless hierarchy. Similar points have been made to refute the idea that a coherent hierarchical structure has always existed (Beteille 1986, Gupta 2000, Dirks 2001), or to disprove the argument suggesting that lower castes did embrace the ritual principles of the system. Historians have at the same time increasingly insisted on the fact that contestations against the Brahminical hierarchical order have existed throughout the history of the caste system, both during the precolonial (Thapar 2000, Chattopadhyaya 1976, Dirks 2001) and colonial periods (Srinivas 1972, Dirks 2001). Together, these perspectives suggest that caste hierarchies may have existed, but that they have also been changing, local, fleeting, and contested throughout (Zelliot 1992), and more importantly for this study, that they continue to be until today (Gupta 2005).

In light of this debate, it is unclear that the current avatar of untouchability should be defined in relation to religious or ritual principles. Besides, since hierarchies have not always been clear or coherent throughout history, or across the Indian subcontinent, it may not be exactly right to argue that members of "untouchable" castes (also referred to as "Pariahs" or "Harijans" in older texts) always and everywhere were at the bottom of their local social order.

With these important notes of caution in mind, it remains that members of these castes have across history, *on average*, faced more discrimination than members of any other stigmatized lower castes, and that they have, *on average*, been assigned the most unenviable positions in these local social orders. In the Dumontian perspective, untouchability is recognized as the specific aspect of the caste system that concerns members of castes in the bottom section of the "purity and pollution" scale (Dumont 1966) – that is, members of castes that were in charge of

"unclean" occupations. In this view, the "untouchable" castes are located *outside* of that caste hierarchy, because their members were considered so "impure" that mere contact with them was deemed to severely "pollute" members of other castes, bringing punishment for the polluter and forcing the latter to perform purification rituals. As mentioned earlier, anthropologists and historians have now largely contested Dumont's emphasis on a symbiotic caste system and on these ritualized motivations. More generally speaking, there is no agreement as to the historical processes that led certain groups to be consigned to the bottom of this hierarchy.[6] As a result, Dumont's interpretation is now rarely accepted. Even if the motivations may not be purely ritual, there is agreement, nonetheless, on the fact that almost everywhere across the Indian subcontinent, some groups associated to a subset of specific occupations have been relegated to the margins of social life, and segregated, because of their inherited occupations.

In that sense, untouchability mainly refers to a principle of avoidance of contact with members of castes performing tasks deemed degrading, such as leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish and animal carcasses. It is, however, not exhaustively defined by this avoidance of contact. Contrary to the treatment reserved to members of other marginalized groups performing menial and potentially degrading tasks, members of the erstwhile "untouchable" castes were, and in many respects still are, also the targets of exploitation and of what may be called "demonstrative humiliations." The fact that untouchability codifies a punishment system and a system of humiliation (Guru 2009) to deal with potential norm deviations differentiates untouchability from other types of caste-based discrimination also common in South Asia (Gupta 2005).[7]

In line with this argument, most definitions thus suggest that three equally important dimensions of untouchability exist: physical exclusion, exploitation, and humiliation. The conjunction of these three characteristics is what arguably differentiates the "untouchables" from other stigmatized groups in South Asia, as summarized by Shah et al. (2006):

[6] See Deliege (1999) and Mendelsohn and Vicziany (1998) for excellent reviews of the competing "theories of caste" and the competing theoretical explanations of whom the groups considered as "untouchables" historically were. Broadly speaking, three types of explanations have been offered about the origins of untouchability: racial theories (broadly arguing that untouchables find their origin in racial differences between Aryan migrants and the original "darker" populations of the subcontinent), religious theories (insisting on various myths and principles of purity and pollution contained in some Hindu scriptures), and economic/Marxist theories (focusing on the need for a subordinate and exploited class within the system of agricultural production).

[7] In what follows, I distinguish day-to-day untouchability-related practices from comparatively rarer acts of retributive violence (often collective acts of violence) committed against those that refuse to reproduce the norm of discrimination entailed by untouchability.

Although other (i.e., "touchable") low castes are also subjected to subordination and exploitation to some degree, they do not suffer the extreme forms of exclusion reserved for "untouchables." Dalits experience forms of exclusion that are unique and not practiced against other groups – for instance, being prohibited from sharing drinking water sources or participating in collective religious worship, social ceremonies and festivals. At the same time, untouchability may also involve forced inclusion in a subordinated role, such as being compelled to play the drums at a religious event. The performance of publicly visible acts of (self-) humiliation and subordination is an important part of the practice of untouchability. Common instances include the imposition of gestures of deference (such as taking off headgear, carrying footwear in the hand, standing with bowed head, not wearing clean or 'bright' clothes, and so on) as well as everyday abuse and humiliation. Moreover, untouchability is almost always associated with economic exploitation of various kinds, most commonly through the imposition of forced, unpaid (or underpaid) labour, or the confiscation of property.

Although the Scheduled Castes rarely constitute a homogenous category (Desai 1976, Rao 2001) – they are divided into multiple subcastes (*jatis*), which do not always behave as objective allies[8] – these three broad principles define untouchability as a unique social reality affecting all of those castes once thought of as "unclean" due to their historical occupation. These three principles constitute the definition of untouchability on which I rely in this study, and as I build the instruments used in the quantitative section of the book (Chapter 5–8).

Since members of these castes are no longer bound to their traditional "unclean" caste occupations, to what extent does their relationship with dominant castes nevertheless remain defined by untouchability? As the second section of this chapter shows, untouchability has evolved over time. The situation of members of the Scheduled Castes has greatly improved overall since independence. Some practices have disappeared, the intensity of untouchability has generally waned, and there is greater variance across Indian states and across the urban/rural divide in the degree to which instances of discrimination are observed.

A raft of recent data, however, shows that untouchability-related practices nonetheless remain extremely common in rural India, *in spite of these improvements*.

2.1.2 Rural Untouchability in the Twenty-First Century: The Evidence

Prominent observers of caste (Teltumbde 2010, Vishvanathan 2005, Sainath 1996, Rao 2009) have often blamed the Indian media and the

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[8] Note, in addition, that the practice of untouchability also exists within the category "Scheduled Castes," among different SC subcastes (Shah et al. 2006, Macwan et al. 2010).

urban middle class for ignoring, or at least minimizing, the troubling persistence of untouchability-related discrimination in rural India. Whether or not these accusations are justified, it is difficult to refute that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the evidence was everywhere to be seen for those willing to see it. Different types of sources pointed to the same conclusion: *some* practices related to either of the three aforementioned dimensions of untouchability persist in *most* Indian villages.

Evidence for this persistence can be seen, first, in publicly available official statistics. For the 1990–2010 period, the statistics from the Ministry of Home Affairs indicate that an average of 30,000 crimes were recorded yearly under the two acts criminalizing most known discriminatory and hostile practices related to untouchability (The Anti-Untouchability Act of 1955 and the Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989, both described later in the chapter). While this estimate is in and of itself impressive, it is however widely acknowledged to be a poor approximation of the prevalence of untouchability, due to massive underreporting (Shah et al. 2006).[9]

More substantive evidence for this persistence was also all over the news stories published in the major Indian newspapers and magazines. According to a summary analysis of the English-speaking press, the number of stories covering untouchability-related incidents published in each of the three major dailies (the *Indian Express*, *The Hindu* and the *Times of India*) exceeded eighty stories a year in the 2005–2010 period. The numbers were proportionally even higher in some prominent weekly magazines such as *Tehelka*, which in the same five-year period reported about 120 different untouchability-related incidents. These reports present a partial and unsystematic view of the problem, and the process through which stories reach the headlines of these publications raises tough questions about the Indian media (Teltumbde 2010). This press coverage, however, gives a sense of the range of incidents labeled

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[9] This underreporting is due to one or both of two reasons. The first one is that police authorities refuse to record a complaint from a member of the Scheduled Castes, which reportedly remains frequently the case (Shah et al. 2006, Teltumbde 2010, Rao 2009). The second one is that members of the Scheduled Castes may themselves choose not to file a complaint. This could in turn be because they are unaware of the provisions of the act, because they fear that filing a complaint will have problematic repercussions on their daily life in the village, or because they perceive that either the police or the judicial system will not prosecute the case fairly and/or efficiently. As a result of this pattern of underreporting, there appears to be a selection in the crimes booked under these two acts, with the more "minor" everyday discriminations on which the empirical part of this study focuses being extremely rarely booked. Accordingly, the 30,000 annual cases described here should be considered as a subsample of the most "serious" crimes, i.e., mainly incidents involving physical coercion or violence (and likely also, incidents involving acts of discrimination or verbal violence).

as untouchability-related. These reports describe an array of practices that go far beyond ritual or religious distinction between groups, and include discriminatory practices in public as well as in private, interpersonal interactions.

Four main themes – presented here in decreasing order of frequency – are recurrent across this sample of more than 700 incidents labeled as untouchability-related in the 2005–2010 period.[10] A plurality of these stories (312), in keeping with the traditional notion of "pollution," focus on the multiple forms of segregation and physical exclusions that members of the Scheduled Castes experience in contemporary rural India. Stories about members of the Scheduled Castes being denied access to a temple, a private house, a well, a school playground, a burial ground, an "upper-caste" neighborhood, various stores, or public buildings appear, on average, twice a week across the three major English dailies. These incidents are observed throughout rural India, including in some of the states considered to be more advanced, such as Tamil Nadu.

A variant on these narratives of exclusion and segregation are incidents in which members of the Scheduled Castes are discriminated against or in which contact with them is avoided without them being altogether denied access or entry. "Tea stall" discrimination of the type described in the introduction to this chapter is, for instance, relatively frequent in these press accounts. Denials of services by a hairdresser or a Dhobi (washer of clothes) are equally frequently reported. The second most common form of untouchability reported in these stories relates to forms of public humiliation that members of the Scheduled Castes endure throughout rural India. A large number of articles (302) relate various practices designed to publicly display the dominance of "upper castes" or other locally dominant castes over members of the Scheduled Castes. These stories report local restrictions on cigarette smoking or use of motorized vehicles by members of the Scheduled Castes. Similarly, local bans on members of the Scheduled Castes' use of sunglasses or modern clothing (such as buttoned-up shirts) have, in recent years, frequently piqued the interest of the press. The third most common theme reported on in this sample relates to sexual harassment practices against Scheduled Castes women. More than a hundred articles denounce cases of rape, attempted rape, or simply the frequency of verbal abuse that Scheduled Castes women endure as they cross the path of "upper-caste" men. Last but not least, a fair number of stories relate incidents of "economic exploitation," in which one or several members of the Scheduled

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[10] These 736 incidents are all the incidents labeled as untouchability- or Dalit-related described in the articles of the *Times of India*, *The Hindu* and the *Indian Express* in the 2005–2010 period.

Castes are straightforwardly exploited, or not fairly compensated for a task they performed. Cases of unpaid or underpaid street sweepers are described in at least two dozen different stories from all over India. A comparable number of articles describe instances of land grabbing, in which members of the Scheduled Castes saw their land being encroached upon or confiscated by powerful local interests.

Beyond news stories, the evidence was clear for everyone to see in the many documentaries produced by activists. Of the proliferating video documentaries on the question, two somewhat well-publicized projects are worth citing. These projects have, for the first time, documented untouchability visually. The first project, by the NGO India Unheard,[11] is named "Article 17" after the article of the Indian constitution declaring an official ban on untouchability. Reminiscent of the tradition of "Dalit life narratives" (reviewed later in the chapter), this project presents a series of videos brought forth by volunteers and document concrete instances of discriminations against members of the Scheduled Castes. These discriminations occur in an extremely wide range of situations.[12] The untouchability-related behaviors captured in these videos echo the forms of untouchability described in the press sources analyzed earlier, documenting various instances of segregation, humiliation, and economic exploitation.[13]

The second project, "India Untouched: Stories of a People Apart," is a widely circulated long-form documentary made by Stalin K. (K, 2007). Dedicated to "all those who claim there is no casteism in India," the documentary presents evidence of various instances of discrimination gathered during four years across more than twenty Indian states. Building on earlier print-format efforts to expose untouchability-related practices (Narula 1999, Deliege 1999), the documentary arguably constitutes the most comprehensive effort thus far to provide visual evidence for the practices that have long been described by Dalit activists. Representative of a somewhat new trend in untouchability-related activism, the documentary – although strident in its criticism of Hinduism – does not shy away from exposing discrimination among various castes belonging to the Scheduled Castes (sometimes referred to as "horizontal

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[11] Accessible at www.videovolunteers.org/tag/article-17/

[12] Many of these several dozens of videos take place in the state of Rajasthan, the focus of the empirical part of this study.

[13] Two examples, also linked from the website of Tehelka, may be mentioned here. In a video titled "Untouchability in Roti," an "upper caste" household pays a sweeper woman for her services by standing at a distance and throwing *rotis* (flatbread) into the folds of her sari. In another video, also shot in Rajasthan and simply titled "Untouchability While Walking," the audience can see SC women made to remove their footwear as they pass by "upper caste" houses.

discrimination," as in Macwan et al. 2010), as well as among the three main religious minorities in India (Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs).[14]

These efforts to raise awareness about the persistence of untouchability cannot be disentangled from the efforts of the many Indian and Western nongovernmental organizations that have dedicated their efforts and money to the issue in the wake of the 2001 Durban World Conference on Racism. Although the conference primarily marked the failure of the Dalit movement to ensure that caste discrimination is officially acknowledged as a form of racism, it also marked the emergence of a more unified and energized movement, as exemplified by organizations such as the National Conference on Dalit Human Rights, the *All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch* (AIDMAM), the *Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andolan* (DAAA), The *National Confederation of Dalit Organizations* (NCDOR), *People's Watch*, *Navsarjan*, and in the state of Rajasthan, the *Center for Dalit Rights*.[15]

This new wave of NGO activism since 2001 has contributed to documenting the living conditions of members of the Scheduled Castes in rural India in at least two important ways. These NGOs have published reports aimed at presenting the situation to major international donors and at framing untouchability as a human rights issue to various UN-affiliated commissions. Such reports, although often unscientific in design and largely drawing from the press sources described earlier, have efficiently pinpointed some of the key areas in which legal progress urgently needs to be made: members of the Scheduled Castes' access to institutions, their ability to lodge formal complaints in the judicial system, and the discriminatory treatment by police officers if and when a complaint is formally lodged. Throughout these reports, both the court enforcement of existing anti-untouchability laws – under which individuals can technically be fined for having simply insulted a member of the SCs – and the sentencing of individuals actually found guilty of these offenses are described as inefficient. The reason is eloquently summed up by Teltumbde (2010):

A long chain of possible loopholes exists between crime and conviction: if a crime is committed, it may not be registered; if registered, it may not be taken judicial cognizance of; if taken cognizance of, it may not be investigated; if investigated, it may not be effectively prosecuted – and eventually all chance of punishment slip

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[14] This denunciation of untouchability as a pan-Indian issue, rather than as a specifically "Hindu" issue, may have helped the documentary being featured in the relatively consensual TV talk show of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan in the spring of 2012.

[15] To this already long list may be added western-based organizations such as Human Rights Watch, the International Dalit Solidarity Network, Christian Aid, ActionAid, The Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Asian Centre for Human Rights, among others.

away. The police investigation, the process of public prosecution and the eventual delivery of justice all represent nodes at which the crime can be "managed" and justice subverted. The poor rate of conviction in cases of atrocities testifies to this assurance.

In the state of Rajasthan, for instance, because of discrimination by police officers, or because of the fear of retribution, members of the Scheduled Castes still file extremely few complaints. As of 2009, the Center for Dalit Rights estimated that only about 5–10 percent of all untouchability-related offenses were the object of a formal complaint in the state of Rajasthan. When these complaints were – in exceptional circumstances – filed, the rates of conviction usually remained below 30 percent, as the contending parties usually came to a nonjudicial agreement, either of their own accord or as a result of intimidation and/or inducement.[16] In addition to these reports tailored to an international readership, the legal branches of these NGOs – including the Center for Dalit Rights in Rajasthan – have typically maintained archives on untouchability-related incidents in which their staff intervened. These detailed reports of "fact-finding missions" on the ground provide rich evidence of the prevalence of the practices described earlier in the chapter.[17]

In spite of the abundance of sources pointing at the persistence of major caste discrimination in rural India, what *systematic* information exists concerning the geographical scope and the prevalence of each of the aforementioned untouchability-related practices? Until a few years ago, very little could be said in response to this question. Two important studies that have measured the prevalence of a long list of untouchability-related behaviors over large samples of villages are, however, worth mentioning here.[18] The first one is the Navsarjan/

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[16] According to Asha Ram Gautam, a general secretary with the Center for Dalit Rights, from a private interview with the author on November 12, 2009.

[17] Unfortunately for researchers, these reports remain too often unsystematic and partial to be put to quantitative use. My own attempts at organizing a database of untouchability-related incidents in Tamil Nadu based on archives from People's Watch and in Rajasthan based on archives from the Center for Dalit Rights have proved extremely challenging due to gaps in data and to the selectivity of these reports.

[18] A third one (Kapur et al. 2010) is reviewed in the third section of this chapter. See also responses to the items on untouchability included in the 2011–2012 wave of the Indian Human Development Survey run by NCAER and researchers from the University of Maryland. The second questionnaire for the 2011–2012 wave asks a direct question of the respondent – "Do any members of your household practice untouchability?" – seeking a "yes" or "no" response. This question is followed by a second question for those who respond negatively to the first, "Would it be OK for someone from the low-caste community to enter your kitchen or use your utensils?" Based on a sample of 42,000 households, the survey found that 27% of respondents admitted to the practice of untouchability. The prevalence of untouchability was highest among Brahmins (52%), followed by Other Backward Castes or OBCs (33%), and non-Brahmin forward castes

RFK Center study (Macwan et al. 2010) on the prevalence of untouchability in the western state of Gujarat – incidentally, a state bordering Rajasthan and sometimes described as "comparable" to Rajasthan in terms of untouchability.[19] This study, the largest to date in terms of the number of villages considered (1,589 villages, from 20 different districts), provides unrivaled evidence to refute the idea that untouchability is now limited to the most underdeveloped corners of India. Designed and executed in collaboration with a team of US-based social scientists led by Christian Davenport, the study is remarkable for at least three reasons. The first one relates to the identification and classification of practices associated with untouchability. As the first step in constructing the study, the team identified the conditions or practices that are characteristically associated with caste discrimination. To develop a near-exhaustive list of such practices, the team relied on various sources, including ancient Hindu cultural and religious texts, domestic constitutional and legal documents, and ethnographic sources. The resulting list served as the basis for a census questionnaire administered to Dalits[20] throughout the state of Gujarat in all 1,589 villages in which Navsarjan had a presence on the ground. This effort resulted in the identification of ninety-eight distinct practices, which the research team in turn clustered into eight categories: (1) water for drinking, (2) food and beverage, (3) religion, (4) touch, (5) access to public facilities and institutions, (6) caste-based occupations, (7) prohibitions and social sanctions, and (8) private-sector discrimination.

Even if some of these practices are purely local, this list thus provides us with a relatively exhaustive list of untouchability-related practices on the ground. Besides, the study provides numerical estimates of the prevalence of each of the ninety-eight practices listed. Some practices are shown to be almost universal. The authors find, for instance, that the practice most prevalent across all villages examined (at a staggering 98 percent) is the failure to serve tea to Dalits in non-Dalit households. Two other food-related restrictions are practiced in almost all villages. In approximately 96 percent of the villages, Dalit laborers are served lunch separately from other workers, and any leftover food touched by them is thrown away, untouched by any non-Dalit. Further, in 94 percent of

(24%). About 15% of scheduled caste and 22% of scheduled tribe respondents also admitted to practicing untouchability. Broken up religion-wise, 30% of Hindus, 23% of Sikhs, 18% of Muslims, and 5% of Christians admitted to the practice (Sampath 2014)

[19] From a private interview with Asha Ram Gautam, a general secretary with the Center for Dalit Rights, on November 12, 2009.

[20] In keeping with the language of the report, I use the word "Dalit" interchangeably with the more neutral "member of the Scheduled Castes" while describing this study.

the villages, when the community is gathered, the Dalits are asked to sit in a separate location to eat and are instructed to bring their own plates. Discrimination related to "touch" – classified separately in the authors' typology – is also among the highest-scoring items. The survey finds that in approximately 96 percent of the cases, Dalits are strictly forbidden from entering the houses of "upper caste" families. More surprising practices related to touch also appear to be relatively prevalent. For example, "In 38% of villages, defilement is considered to have occurred when a Dalit accidentally touches a non-Dalit." Restrictions apply to both private and public spaces. In 87 percent of villages surveyed, Dalits were, for instance, not allowed to hire cooking pots for wedding ceremonies. Further, Dalits are not able to avail themselves of the services of local barbers (in 73 percent of villages), potters (in 61 percent of villages), and tailors (in 33 percent of villages). In 29 percent of villages, Dalits are even denied access to the drinking water supply, such as common wells or taps, and in 71 percent of the villages visited, there is no water tap in the Dalit area of the village.

Finally, this study is important because it devotes as much attention to horizontal (Dalit on Dalit) discrimination as it does to vertical (non-Dalit on Dalit) discrimination. While the few numbers presented in the preceding paragraph concern vertical discrimination, the authors describe patterns of horizontal discrimination and provide estimates for its prevalence, suggesting that the problem may be even more complex than what earlier analyses of untouchability had suggested.[21]

The second of these quantitative studies, more ambitious in its geographical scope, draws from a representative sample of 565 randomly selected villages across eleven major Indian states. Based on participatory rural appraisals, the "Action Aid study" (the basis for the breakthrough volume by Shah et al. 2006) provides insights into the nature of discrimination and the widespread prevalence of untouchability-related behaviors in public life as well as in more subtle, private, and interpersonal interactions. As in Macwan et al. (2010), the authors build a similar list of common practices and measure their prevalence *at the village level*.[22] Overall, their results suggest that untouchability is most prevalent in the "interpersonal" and "cultural-religious" spheres. Generally

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[21] While this study concentrates on the effect of access to political power by a member of the Scheduled Castes on "vertical" (non-Dalit on Dalit) discrimination, further studies should explore its impact on "horizontal" discrimination. Dunning (2010) implies that we should observe effects on horizontal discrimination as well.

[22] In that sense, both studies differ from my own efforts in the quantitative part of this volume. Contrary to these two studies, I focus on the psychology of individuals and hence attempt to measure untouchability at the individual level.

speaking, their estimates provide another sobering indication of the resil-
ience of untouchability-related practices across rural India.[23] According
to the authors, members of the Scheduled Castes could not enter others'
homes, and they could not eat alongside non-SCs in more than 70 per-
cent of all villages as of 2006. Forms of economic discrimination figure
mostly in the high to medium range of prevalence (20–45 percent) rather
than in the lower range. Members of the Scheduled Castes are forbidden
entry into shops and are discriminated against in waged work in more
than 30 percent of all villages, suggesting that untouchability entails a
number of economically "irrational" behaviors.

Also noteworthy are the rather high levels of forms of untouch-
ability designed to produce signs of public subordination or humili-
ation, namely formal or informal sanctions against members of the
Scheduled Castes who attempt to disregard local norms of caste-
related behavior. While "upper castes" routinely engage in wedding
processions – often in a very ostentatious manner – wedding proces-
sions for members of the Scheduled Castes are reportedly banned in
47 percent of villages surveyed, as are festival processions in 24 per-
cent of villages. Similarly, sanctions against SCs who sport ostenta-
tious or bright clothing exist in 19 percent of all villages. Comparable
restrictions against wearing footwear or sunglasses or smoking in
public are also relatively common.

These conclusions, developed at length in Shah et al. (2006), provide
yet another grim picture of the persistence of untouchability in rural
India. While the authors insist that these statistics point to an *improve-
ment* (one may speculate that most, if not all, practices would have prob-
ably been above the 90 percent line fifty years ago), their conclusions also
testify to the stickiness of these practices.

2.1.3   *The Stickiness of Untouchability in Rural India*

Even if many practices have changed or altogether disappeared – as the
following discussion shows – these findings suggest that some of the cen-
tral sites of untouchability have remained the same over time.

First, consider the very obvious similarities between recent accounts
of untouchability and those from the 1960s and 1970s. Many preva-
lent practices observed in the landmark survey of untouchability in rural
Gujarat carried out by Desai and his coauthors in the early 1970s (Desai

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[23] The authors unfortunately do not provide estimates at the state level. The national esti-
mates described here and in the book include states in which many would expect to see
less discrimination (southern states especially), but one may expect much more pessi-
mistic estimates for the states of the Hindi belt, including Rajasthan.

1976) remain relevant and prevalent today. Comparing the estimates of Desai (1976) to the estimates of Macwan et al. (2010) in the same state should inevitably make us pessimistic. Even if it is difficult to infer a time trend by comparing the findings of two studies with fairly different methodologies, it is in and of itself significant that some of the practices described by both sets of authors have persisted unchanged: cases of discrimination in access to the temple, in access to water facilities, and in access to shops still exist today, and little has changed when it comes to these issues. Even if the motivations for untouchability-related discrimination may have changed, many of the sites of discrimination described by Desai strongly resemble those described almost forty years later by Macwan et al. (2010).

Besides, many of the sites of discrimination described in the works of the anthropologists who painstakingly documented social relations in rural India during the 1960s and 1970s (Moffatt 1979, Epstein 1973, Mosse 1985, Beteille 1965, Oommen 1984, Mahar 1972) are similar today. Isaacs's classic volume on untouchability (Isaacs 1965), based on two years of fieldwork and interviews throughout India, perfectly illustrates these similarities. As Isaacs describes the many day-to-day discriminations that the "ex-untouchables" continue to endure in postcolonial rural India – their difficulty in accessing water sources, the prohibition of food sharing, the many forms of discrimination in contact – he notes that "everything has apparently remained much the same" since independence. Comparing his observations with the observations made by Shah et al. (2006) and Macwan et al. (2010), one may be tempted to extend Isaacs's conclusion, even though seventy years have now passed since independence.

Looking beyond social-scientific accounts, it is also significant that some of the central discriminatory practices observed in rural India today resemble practices that have been described for almost three decades in the many Dalit "life narratives" chronicling the reality of growing up "untouchable" in that period.[24] A recent prominent example of this genre, *Joothan* (Valmiki 2003), illustrates this point vividly. Built around a series of piercing vignettes, *Joothan* tells of the many hardships that the author went through while growing up "untouchable" from the 1950s

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[24] According to Ganguly (1997) and Arora (2010), the genre of "Dalit life narratives" started with the publication in the Marathi language of Daya Pawar's *Balute* in 1978. Other landmark publications include Laxman Mane's *Upara* (*The Outsider*, 1980) and Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* (*Petty Thief*, 1987), and Sharan Kumar Limable's *Akkarmashi* (*The Outcast*). Life-narratives first emerged in the Marathi language in the post-independence period. Since the 1980s, the genre has spread to other linguistic clusters such as Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi. *Joothan* (Leftovers) by Om Prakash Valmiki (1997) is a prime example of this new genre in Hindi literature.

on outside a typical village in Uttar Pradesh. For instance, the memoir shows Valmiki's father struggling to get him admitted into a primary school in the 1960s. When the boy finally gets in, he is not allowed to sit on the benches. Instead, he is consigned to the floor at the back of the class, ensuring he is a distance away from the "upper caste" boys, and too far back to see anything clearly on the blackboard. While one of the self-confessed objectives of the narrative is to show that the "times have changed," readers aware of the persistence of untouchability in rural India may see exactly the contrary in this account. While members of the Scheduled Castes would nowadays have no trouble ensuring their children's admissions into public schools, the interpersonal discrimination (by the instructor, or by other students) described by the author persist in more than a third of villages, according to the various surveys described earlier. This narrative, like many others in the same vein, shows how similar the sites of discrimination have remained over the past decades. In spite of the fact that the world has changed, and that many of the former "untouchables" have become wealthier or have escaped the realm of the village in the last forty years, many of the discriminatory practices relating to "touch" that already constituted the core of untouchability in the 1960s remain prevalent in rural areas today.

More ancient accounts of caste relations further illustrate the striking similarity in sites of untouchability over time. The numerous reports penned by Harijan Sevak Sangh members in the latest part of the colonial period (see, for instance, Venkatraman 1946, Singh 1947, Bhatt 1941) denounce practices, especially ones relating to the avoidance of touch or to the segregation of members of the Scheduled Castes, that appear to remain relatively common in rural areas today. The issue of "temple entry," usually considered in these reports from the Gandhian era as the litmus test of untouchability, is far from being resolved as of 2016. When it has been resolved, it has more often been resolved by creating separate temples than by waiving the prohibition on temple entry (Shah et al. 2006). Similarly, the frequent denunciations of discrimination in access to student hostels or of unequal treatments by various state institutions echo the very contemporary preoccupations of caste activists, all the way to the case of Rohit Vermula in 2016.[25]

The few detailed accounts of untouchability available from earlier in the colonial period similarly illustrate how slow progress has been. One such account is that of Abbé Dubois (1906), a French Jesuit missionary

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[25] Rohit Vermula was a Dalit student at Hyderabad University who killed himself in January 2016, after he and four other Dalit students had been suspended from the university hostel. See Chandra (2016) for a discussion of the case.

who lived in India in the first part of the nineteenth century. In a scorching critique of the caste system, Dubois describes in great detail the various tribulations of the "pariahs." While the extreme forms of "enslavement" he describes have no doubt disappeared, what is perhaps most striking in his account of the "miserable condition of these wretched pariahs" is the similarity with the current situation, in particular when Dubois describes "upper-caste" members' strict avoidance of any contact with the "untouchables."

In sum, the stickiness of some of the key principles and sites of untouchability is remarkable. In many areas, this stubborn persistence can pessimistically be interpreted as evidence that a small core of practices may actually *never* change.

2.1.4   The Uncertain Effects of Political Mobilization

This relative stickiness also comes to show that the numerous social, political, and legal attacks on untouchability that unfolded over the last century, and especially over the last decades, had limited effects on day-to-day practices.

Over the centuries, many important social movements have attempted to change the nature of relations between former "untouchables" and others. While reviewing these efforts is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is notable that movements against untouchability have existed for almost as long as untouchability itself. Reformist movements within Hinduism, such as the Shraman and Bhakti traditions, have contested practices inherent to Hinduism since medieval times (see Zelliot 1992 for a review). During colonial rule, progressive Indian elites launched various movements such as the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj, taking aim at Indian culture's most repressive elements, including untouchability.

The mass political organization of the "untouchables" started, however, with the "Dalit movement" launched by Ambedkar at the end of the colonial period (Omvedt 2001). Building on the "lower-castes" movements of Phule in the Bombay province and *Periyar* in south India (Deliege 1999, Zelliot 1992, Omvedt 2001), Ambedkar agitated for Dalit rights during British rule, and once again after independence. He shaped the constitution of independent India to organize Dalits as a separate political entity and to secure their socioeconomic rights. By providing the community with "reservations" and ensuring its access to institutions that had until then been closed to them, Ambedkar operated on the logic that a few individuals would lead the entire community forward, and that this vanguard would transform society gradually but steadily. In

spite of Ambedkar's many achievements, preeminent among which were the development of an autonomous "Dalit movement" that survived his own death in 1956, and the creation of reservation policies for members of the Scheduled Castes, the patterns described in the first part of this chapter may signal that political mobilization had a limited impact on patterns of everyday inter-caste interactions.

Beyond Ambedkar, this persistence also marks the limited impact that various political movements claiming to represent Dalit interests since the 1960s have had on the day-to-day treatment of members of the Scheduled Castes in villages – including the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and its leader Mayawati's rapid ascent to power in Uttar Pradesh. While movements as varied as the Republican Party of India (RPI), the Dalit Panthers, BAMCEF, and the BSP have regularly been said to have enhanced the "self-respect" and "assertiveness" of Dalits (Pai 2000), there is no conclusive empirical evidence to suggest that this historical rise in political mobilization improved the lot of members of the Scheduled Castes in their interactions with others at the street level. Beyond channeling patronage resources to members of the Scheduled Castes, which the BSP has achieved (Pai 2011), one might call into question the fact that Mayawati's successive tenures in Uttar Pradesh since the 1990s led to a reduction in the intensity of untouchability on the ground. Even if a spectacular politics of symbols and statue-building may have credibly reinforced the pride and self-worth of members of the Scheduled Castes in the state, it is less than clear that the political mobilization around these policies also led to an improvement in the behaviors of members of other castes (Pai 2002, 2011).

2.1.5   The Limited Effects of Anti-Untouchability Policies

Beyond political mobilization, this persistence also suggests that the extensive legal efforts to ban untouchability and to counter its long-term social effects have had a rather limited impact to date on day-to-day relations between former "untouchables" and others.

Acknowledging the practice of untouchability and the ensuing socio-economic "backwardness" of former "untouchables," the successive governments of the post-independence period made a number of provisions to "uplift" or "empower" members of these groups.[26] Specifically, these governments engaged in two types of measures.

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[26] While the constitution actually makes provisions for a number of other groups, I shall focus here on provisions for the SCs.

Building on constitutional provisions, the first type of measure consisted of texts officially banning the practice of untouchability. Article 17 of the constitution explicitly declares any untouchability-related practice to be an offense, while Article 35 provides that "parliament shall have, and the legislature of a state shall not have, power to make laws … prescribing punishment for those acts which are declared to be offenses under this part" (i.e., fundamental rights). The Lok Sabha (lower house) exercised this exclusive power for the first time in 1955, passing the Anti-Untouchability (Offences) Act, which outlawed the "enforcement of disabilities on the ground of untouchability" in public places. Under pressure from Dalit groups, the act was later amended to include stronger protections. As a result, the Untouchability (Offences) Amendment bill, later renamed the Protection of Civil Rights (Amendment) Act, came into force in 1976. The act provides for enhanced and stringent punishment (including extremely stiff fines) for any offense related to untouchability. Finally, in 1989, an even more repressive new act was promulgated (the Prevention of Atrocities Act) in order to reinforce the earlier acts. Altogether, these successive acts provided the country with a clear legal framework to ensure the interdiction and prosecution of all of the untouchability-related practices described earlier in the chapter.

Second, because there had been an early consensus (actually predating independence) on the fact that the practice of untouchability could only be eradicated by reducing the socioeconomic gap between members of the SCs and others, successive governments of independent India engaged in a series of measures aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of members of the SCs (Deliege 1999, Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998). Two types of such policies can be considered here. First, there have been general policies and programs aimed at improving the condition of the poor, of which the Scheduled Castes represented a major portion. Measures of this type include land redistribution, efforts to improve basic education, basic health, and access to food. Beyond these general anti-poverty policies, there have also been a number of targeted policies of compensatory discrimination specifically aimed at the SCs. State expenditure has been specifically allocated to members of the Scheduled Castes, and scholarships, loans, land grants, targeted housing schemes, and targeted medical care plans are other initiatives under this heading.

More importantly, and in connection with the specific interest of this study, the state has followed the constitution[27] in providing for

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[27] The Indian constitution directs the state to ameliorate the conditions of the weaker sections of society in general, and the SCs and Scheduled Tribes in particular. Articles 330 and 332 outline the provisions for reservation within electoral institutions. Articles 15.4

"reservations" for socially important jobs or resources.[28] Since independence, a number of seats have been reserved in the national and state-level legislative assemblies of the country. In those assemblies, the number of reserved seats is usually proportional to the percentage of members of the Scheduled Castes in the overall population of the state. In these "reserved constituencies," only members of the Scheduled Castes are allowed to contest elections, which automatically leads to the election of an SC candidate. Since 1993, these dispositions have been extended to the *panchayati raj* system (i.e., local government). As I show in more detail in Chapter 3, these reservations in local government institutions have allowed hundreds of thousands of members of the Scheduled Castes to access the positions of village council member or village council president. Beyond political institutions, a variety of comparable quotas have been adopted in educational institutions, with these efforts largely concentrated on higher education. The number of university scholarships for SC students has continuously increased since independence, and admissions quotas have been implemented in all major institutions. Finally, jobs have been reserved for the SCs at all levels of the civil service by both federal and state-level institutions. Due to the sheer number of jobs that have over time been allocated to members of the former "untouchable" castes through this process, this is certainly the most spectacular component of reservation policies. The percentage of members of the SCs that have accessed government jobs has never ceased to increase, providing select individuals from these castes with stable monetary resources and the multiple advantages in kind (housing, various discounts, access to loans, etc.) to which members of the civil service typically get access in India.

As remarkable as this combination of repressive and compensatory measures might be, almost seventy years after independence, its actual impact on the living conditions of members of the Scheduled Castes can at best be described as disappointing. Even if no political force openly proposes to withdraw them today, compensatory reservations are now largely seen as a limited tool to redress centuries of unequal social relations (Chin and Prakash 2011, Galanter 1984, Jensenius forthcoming). While the socioeconomic gap between Dalits and others has been slightly

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and 29 outline the principles for reservation in educational institutions, while articles 16.4, 320.4, 333, and 335 detail the principles for reservation in government jobs.

[28] While the long history of the origins of these measures is beyond the scope of this work (see Mendelsohn and Viczinany 1998, Galanter 1984 for excellent reviews), it may be interesting to note that native rulers and colonial authorities played an extensive role in the progressive development of such preferential policies.

reduced (Shukla and Jain 2010), this improvement may have more to do with the new market-based economy that developed after 1990 (Kapur et al. 2010) than with these compensatory measures. We now have credible quantitative evidence suggesting that reservations in political institutions have translated into no more than a minor, if not null, effect on the material well-being of the average member of the Scheduled Castes (Dunning and Nilekani 2013, Besley et al. 2008, Jensenius 2015). While we do not have similar quantitative estimates reservations in education and for government jobs, which are far more common, these are just as often described as limited (Deliege 1999), including by some of their most central proponents (Thorat 2010). The effects of one individual's access to a government job remain extremely visible in rural India and typically extend to one's entire family, for several generations. Such individuals are typically important and prestigious within their community, and appear to transmit material, social, and cultural capital to their offspring (Thorat 2010, Bose 2008). However, such positions are also frequently described as being cornered by elites within the Scheduled Castes (the so-called "creamy layer" in Indian debates on this question). As a result, the effects of social and political reservations on the material well-being of the average member of the Scheduled Castes have typically been seen as either insufficient (Thorat 2010, Teltumbde 2010) or null (Deliege 1999).

Surely enough, members of the SCs might have been worse off than they currently are without the deployment of this impressive raft of legislations. However, it is not excessive to say that the expectations enumerated at the beginning of the postcolonial period have not been met. Regardless of whether this array of compensatory measures has materially improved the economic lot of members of the Scheduled Castes, most observers agree that the legal activism of the Indian state has not come close to *eliminating* discriminatory practices at the interpersonal level. The fact that major discriminations remain common throughout rural India seventy years after independence implies that the two strategies envisioned by the founders of independent India to eradicate these practices have had limited effects. The strategy that consisted of eradicating untouchability by diverting a disproportionate fraction of state benefits to members of the Scheduled Castes – hence elevating their socioeconomic status – did not fully materialize. This can be attributed to one or both of two reasons: the material benefits received by the average member of these castes have been too small to make a difference; and/or certain discriminatory behaviors are resistant to Dalits' socioeconomic elevation (i.e., members of the Scheduled Castes are discriminated against regardless of their socioeconomic status). The persistence

of discriminatory acts – including in public places – in thousands of villages also signals the relative failure of the strategy that consisted of legally repressing untouchability.[29] In spite of the fact that extremely repressive acts have been in place for decades, discriminations continue, and their victims are often not heard by the judicial system (Teltumbde 2010, Narula 1999).

2.2 The Evolution of Untouchability in Rural India

The evidence presented in the first section in sum suggests that prominent untouchability-related practices have persisted, that *some* central untouchability-related practices have subsided, and that the measures designed to eliminate them have had limited effect. While this is problematic, it would, however, be an exaggeration to claim that social relations between former "untouchables" and more dominant groups have not changed in rural India. As I show in this section, significant changes have occurred.

2.2.1 The Changes: Many Practices Have Disappeared

As a result of centuries of "cumulative deprivation" (Oomenn 1984), members of the Scheduled Castes remain comparatively poorer than other Indians (Shukla and Jain 2010). As far as everyday untouchability-related discrimination is concerned, rural members of the Scheduled Castes are nevertheless better off today than they ever were. While this chapter has until now emphasized the visible persistence of untouchability, and the fact that some central practices seem resistant to change, it is also the case that many untouchability-related behaviors have declined or altogether disappeared in rural India.

The quantitative works quoted earlier (Macwan et al. 2010, Shah et al. 2006), assuming that they accurately measure the prevalence of all known past and present untouchability-related practices, also provide us with valuable insights on the practices that have now become less common. Shah et al. (2006), for instance, shows that Dalits are now denied access to public transport or to cinema halls in less than 10 percent of villages. The study also shows that Dalits can now "access gram panchayat" buildings, "vote at the same time" as other villagers, enroll in public schools, use footwear, and ride bicycles in all but an extremely

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[29] Insofar as little has been done in order to ensure the day-to-day implementation of these acts on the ground (Deliege 1999, Narula 1999), this persistence may signal a lack of attention to untouchability by political elites as much as it signals a "failure."

small minority of villages (less than 15 percent of their sample). Along the same lines, Macwan et al. (2010) provide evidence suggesting that members of the Scheduled Castes in rural Gujarat can now access bus services (without having to vacate their seat for "upper-caste" villagers), get treated in health centers, and serve as postman or schoolteacher in non-Dalit hamlets in almost all villages.

If historical accounts of untouchability suggesting that these discriminatory practices once constituted the norm are to be believed, these estimates signal groundbreaking developments inasmuch as they signal persistence. The striking study of Kapur et al. (2010), in which a very large sample of Dalits in two districts of Uttar Pradesh were asked to compare caste-related social practices in 1990 and 2007, may be seen as further evidence of these profound changes. While asking respondents to be objective as they recall their past is difficult, it is significant that responses on all nine untouchability-related items included in their instrument led to the same conclusion. Respondents perceived that tremendous social change had happened over the past twenty years.[30]

My own discussions with villagers in rural Rajasthan corroborate these trends from other states. Each of the several dozens of Dalit villagers that I interviewed on the topic of caste relations over the past few years implied that changes were happening fast and that instances of discrimination against them were fewer and less common than they were ten years prior.[31] The practices that these villagers pointed to as examples of recent changes varied greatly from one village to the next. However, not a single one of my interlocutors, even those that were the most vocal about caste-related "atrocities," disagreed with the idea that changes were taking place.

Altogether, these various pieces of evidence inspire at least three comments on the nature of the changes in untouchability. The first is that changes have happened and that they continue to happen. Both the responses of Dalit interviewees in the Kapur et al. (2010) study and my own interviews with Dalit villagers suggest that changes have happened at an unprecedented pace over the last decade. While these perceptions of change over time are extremely difficult to corroborate, it is

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[30] The authors detect spectacularly large effects. One example: while respondents indicated that non-Dalits would almost never accept a glass of water or tea in a Dalit house in 1990 (1.7% and 3.6%, respectively, in each of the two districts surveyed), they reported that a majority of them (72.5% and 47.8%, respectively) accepted such a glass at the time of the survey (2007).

[31] Some of the survey responses included in the quantitative survey presented in the second part of this book further suggest that this is indeed the case.

important to note that these responses did not come from respondents who refrained from complaining about their environment or tended to paint the reality they faced in rosier shades. My interlocutors frequently noted the importance and scope of these changes even as they were listing caste-related grievances. In addition to these responses, the fact that most of the untouchability-related practices listed in the large-N village surveys described earlier (Macwan et al. 2010, Shah et at. 2006) are practiced in 50 percent or less of all villages sampled suggests that few practices may in fact be totally rigid. If some form of discrimination occurs in one village while it does not happen anymore in another one, it is after all evidence that such practices can change or even disappear over time.

The second valuable conclusion one can draw from this data is that the discriminatory and hostile practices that are changing are rather diverse. Extreme forms of bondage that were once constitutive of untouchability have usually already disappeared; instances of discrimination in access to state-run institutions, including schools and hospitals, are now increasingly rare; discrimination in access to private shops and businesses is altogether not that common anymore. But minor private interpersonal behaviors, including some practices related to food sharing, also appear to be changing. The aforementioned village surveys provide evidence for this. They show, for instance, that a vast majority of non-Dalit villagers resist serving tea to a Dalit villager in their own house, but that much fewer of these villagers would actually refuse tea offered by a Dalit villager at his house.

The third meaningful conclusion relates to an apparent contradiction in this last example: due to the various changes that have now taken place, contemporary untouchability has become a less coherent system than it once was, at least in the accounts of some historians of caste (especially Dumont 1966). As should be clear from the last few pages, non-Dalits now engage in a multitude of interpersonal situations in which their "purity" is at risk of being undermined. For instance, barring a diminishing minority of villages, they share seats and drinking glasses with Dalits in several different contexts and settings. However, notwithstanding these visible changes, the rhetoric of purity and pollution remains frequently invoked to justify some other forms of interpersonal discriminations with very similar objective potential for ritual "defilement." Examples of such contradiction abounded during my fieldwork in rural Rajasthan: "upper-caste" villagers on occasion shared a cigarette with *Dalits*, but never a pipe. They would sit next to Dalits at a village meeting, but not during a local celebration. As noted

by Deliege (2010), this growing incoherence in ritual terms probably suggests profound changes in the motivations of those that continue to engage in untouchability-related practices.

2.2.2   Changes in Patterns of Untouchability-Related Violence

Another important change in the practice of untouchability relates less to discriminatory practices than to acts of physical violence against members of the Scheduled Castes. Recent works on caste relations (Narula 1999, Visvanathan 2005, Teltumbde 2010, Deliege 2010, Thorat 2010, Shah et al. 2006, Rao 2009) have suggested that a new dark side of untouchability may have developed as a result of the groundbreaking social changes described in the previous sections. After analyzing spectacular and particularly gruesome acts of violence against members of the Scheduled Castes in rural India, these authors have argued that the past few decades saw important changes in patterns of physical violence, attacks, and physical assaults against members of the Scheduled Castes. Recent national crime statistics, depending how they are interpreted, potentially lend credit to this hypothesis. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against Dalits (a broad category including rape, murder, beatings, and physical violence related to land matters) have, for instance, increased by 29 percent from 2012 to 2014. In 2014, 47,064 cases of crimes against Dalits were registered, up from 39,408 in 2013 and 33,655 in 2012.[32]

Given the absence of credible statistics on the question and given likely debates about the interpretation of such statistics,[33] it is unclear whether these changes actually imply an increase in the *frequency* of acts of violence perpetrated in the name of caste. But it is at least fair to say that violent crimes involving physical violence and/or murders targeting members of the Scheduled Castes are common (Thorat 2010).

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[32] Statistics collected by the Center of Dalit Rights (a Rajasthan-based organization), and reported in Coudéré (2016) confirm this trend. According to Coudéré, "recent figures for Rajasthan, the state with the highest rate of atrocities committed against *Dalits*, indicate that this violence continues to rise. Between April 2015 and March 2016, 617 severe incidents were registered by the Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) in Jaipur, the only organization in Rajasthan monitoring these atrocities. It should be noted that these numbers are the tip of the iceberg. Among them, 161 cases related to land disputes, 127 cases included violence against women and rape; and 97 were physical assaults. In 2014–2015, 566 cases had been reported."

[33] A mentioned earlier, the statistics from the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the number of cases booked under the Anti-Untouchability Act and the Prevention of Atrocities Act suffer from various biases. Besides, it is hard to tell whether an increase in reporting can be interpreted as an increase in the incidence of a crime.

According to official statistics from the Ministry of Home Affairs, in any given year during the 1990s and 2000s, an average of about 600 murders, 3,000 assaults leading to injuries, 1,000 rapes, and 200 abductions were booked yearly in India under the two main Anti-Untouchability acts. More than 60 percent of these "atrocities" were concentrated in just five states, including the state of Rajasthan, which often topped the list in terms of per capita acts of violence.

Regardless of what the actual quantitative trend is, the changes emphasized by these various authors concern the style and the context of that violence. "Atrocities," as these incidents are legally described in the Indian law (especially in the 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act), have always occupied the extreme end of the spectrum of untouchability-related behaviors. Acts of public humiliation have always been thought of as constitutive of untouchability, and the most extreme of those humiliations have always included physical violence. As noted by Teltumbde (2010), however, the style of violence may have changed over the last few decades. While "atrocities" tended to be "casual and more humiliating than injurious," they now are "far more violent, more physically destructive and more brutal than before" (Teltumbde 2010). They are also often carried out collectively and in a loosely planned manner, as evidenced by the modus operandi in some of the most publicized cases of caste massacres over the last decades, including the Khairlanji murders investigated in depth in Teltumbde (2010).

Cases of untouchability-related massacres and atrocities do not only suggest that violence has become more collective, demonstrative, and planned. They also imply that the context and the timing of that violence have changed. The 2005 massacre that occurred in the Rajasthani village of Chakwada followed a demonstration by Dalits demanding the right to use the village's pond (Bhatia 2006). Similarly, the backdrop of the Kairlanji murder investigated at length by Teltumbde (2010) arguably had to do with local Dalits' newfound ambitions in terms of land ownership. Finally, of particular relevance to this study is the case of Melavalavu village in Tamil Nadu, where a particularly assertive Dalit village council president was beheaded only a few days after he was elected in 1997. Seeking commonalities among these extreme cases of violence, many observers of caste-related violence tend to interpret such incidents as attempts by local elites to thwart Dalits' assertion of their rights – to refuse blatant exploitation of their community, or to affirm a newly accessible political or economic power (Narula 1999, Visvanathan 2005, Teltumbde 2010, Rao 2009, Deliege 2010, Thorat 2010, Shah et al. 2006).

2.2.3   *Changes in the Motivations of Untouchability*

These various changes – in patterns of discrimination and violence – in turn suggest that the motivations behind the persistence of discriminations toward members of the Scheduled Castes have changed. Specifically, they suggest that the motivation for untouchability-related behaviors is almost never purely ritual or religious anymore, and that they rather have to do with logics of socioeconomic competition between groups (Viswanathan 2005, Teltumbde 2010, Gupta 2005).

Rural Indians on occasion continue to express their distaste and antagonism toward members of the Scheduled Castes in traditional ritual idioms. Untouchability is also frequently interpreted as such by commenters addressing untouchability, including Dalit activists. However, the obvious contradictions (in ritual terms) in the discriminatory patterns of villagers imply that untouchability may in fact have little to do with ritual explanations. If religious beliefs were the sole drivers of untouchability, we would not observe changes in minor interpersonal behaviors that are presumably immune from legal action. Yet even some of these minor interpersonal behaviors appear to be changing. The new patterns of violence just described point to the same conclusion. In India as elsewhere, collective violence rarely derives from religious beliefs alone, and contemporary untouchability may obscure deeper economic and political realities. Local-level competition for access to political and economic resources – in rural India, preeminently the control of land – now constitutes the most obvious subtext of untouchability. Taken together, the fact that some discriminatory practices persist while others become less frequent, along with the new forms of violence just described, can be seen as efforts to maintain existing caste hierarchies in the context of enhanced economic competition.

Moving to the individual and psychological levels – the proper focus of the rest of this study – the extensive social and legal changes described in this chapter imply that an individual's decision to discriminate or engage in hostile behavior derives from the interaction of at least three factors.

The first one, unsurprisingly, is a form of prejudice. While ritual beliefs appear to play a minor part in the reproduction of untouchability-related behaviors, this does not mean that another form of prejudice against members of the Scheduled Castes does not exist. It simply implies that this prejudice is no longer necessarily grounded in considerations about "purity." Fueled by the criminalization of untouchability, bitterness about "reservations," and the emergence of a small but visible class of prosperous members of the Scheduled Castes, antagonism

toward members of the Scheduled Castes remains very real (in a way that echoes what specialists of racial relations in the United States have referred to as "modern racism"). In the discussions with members of dominant castes in Rajasthan on which the argument presented in Chapter 4 is built, this modern distaste for members of the Scheduled Castes was very commonly expressed through the usual stereotypical channels, and rarely if ever expressed in ritual terms. Members of the Scheduled Castes were described to me as having many negative characteristics ("lazy," "dishonest," "manipulative," and "unable to think for themselves" being most commonly mentioned), and as inferior or different from any other social group in their village. While very few villagers openly signaled that ritual considerations mattered to them, most emphasized that these negative traits of character made it unlikely that they could offer as much respect to members of the Scheduled Castes as they did to other villagers.

This relatively extensive and widespread form of prejudice against members of the Scheduled Castes does not, however, constitute the whole explanation for the persistence of untouchability-related practices. Since prejudice is very common and varies very little across villages (as I show later in this study), the spectacular variation in the intensity of untouchability across villages that are sometimes very proximate (see also Macwan et al. 2010 on this) suggests that more strategic factors also play a role in the spatial variation in untouchability-related practices.

Two such factors emerged from my interviews with members of dominant castes in rural Rajasthan.[34] The first strategic factor relates to what potential discriminators perceive to be the norm of discrimination in their village. Regardless of individual levels of prejudice, almost all villagers I interviewed declared that they were discriminating against members of the Scheduled Castes in situations X and Y but not Z, simply because such a pattern of discrimination was the norm in their village, and because they did not want to depart from that norm. When faced with their own contradictions – or, in the case of many younger villagers, prompted to explain why they discriminated even though they did not appear particularly prejudiced – the single most common answer was: "because this is how it is in this village." Many younger villagers also emphasized that the social cost paid by "early breakers" of the norm would be rather high. Many respondents, for instance, insisted on the important role of caste elders in village society, or on the painstaking

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[34] Details on the ethnographic component of my fieldwork are presented in Appendix A.

explanations they would have to give if they permitted a practice that was generally considered taboo.[35]

The second strategic factor relates to what potential discriminators perceive to be not the social cost, but the legal or judicial costs of untouchability-related behaviors. Although the way untouchability has been addressed in the legal system is notoriously dysfunctional, texts criminalizing these practices (especially the 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act) exist, and entail stiff penalties. Even if these acts did not altogether put a stop to untouchability-related practices (as the estimates given earlier in the chapter would suggest), they nonetheless placed a new pressure on potential discriminators. Legal considerations were very frequently among the justifications given by my interlocutors for why they engaged in one type of behavior and not another, or for why some form of discrimination was not practiced in their village while it was practiced in many surrounding villages. Villagers discussed at length the (relatively small number of) local untouchability-related cases in which discriminators had actually been sentenced. Insofar as the real threat constituted by anti-untouchability legislations eventually rests on local factors – the relative influence and connections of different caste groups, the social identity of local authorities, the presence of civil society activists on the ground – these strategic considerations about the legal repercussions of untouchability probably constitute another important factor in the spatial variation in untouchability.

I return to this distinction in Chapter 4 as I explore the impact of one specific form of state-induced social change – descriptive representation by a member of the Scheduled Castes – on the persistence of untouchability.

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[35] In the long run, the enforcement of these norms may be understood as efforts to enforce existing caste boundaries, in the general context of an ethnicity-based patronage economy (Chandra 2004).

3   Local Representation in Rural India: A View from the Ground

Can caste quotas at the local level change the beliefs that underpin persistent untouchability? More generally speaking, do members of the Scheduled Castes benefit from descriptive representation? In order to answer the questions that this book aims to address, this chapter delineates the incentives, powers, functions, and connections of officials who are elected to political positions at the local level. Given this book's focus on the key position of *sarpanch* (village council president[1]), this chapter addresses a number of simple but crucial – and until now unaddressed – questions about the 240,000 or so individuals elected in a comparable position throughout India.[2] Who are *sarpanches*, and what is their sociopolitical background? How and why does one become a *sarpanch* in today's India? What are *sarpanches*' incentives before and after reaching office? What do they do on a daily basis? Finally, what are their relationships with villagers and with other local authorities?

To answer these questions, this chapter primarily draws on observations and interviews carried out in eleven villages of Rajasthan since 2009. The selection criteria and methodology used in this research are detailed at greater length in Appendix A. These repeated visits and discussions both at the village and at the block level allow me to provide a nuanced account of the specific role played by these officials in village life. While this chapter draws on field research carried out solely in the state of Rajasthan, it points at potential institutional, social, and political variations across state lines in an effort to delineate the external validity of its argument.

This field research reveals a number of critical observations about the characteristics and the activities of *sarpanches*. First, I show that the socioeconomic profile of these officials is relatively ordinary. Except for the fact that some sort of political connection seems to be required in

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[1] While village council presidents are referred to as sarpanches in the state of Rajasthan, a variety of terms are used in the rest of the country to refer to these officials.

[2] Including council members, a total of 2.8 million individuals were elected as representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions as of 2009.

order to win a *sarpanch* election, there does not appear to exist many requirements, for instance in terms of wealth or education. *Sarpanches* are, in other words, common men and women. Second, the process through which *sarpanches* come into office is relatively similar across villages, including in "reserved villages." Being elected as *sarpanch* in contemporary rural India is the outcome of an arduous, intense, and surprisingly competitive process in which various candidates seek the support of complex political coalitions. Interestingly enough, my observations suggest that these coalitions almost always transcend otherwise rigid caste lines. Third, in spite of the similarity of the selection process across villages, the role played by *sarpanches* in village life varies tremendously from one village to the next, in a way that appears to be correlated with these officials' social status before their election. In other words, part of their authority derives from characteristics that predate their democratic election.

As has already been noted in several accounts of local representation in India (Kumar and Rai 2005, Baviskar and Mathew 2009, Johnson 2003), *sarpanches* have less de facto power when they are less educated or from traditionally marginalized groups, since in those cases they are more likely to fall prey to the influence of other local actors. While this observation has sometimes led observers of local institutions to conclude that *sarpanches* drawn from disadvantaged groups were altogether powerless, my observations suggest that the reality might be more nuanced. *Sarpanches*, including those who serve as agents of locally powerful elites, personally perform a number of important tasks that no other political actor performs at the local level. I thus argue that even those officials that I come to refer to as "weak *sarpanches*" play a unique role in village life. My fifth significant observation relates to the motivations of *sarpanches*. I suggest that serving as *sarpanch* primarily constitutes a path toward upward social mobility for that individual and his immediate family – in part due to embezzlement and rent-seeking, but also to the new connections made during their tenure. Villagers, I argue, mostly seek to become *sarpanches* to ensure future prosperity for themselves and their family.

I develop each of these points in the third section of this chapter. Before turning to these ground-level observations about Rajasthani *sarpanches*, the first two sections provide a brief review of local-level institutions in rural India (i.e., the *panchayati raj* system). While the first section of this chapter provides a general overview of these institutions and their history, the second section draws from my field observations in order to provide a more concrete and detailed illustration of the functions and attributes of *gram panchayats*, the village-level institutions that *sarpanches* preside over and on which this study focuses.

3.1 The Modern Panchayati Raj System: Origins and Functions

Across the more than 600,000 inhabited villages that comprise rural India (as per the 2011 Census of India), there is probably no public building that is as frequently and universally visited as the *gram panchayat* building. *Gram panchayats* (village councils) are the most local form of elected government throughout rural India.[3] Here, on any given day, villagers can meet their most direct political representatives and ask for their assistance (Kruks-Wisner n.d., Bussell 2015). For villagers who rarely venture outside of their own village – presumably a *majority* of villagers – the *gram panchayat* office also constitutes the de facto face of the Indian state administration. As of 2013, around 240,000 GPs existed throughout the country (9,166 for the state of Rajasthan alone),[4] each of which was in charge of an average population of around 3,000 and of a jurisdiction including one to ten census villages.[5]

Panchayats – literally, assemblies made of five local elders – have been a feature of rural India since time immemorial. Their current avatar is, however, a relatively recent creation. While a series of colonial decisions and the deliberations of various committees in post-independent India sketched out the contours of the current *panchayati raj* system,[6] it was only in the 1990s that the Indian state finally decided to reorganize these institutions on a democratic basis and to endow them with significant powers. The 73rd Amendment Act, enforced in 1993, superimposed elected structures of governance on the administrative structures that had been in place since independence throughout rural India.[7] The amendment has created democratic structures at three levels: *gram panchayat* at the village level, *panchayat samiti* at the block level, and *zilla parishad* at the district level.[8] It has also required that regular elections be held at all

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[3] Insofar as many published works have already described the main actors and institutions of local government before me, this section provides a brief description. For a more detailed and exhaustive overview, see Mullen (2012) or Bohlken (2016).

[4] The number of GPs has increased since. As of 2016, there are, for instance, 9,894 GPs in Rajasthan.

[5] The average number of census villages per *gram panchayat* in Rajasthan was 4.3 at the time this study was run (as per the 2001 Census of India).

[6] See Mullen 2012 for a more exhaustive review of this institutional history.

[7] In most states, local elections had not taken place for several decades, and rural development had been solely managed by state government-appointed officials.

[8] *Gram panchayats* are the key units of the Panchayati Raj system, insofar as they are the units implementing various development projects on the ground. Block-level *panchayats* (Panchayat Samitis), which on average include thirty-four *gram panchayats* (as of 2016), are the conduits through which most of the funds for rural development flow to *gram panchayats*; in collaboration with the office of the Block Development Officer, they are also in charge of overseeing the implementation and the maintenance of projects on the

three levels every five years, and ordered the formation of State Election Commissions to oversee the organization of these elections. The act specifies that three key actors should play a role in the administration of the village's affairs through the *gram panchayat*, the lowest tier in this new institutional structure: elected council members (colloquially referred to as "ward-panchs" in Rajasthan), a village council president (called *sarpanch* in Rajasthan), and an unelected career civil servant detached from the state administration (called *gram sevak* or *gram panchayat secretary* in Rajasthan).[9]

In an effort to encourage a more transparent and participative form of democracy, the act also required village governance to be the product of the deliberations of village assemblies (*gram sabhas*) open to all, to be organized at least every three months in each *gram panchayat* (hereafter abbreviated as "GP").[10] Finally, in order to alleviate pressing concerns that devolving power to rural institutions would reinforce the power of traditionally dominant groups, the act mandated the reservation of positions for women, Scheduled Castes (hereafter abbreviated as "SCs"), and Scheduled Tribes ("STs") at all three levels of the *panchayati raj* system,[11] including for the key village-level position of *sarpanch*. This amendment required that no position be reserved for the same group for two consecutive elections, hence combining the principle of "reservation" with a principle of "rotation."

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ground. The district-level *zilla parishads*, which on average include 300 *gram panchayats* and 9 *panchayat samitis* (as of 2016), mostly enunciate the "development strategy" of the district and generally determine its development priorities.

[9] The name taken by each of these positions varies across the country and across levels of government. This threefold structure – elected councilmen, led by an elected council head, and assisted by an apolitical and unelected civil servant drawn from the state administration – is, however, similar at the block (*panchayat samiti*) and district (*zilla parishad*) levels. At the block level, the elected head of the *panchayat samiti* (the *pradhan* in Rajasthan) works hand in hand with the unelected but powerful Block Development Officer (known as "BDO"), a high-ranking member of the state administration. The BDO oversees the tender processes, the disbursement of funds, and the legality of all transactions. He also heads an administration of technical staff – accountants, engineers, education officers, and so on – who validate the soundness and legality of all development projects in all GPs under their jurisdiction. Given these extensive powers, the large funds they control, and the fact that the elected heads of *panchayat samitis* (*pradhans*) do not have a say in the choice of the BDO they are assigned, BDOs are typically seen as being much more influential than the elected *pradhans* (Purohit et al 2002). At the district level, the elected head of the *zilla parishad* (the *pramukh* in Rajasthan) similarly works hand in hand with the unelected but all powerful district collector as they co-administer the District Rural Development Agency.

[10] In the spirit of the act, *gram sabhas* were to approve all development projects before they were implemented and to select the beneficiaries of development programs. As I explain later, these important decisions are in fact rarely – if ever – made during *gram sabhas*.

[11] In most states, reservations were later expanded to members of the Other Backward Castes or OBCs.

While these measures provided a common institutional structure for local government throughout India, the 73rd Amendment remained relatively vague as to the substantial powers to be invested in these local governments. The task of defining the attributions and the financial endowment of the newly created institutions was thus left to state governments (Bohlken 2016), opening the door to disparities in the resources at the disposal of *gram panchayats* across state lines (Bohlken 2016). While this makes it difficult to provide a national-level overview of the functions and competences of *gram panchayats*, it is nonetheless important to note that the decentralization implied by the act was originally presumed to be extensive. No less than twenty-nine key areas of administration, including decisions over health and education services, roads, sanitation, and other local services, were to be progressively devolved to local government bodies. Altogether, the act thus allowed for a considerable degree of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization to the village level.

While all states passed legislation compliant with the act within a few years,[12] the actual provisions of the act were implemented slowly and unequally across state lines. Democratic elections were eventually held in all states, even though they were delayed by litigation regarding the provisions of the state legislation in some cases (Jharkhand was the last state to set up these elections in 2007). In terms of *administrative* decentralization, however, only three major states had operationally devolved all twenty-nine functions to local governments as of 2011. In terms of fiscal decentralization, *panchayati raj* institutions in almost all states (including Rajasthan) remained as of 2011 almost entirely dependent on grants from the state and central government for their revenues, and continued to generate very little revenue of their own; as a result, their primary formal function remains the allocation and disbursement of funds transferred from higher levels of government. Although in some states *gram panchayats* play a more extensive role (in some cases collecting taxes), the only functions of *gram panchayats* that are consistent country-wide remain the selection of beneficiaries for a limited number of national or state-level welfare schemes, and the allocation of a budget for the construction (and sometimes, though not always, the maintenance) of basic village public goods such as streetlights, roads, water taps, and drains.

The state of Rajasthan, on which this study focuses, constitutes a relatively representative example of the level of decentralization that has been achieved almost two decades after the 73rd Amendment Act came

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[12] The Rajasthan Panchayat Act was, for instance, promulgated in 1994, and the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Election Rules in 1996.

into force. As of the late 2000s, Rajasthan did not stand out as either particularly advanced or particularly late in the gradual process of decentralization. Politically, the democratic structure of local government institutions had been established relatively early on, as 1995 saw free, fair, and democratic elections for all positions, including for "reserved" positions at all three tiers of *panchayati raj* institutions. However, both the administrative functions and the resources of *gram panchayats* remained relatively limited compared to what the 73rd amendment had recommended. To the best of my knowledge, little has changed in this picture as of 2016: *gram panchayats* in Rajasthan and in most other states remain entirely dependent on grants and funds received from the state administration, including for national-level funds. As such, they are better thought of as distribution agencies than as independent political entities.

3.2   What Do *Gram Panchayats* Do? The Case of Rajasthan

What, concretely, do *gram panchayats* (GPs) do? What are the resources they benefit from in order to achieve each of their functions? Given the usual gap between state legislation and practices at the village level, a view from the ground appears necessary in order to provide an adequate answer to these questions. In this section, I thus draw from field research in Rajasthan since 2009 in order to provide some answers.

3.2.1   The Functions of Gram Panchayats

The *gram panchayats* (hereafter, GPs) of Rajasthan have since their second birth in the mid-1990s fulfilled at least three types of functions. They are, first, in charge of issuing a number of valuable official documents used by villagers in their interactions with authorities at several levels of government. Among other documents, GPs issue birth, caste, and death certificates. GPs also issue a number of documents necessary for land transactions and for the inheritance of land, the most prized among them being the "no-objection certificate."[13] GPs on occasion also provided documents and certificates that served as evidence in judicial courts. Because these documents play a significant role in villagers' lives (Chandra 2004), this underestimated function may be one of the most important ones that GPs fulfill. An uncooperative GP could dramatically

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[13] The "N.O.C." is an official document signed by the *sarpanch* that confirms the ownership of a parcel of land, or indicates that the GP does not object to the construction of a building on that parcel. While an "N.O.C." may reportedly have uses beyond land transactions, I never saw villagers require it in any other context.

delay the transmission of a parcel of land, or impede a villager's access to a number of state benefits.

The second function of GPs, the construction and maintenance of "development-related" public goods, constitutes the core of their mission and accounts for a large share of their budgets.[14] As noted earlier, this function was originally envisioned to be extensive: according to the 73rd amendment, the legislature of a state may by law endow GPs with the powers and the authority necessary "to enable them to function as institutions of self-government." The eleventh schedule of the act, which lists the twenty-nine matters that may be entrusted to GPs regarding the implementation of development-related schemes, covers virtually all areas of interest to village life, from agriculture, irrigation, and water management to education, child development, and health services. As is typical of the usual gap between legislation and implementation in India, however, most of these matters have not been taken up by GPs so far, except in a couple of states (Karnataka and Kerala, for instance).[15]

In Rajasthan, the state government has formally transferred all twenty-nine matters to the GP level (Rajasthan SFC commission report, 2008). Visiting GPs and shadowing GP officials however quickly suggests that the transfer was in most cases purely theoretical. The eleven GPs of Rajasthan that I investigated since 2009 have only been active in a handful of key sectors. To the best of my knowledge, this remains true as of 2016. Owing to a total absence of funds or staff allocated to most "matters" listed in the 73rd Amendment Act, the GPs of Rajasthan have remained inactive even in some of the core "civic functions" identified as such in the act (i.e., primary education, primary health care, safe drinking water, street lighting, sanitation including drainage and scavenging facilities, maintenance of cremation and burial grounds, public conveniences, and other common property resources). In practice, the functions relating to primary education and primary health, for instance, remain with the respective departments of the state government (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2012). While *gram panchayats* can report problems related to the functioning of school or health centers (including *anganwadi* – child development – centers) to district authorities, they are not in charge of

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[14] On the allocation of GP budgets, I draw specifically on interviews with the sarpanches of villages 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10 (respectively on February 10, 2009, March 10, 2009, January 26, 2009, January 27, 2009, July 12, 2011, and May 12, 2011), interviews with GP secretaries of villages 2, 7, and 11 (respectively on March 22, 2009, September 09, 2009, and March 15, 2012), and interviews with the accountant of the Bassi Panchayat Samiti on October 12, 2011 and November 12, 2011.

[15] A remarkable exception needs to be mentioned here: the state of Bihar has been experimenting since 2014 with providing *gram panchayats* with judicial powers, and with the ability to impose fines for minor crimes.

building renovations or the day-to-day management of either institution. In the case of drinking water supply, the digging of new hand pumps and their installation in rural areas remains the prerogative of the Public Health and Engineering Department, and their maintenance has similarly not been transferred to the GP level. This has led to problematic situations on the ground: while GPs decide on and pay for the installation of new wells, hand-pumps, tanks, or other water sources, they are not in charge of either their installation or of their maintenance. The maintenance of existing public goods in the village is, more generally speaking, not the GP's prerogative except on a handful of topics: street lighting, internal roads, sanitation (including drainage and scavenging facilities), cremation and burial grounds, and the relatively few "common property resources" (such as the *panchayat* building itself). These last few matters are the only ones that remain fully the prerogatives of GPs, from installation to maintenance.

Yet even in the case of these few core competencies, the GPs of Rajasthan remain far from the autonomous and independent institutions of self-government that the act had once wished for. Since rural development remains tightly supervised by the Block Development Officer (BDO) and his staff, the budgetary choices that GPs make are in practice very limited. Funds distributed to each GP in a given year are only released by the block-level accountant on the basis of specific proposals detailing how the funds will be used. Without the official sanction of the office of the Block Development Officer (BDO), GPs are thus not able to access a single rupee of their own budget. The process through which GPs get to spend their resources also underlines the limited leeway that GPs have in deciding on the types of projects on which their funds should be spent. Since most proposals received by the BDO are for funds tied to a preexisting state or national scheme, GPs rarely have to make strong political choices about the types of goods on which they choose to spend their funds. In addition, because these schemes often provide detailed guidelines as to what the specific works undertaken by the GP should be, there is little margin for improvisation at the GP level regarding the technical details of how a road should be constructed or a tank installed. It is thus probably not unfair to see these GPs as "democratically elected distribution agencies" rather than as local self-governments.

Beyond their roles in issuing documents and in the construction and maintenance of infrastructures at the village level, the third function of GPs consists of their role as intermediary for a wide array of social schemes from the state or central governments that provide targeted benefits (either pensions, discounts on basic goods, loans, or grants) to

eligible households. These schemes are numerous and diverse in contemporary India (Bardhan 2001). At the time of my field research, villagers tended to approach the GP in order to obtain a job card allowing them to take part in the MNREGS,[16] a Below the Poverty Line (BPL) card granting access to the Public Distribution System (PDS), or old-age, handicap, and widow pensions.[17] They also approached the GP in the hope that they could become beneficiaries of the Indira Gandhi Rural Housing Scheme (*Indira Awaas Yojana* in Hindi), which provides a relatively generous subsidy allowing a deprived household to build a house made of solid construction materials. While the extent to which GPs really *choose* the beneficiaries of these schemes remains unclear – I return to this point later in the chapter – their main role in this process was not necessarily to decide which households would benefit from these schemes. Most of the GP's time and energy were instead spent pressing for funds to be released once authorities at the block or at the district level had sanctioned decisions.

After following various actors in the *gram panchayat*, I realized that both elected officials and *gram panchayat* secretaries devote a considerable fraction of their time to ensuring that the funds to be released by authorities indeed reach these beneficiaries. Given the delays and the various bureaucratic obstacles that perpetually thwart the timely release of funds to beneficiaries,[18] this role appears especially precious to villagers. During my interviews with villagers, many emphasized the importance of this intermediation role of the GP during the discussions I had with them: without the influence of the GP (and especially of the *sarpanch*), many perceived that social benefits already due to them would not reach them.[19]

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[16] The MNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), the massive job guarantee scheme in place since 2005, provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment a year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public works–related unskilled manual work.

[17] As noted in the emerging literature on claim-making in rural India (Kruks-Wisner n.d., Bussell 2015), villagers also approach more informal actors in order to get the attention of authorities. In this picture, the *gram panchayat* remains a central stop, however, as *sarpanches* are often the best equipped to provide the necessary assistance to villagers.

[18] In Rajasthan, unelected bureaucrats – previously the sole authority in charge of rural development – frequently tended to resist the changes prescribed by the 73rd Amendment Act. This may have been because they were trying to collude with elected village officials to extract some rent out of development projects or merely because they were expecting a kickback before releasing the funds. This permanent tension between elected and unelected officials in charge of rural development remains one of the major issues faced by the Panchayati Raj system today.

[19] In this section, I especially draw on interviews with villagers in villages 9, 10, and 11 throughout March 2012. This echoes one of the findings mentioned in Dunning and Nilekani (2013) regarding villagers' beliefs about the influence of the *Gram Panchayat* on the release of targeted benefits delivered at higher levels of government. Note the

3.2.2   *Resources, Budget, and Personnel*

While the activities of Rajasthani GPs appear limited with regards to what the 73rd amendment had originally envisioned, the sums received by the GPs to tackle this limited number of basic functions are relatively substantial. In that sense, GPs are major players in the development of infrastructures at the village level. Given that the GPs of Rajasthan (as in most states, as shown in Mullen 2012) generate almost no revenue of their own,[20] 95 percent of their regular financial resources comes from two funds: the TFC (the "Thirteenth Finance Commission," a national-level fund in charge of disbursing funds necessary for the implementation of social schemes administered at the federal level) and the SFC (The State Finance Commission, its equivalent at the state level). In the period between 2005 and 2010, the average yearly funding received from these two commissions by each GP of the state of Rajasthan averaged 1.2 million rupees (approximately $18,000, as of December 2016), a sum that would typically allow for three to five major projects (a well, a road, a few hand-pumps, a few public lights) to be implemented each year.

While such a sum allows a GP to significantly improve the infrastructure of a village, it is important to note that a handful of GPs in each district also received resources that were less recurrent, but much larger, from other sources. In addition to the aforementioned resources received from higher levels of government through the usual channels,[21] the GPs I investigated had on occasion received discretionary funds from their MLA (member of the legislative assembly, or state legislator) or from their MP (member of parliament).[22] While the sums distributed

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important implication of this fact: the GP may favor certain villagers over others, not so much in selecting them for benefit schemes, but rather in agreeing to help them obtain their dues once they are selected.

[20] While the 73rd amendment suggested that GPs should raise their own taxes, such developments have only taken place in a few states (Karnataka being one such example, even though taxes remain low in the state, according to Mullen 2012). As a result, in most states, the only resources generated by GPs come from the sale of commonly owned natural resources (such as wood or leaves) where any exist, or from the small fees villagers pay when asking for official documents.

[21] The funds from these two commissions are channeled through the *panchayat samiti* and/or the *zilla parishad*. At each stage, their disbursement is overseen by the respective administrative services of the unelected BDO and district collector.

[22] MP funds ("MPlads") are Rs. 10 million per year for each MP and MLA funds ("MLAlads") are Rs. 2.5 million per year for each MLA. These funds are allocated to specific projects in these officials' constituencies. As for all other funds, the allocated sums transit through the office of the BDO, who technically oversees the tender process and ensures the implementation of each project.

by these legislators had been rare (only a handful of GPs receive these funds within each district),[23] they had usually more than doubled the yearly budget of the few GPs that had received them, allowing the GPs to implement *many* additional projects.

More importantly, every year since 2005 and the launch of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS),[24] GPs received substantial financial resources to purchase the materials necessary for MNREGS projects (roads, drainage, water harvesting, etc.). While there was extreme variance in the amounts received by GPs from one year to the next,[25] the detailed budgetary data I obtained from eight of the eleven GPs suggests that MNREGS funds on average more than doubled the yearly budget of GPs.

In spite of these relatively sizeable resources,[26] it is striking to note that GPs have almost no full-time personnel at their disposal. Beyond a *panchayat* secretary (the *gram sevak*, a career civil servant detached from the state administration), and in relatively few cases a peon or a street sweeper, the GPs of Rajasthan do not employ any technical staff of their own. The total absence of technical personnel echoes the limited competencies of GPs and their dependence on the BDO's office already noted earlier. Since GPs do not directly oversee the technical aspects of the projects they implement, nor maintain their own infrastructure, members of the *gram panchayat* spend a considerable fraction of their time requesting the assistance of the BDO and his staff. This dependency in turn echoes the GP's primary role as an intermediation agency. Instead of the autonomous village self-government that both Gandhi and the 73rd Amendment Act had originally envisioned, the *gram panchayat* is often the institution that villagers turn to in order to attract the attention of block- or district-level officials.

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[23] With the exception of one village in Bassi block (village 9), which had received funds from either the MLA or the MP in four out of five years between 2007 and 2012. The singular personality of the *sarpanch*, who was a connected businessman, a former MLA candidate, and a regional leader for the BJP at the district level, presumably explains this extraordinary success in attracting funds to the village.

[24] The MNREGS is a government scheme that guarantees a hundred days of wage employment each year to each rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. As of 2009, *gram panchayats* functioned as nodal agencies for carrying out the work and for disbursement of wages. They were also, as still are today, in charge of purchasing construction material.

[25] Interestingly enough, the funds received by seven out of the eleven GPs that I focus on have continuously decreased since 2009, as village officials appeared to have run out of potential projects.

[26] Among the GPs I visited, the average yearly budget was about 3 million rupees – around $45,000. Adding funds from parliamentarians and MNREGS funds to regular resources, a GP may, in a good year, receive close to 5 million rupees, or approximately $75,000.

3.3   The Village Council President in Rajasthan

Who are the village council presidents (known as *sarpanches* in Rajasthan) on whom this study focuses, and what specific role do they play in village government? Answers to these questions can easily be found in both the 1993 73rd Amendment Act and the 1996 Rajasthan Panchayat Act. *Sarpanches* are, according to these acts, the directly and democratically elected executive heads of village councils (*gram panchayats*). As such, they are primarily in charge of implementing the decisions collectively taken by village councils in each of the areas described in the previous section.

In this section, I go beyond this simple legal definition. I illustrate the everyday involvement of *sarpanches* in local government and emphasize a number of social, political, and relational characteristics of these individuals in the process. A "thicker" description of this type is necessary for at least two reasons. The first one is that *sarpanches*' daily activities on the ground do not necessarily correspond to the definitions of their function that one can find in official acts. Given the multiplicity of actors involved in local governance, and the nebulous way in which acts have delineated the role of each of these institutional actors (Mullen 2012), inferences made from official acts are of limited use. Many common practices on the ground do not stem from these acts but rather from ad hoc arrangements; at the same time, *sarpanches* only spend time on a few of the functions that they are legally required to fulfill as per these acts. As noted in the first section of this chapter, three key actors play a role in the administration of the village's affairs through the *gram panchayat*: a number of elected councilmen (*ward-panchs* in Rajasthan), a village council head (*sarpanch* in Rajasthan), and an unelected career civil servant detached from the state administration (*gram sevak*). These three village-level actors in turn deal with a multitude of institutions at the block and district levels. What role have *sarpanches* carved out for themselves in this complex institutional pyramid?

The second reason why a more detailed account of these officials is necessary follows from this study's interest in the impact that different subtypes of these officials – namely, officials with different caste backgrounds – can have on intergroup relations. In order to theorize about the impact that a *sarpanch* can have on this outcome, it appears necessary to isolate the role played by these officials from the roles played by other actors of local government. Insofar as the socioeconomic characteristics of these officials may drive their incentives as well as their ability to make

a difference once in office, documenting their background appears to be equally important.

In this section, I draw from a combination of qualitative observations, interviews, and aggregate data drawn from a variety of official sources about Rajasthani *sarpanches* in order to describe their backgrounds, functions, and motivations. I successively review five salient dimensions of their identities. In each case, I describe *sarpanches* in general terms but also highlight the differences, if any, between SC *sarpanches* and *sarpanches* from dominant groups.

3.3.1 Sarpanches *as Common Villagers*

Like many elected officials in India, the *sarpanches* I met often rushed to emphasize their simple living conditions, in order to preempt potentially embarrassing questions about the monetary returns of their office. Looking closely at their socioeconomic backgrounds, however, suggests that this was not purely a defense on their part. Although they energetically embraced power and used its attributes in order to elevate their socioeconomic status, the profiles of Rajasthani *sarpanches* – at least *at the onset of their tenure* – was generally speaking not that far apart from the socioeconomic profile of the median villager from their group. The overwhelming majority of the *sarpanches* I met – both SCs and non-SCs – had living standards that were comparable to those of their neighbors. They almost never owned a four-wheeler or had access to any such conspicuous possession. In other words, they did not resemble old elites as they entered office. In that limited sense, they may be described as "common villagers."

While we lack good quantitative indicators to describe *sarpanches* in a more systematic way, publicly available data captures this relative normality at the onset of their tenure on at least two dimensions: education and age.

The *sarpanches* I followed had received little education: a self-reported average of 8.4 years. This number was incidentally very close to the self-reported average education received by other villagers that were interviewed in the same villages throughout this project (8.3), and representative of the 9,156 Rajasthani *sarpanches* elected in 2010.[27] These estimates – however limited and imprecise they might

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[27] Both the average and the median *sarpanches* elected in 2010 are classified as "literate" by the Rajasthan State Election Commission, which means that he or she had received between two and nine years of primary education, and had definitely stopped short of secondary education or of a college degree.

be – imply that *sarpanches* were only *marginally more* educated than their constituents, and *significantly less* educated than many of their interlocutors in the local administration at the block level, who would have had to be schooled for at least twelve years in order to be entitled to join the state administration. As a case in point, most *sarpanches* I encountered were less educated than the only employee of their *gram panchayat*, the *gram sevak* (the panchayat secretary). This imbalance was the subject of many jokes during my interviews with both *sarpanches* and *gram sevaks*, with the *gram sevak* often being teased for being a learned man.[28]

Besides, this was true for both SC and non-SC *sarpanches*. As can be seen from Table 3.1, non-SC *sarpanches* (column 2) were relatively comparable to the random sample of non-SC villagers interviewed in the following chapters (column 1) in terms of education levels. Similarly, SC *sarpanches* (column 3) were relatively comparable to the random sample of SC villagers interviewed in the following chapters (column 4) in terms of education levels. Although the State Election Commission's measure problematically groups together all those who self-described as "literate" (meaning that they had between two and nine years of schooling), the table illustrates the relatively unexceptional characteristics of *sarpanches*. While a majority of *sarpanches* self-described as "literate" in 2010, very few of them had gone on to study beyond that. Evidence of this may be seen in the fact that secondary education graduates were proportionally more numerous in the population than among *sarpanches*. Besides, it is significant that at least *some* of these officials self-described as illiterate, especially if we consider that these estimates may be artificially low insofar as they are based on self-reports.

In terms of age (Table 3.2), both SC and non-SC *sarpanches* differed from my random sample of voters. As can be seen from comparing column 1 to column 2, and column 3 to column 4, *sarpanches* from both groups were marginally older than a random sample of respondents in age of voting. While this should not be entirely surprising, it is, however, important to note that a fair number of *sarpanches* in both cases were young *sarpanches* (i.e., below thirty-five years of age).

More importantly perhaps, given my focus in the rest of this book, Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show that SC *sarpanches* were altogether not radically different from *sarpanches* from dominant groups in terms of their educational achievements and age. Compared to *sarpanches* from dominant

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[28] This is, however, a posture that many *gram sevaks* assume. As one of them told me quite straightforwardly, "Sarpanches have no ideas on how to get things done because they are uneducated; without us they'd be lost." (Interview in village 10, on March 20, 2012).

Table 3.1. *Comparing Education Levels of* Sarpanches *(as of 2010) and Respondents (as of 2009)*

	(1) % Among *sarpanches* from Dominant Groups★	(2) % Among *respondents* from Dominant Groups★	(3) % Among SC *sarpanches*	(4) % Among SC *respondents*
Illiterate	7.65%	8.83%	11.96%	21.25%
Literate	64.38%	55.21%	68.00%	54.81%
Secondary Education or Higher	24.77%	35.96%	17.13%	23.94%
No information	3.20%	0%	2.91%	0%
TOTAL	100.00%	100%	100.00%	100%

★ This category groups together *sarpanches* from general categories and from the OBC category.
Sources: Rajasthan State Election Commission for columns 1 and 3, and survey conducted by the author (and further described in Chapter 5) for columns 2 and 4.

Table 3.2. *Comparing the Age of* Sarpanches *(as of 2010) and Respondents (as of 2009)*

	(1) % Among *sarpanches* from Dominant Groups★	(2) %Among *respondents* from Dominant Groups★	(3) % Among SC *sarpanches*	(4) %Among SC *respondents*
Below 25	2.62%	23.83%	5.53%	30.74%
25–35	14.28%	26.56%	16.42%	25.21%
35–50	33.65%	29.30%	28.79%	26.77%
50–60	19.64%	13.93%	20.23%	9.06%
Above 60	13.50%	6.38%	15.05%	6.94%
No information	16.30%	0%	13.98%	0%
TOTAL	100.00%	100%	100.00%	100%

★ This category groups together *sarpanches* from general categories and from the "OBC" category.
Sources: Rajasthan State Election Commission for columns 1 and 3, and survey conducted by the author (and further described in Chapter 5) for columns 2 and 4.

groups (that is, upper castes and OBCs), SC *sarpanches* were on average slightly more likely to be illiterate, but the quantitative differences none-theless remain relatively small, and the repartition over the other educa-tion categories remained, broadly speaking, comparable. Given the far higher rate of illiteracy among rural SCs when compared to the general population (32% against 20% as of the 2001 Census of India), however, these small variations across groups are not surprising and suggest that SC *sarpanches* are not much more exceptional in comparison to the over-all SC population than *sarpanches* from other groups are in relation to theirs. Comparing column 1 to column 3 in Table 3.2, one can reach a similar conclusion regarding age.

In addition to their relatively low educational achievements and to the fact that villagers from all age groups managed to win elections, the *sar-panches* of Rajasthan could be considered "normal" or "common" inso-far as almost all of them were also working men. No state-wide data exists on this question. But it is significant that seven out of the eleven *sarpanches* I observed in the course of my research continued to oversee the cultivation of their land. Of the remaining four *sarpanches*, one of them (a member of the Scheduled Castes) was a daily wage laborer in a wealthier family's farm situated outside the village, but benefited from remittances from his son, who had been allotted a government job in Jaipur.[29] Another *sarpanch*, who was heir of an aristocratic family and a businessman with real estate interests in Delhi and Dubai, represented an outlier to a near-comical degree, while the last two *sarpanches* were local shop owners. These men's residences also provided important clues to their respective socioeconomic standing. Save for the aforementioned outlier, each of the eleven *sarpanches* I studied lived in a relatively large and comfortable house in the village over which they presided, but the amenities of that residence did not significantly differ from the amenities of less well-off households. While none of them was among the poorest members of their community, none of them was dramatically rich at the time they became *sarpanch*, save for the aforementioned outlier.

Even more surprising perhaps is the fact that these *sarpanches* had little political experience prior to reaching the office of *sarpanch*. Only four of them had until then been elected to other positions at the local level (three as council members in their village, and one as *panchayat samiti* "director"[30]). These *sarpanches* also belonged to all sizable caste groups. In the Bikaner district, Jats had visibly become the dominant caste at the local level (and dominated in *sarpanch* elections), but this was not the

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[29] Although his new function was gradually drawing him out of his pre-election routine.
[30] A "director" is simply a council member at the *panchayat samiti* level.

case in the Jaipur district, where the caste makeup was less favorable to Jat candidates. All sizable communities, for instance, had one or several *sarpanches* across the thirty-five GPs that are included in the Bassi *tehsil* of the Jaipur district.

The caste diversity and low levels of political experience in this small sample, including in villages *not* headed by an SC *sarpanch*, starkly contrasted with the traditional image of the *sarpanch* as an elder drawn from one of the groups that have dominated rural Rajasthan for centuries (an image that was certainly influential prior to the current form of *panchayati raj* institutions). While Brahmins and Rajputs remain "overrepresented" at higher levels of government in contemporary Rajasthan (Jaffrelot and Kumar 2009), this did not appear to translate to the village level. The glorious past of a dominating local Rajput dynasty was conspicuously in evidence in most villages, from the imposing *havelis* (mansions) at the epicenter of the village to the families' frequent accounts of themselves as the "natural" rulers of the areas prior to the implementation of the modern *panchayati raj* system at the beginning of the 1990s.

The main explanatory factor in the rapid development of such a wave of relatively inexperienced political officials is obviously institutional. The conjunction of democratic elections with a system of rotation-based reservation automatically led to a diversification in the profiles of these officials. Due to the number of ethnic and gender categories for which elections are reserved (Rajasthan counts four: SC, ST, OBC, and women), male villagers who did not belong to any of these groups could potentially have been barred from running for four successive electoral periods, each of which lasting five years. Given the peculiarity and perceived unpredictability of this system of rotation-based reservation,[31] local political dynasties had been made more difficult to sustain, or had been interrupted. While many older villagers recalled, in interviews, the not-so-distant time when the office of *sarpanch* was passed from father to son, as was often the case before the 73rd Amendment Act required the organization of elections, the intricate institutional requirements of the modern *panchayati raj* system had irrevocably changed the situation.

The *sarpanches* my research assistants and I followed differed, however, from "common villagers" in several important respects. While no informal requirements in terms of wealth, education, or political experience appear to exist to become *sarpanch*, each of the officials I interviewed had been a community leader before they managed to win a local-level election. They had also invariably developed a connection with one – and in some cases, several – of the major political parties prior

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[31] I explain the intricacies of this system in detail in Chapter 5.

to contesting the *sarpanch* election, which is theoretically non-partisan (Rajasthan Panchayat Elections Rules, 1996). There were no differences in this regard between SC and non-SC *sarpanches*.

Three of the eleven *sarpanches* I followed had made themselves known to their constituents through their role in informal caste organizations at the local level; two others had been the equivalent of labor organizers. One of them had even organized a strike among the quarry workers of his village (although he himself was not one of them). One had been a fore-man (a "mate") on MNREGS projects and through this role had, in his own words, "convinced workers – especially women – that [he] could do something for them."[32] Four had actively campaigned for political parties during MLA elections, with various responsibilities. Some of these *sar-panches*, while they had not formally served as community organizers or politicians, had nonetheless been a resource for villagers from their own caste groups, who naturally turned to them when they needed assistance with various bureaucratic transactions.

Beyond this type of political work, all but two of these eleven *sar-panches* also admitted to having "required the assent" of local strongmen affiliated with partisan forces prior to declaring themselves as candidates. While my research did not allow me to determine whether SC *sarpanches* were more likely than others to require the assent of those powerful actors, it is likely the case that caste and social status would play a role in this process. Through the course of my interviews, I could not con-clusively determine whether the *sarpanches* had themselves requested to meet these powerful actors often located outside the village or whether they were *summoned* to do so. Seeking the support of political parties and/or powerful local interests emerged as a mandatory step, in the words of these leaders. As is explored later in the book, the form that village politi-cal campaigns have taken in recent times likely explains the need to reach out to powerful actors outside of the village.

While these aspects of their profiles may suggest that *sarpanches* are not exactly "common villagers," these few informal requirements remain relatively democratic in nature. Political ambitions now exist within all major groups. Almost any villager harboring political ambitions may pre-pare the ground for an election by putting effort into helping villagers around him in some capacity: as a simple broker, as a party worker, or as a self-proclaimed caste leader. Similarly, maintaining strategic ties with one or several political parties is costless, open to all, and may come in handy when election time comes, as the next section makes clear. As the cost of elections rise, this situation may be evolving in the near future.

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[32] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 11, on March 17, 2012.

In many urban contexts in India, where the cost of elections is dispro-
portionately higher than it is in villages (and increasing), parties already
refuse to give tickets to applicants who cannot back their campaign with
serious personal assets (Chauchard n.d.). While this was overall not true
of rural Rajasthan at the time my fieldwork took place, this will likely
change over the next few electoral periods.

3.3.2   *The Winner of an Epic Electoral Battle*

In spite of their tendency to present themselves as common men, the
sarpanches I met were not shy when it came to their electoral feats. Each
of them had won a village-level election for a position that was once con-
sidered unimportant, but they usually recounted the narrative of their
victory with a surprising amount of detail, and with visible pride. While
such a display of pride may at first seem exaggerated, the extremely com-
petitive nature of *sarpanch* elections in most of rural India – including
Rajasthan – in part justifies this attitude. In Rajasthan, as in a majority
of states, villagers directly elect their *sarpanches*. During these elections,
villagers pick among several candidates[33] after a short but heated cam-
paign.[34] The challenging nature of these campaigns implies that winning
candidates managed to overcome a number of social, legal, and finan-
cial hurdles. Winning campaigns are also required to have bested a large
number of determined competitors, some of whom had likely resorted
to particularly malicious campaigning techniques. The following para-
graphs draw from my interviews with winning candidates – and a few
unsuccessful ones – to explore each of these aspects of *sarpanch* elections.

  First, the number of candidates running for these elections is aston-
ishing. In 2010, according to the Rajasthan state Panchayati Raj depart-
ment, an average of 5.15 candidates ran in *sarpanch* elections that took
place in general seats (open to all candidates regardless of their back-
grounds), while an average of 4.5 candidates competed in seats that had
been reserved for a caste or gender category.[35] As in other states, these
numbers have been constantly on the rise since the first *gram panchayat*
election of 1995. Three factors explain the popularity of these elections.
First, the position of *sarpanch* is an attractive one, for reasons I return

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[33] As for all major elections in India, the winner of a plurality of the votes – according to
the first-past-the-post system – becomes the *sarpanch* for five years.

[34] For a rare long-form journalism outlook on *sarpanch* elections, see the excellent piece by
Vij (2010).

[35] Reservation reduces the number of eligible villagers allowed to run. For instance, wher-
ever the position of *sarpanch* is reserved for members of the SCs, only SC individuals can
stand for election. The different between SC and open seats on this dimension is thus
logical.

to in the next few pages. The second factor is that *sarpanch* elections are relatively open elections. Given the absence of expectations in terms of candidate qualifications or partisanship, villagers from all walks of life try their luck. Some of them stand no chance of victory, at least in the short run, and thus appear to run for motivations that extend beyond the election at hand. Because these elections are now extremely widely contested, a number of villagers hoping to build a base for other electoral contests frequently join in the fray. The third factor that probably contributes to the inflated number of contestants relates to the dubious means deployed by those eager to triumph in local elections: decoy candidates, designed to undercut the vote banks that viable competitors are thought to possess among certain groups,[36] are frequent. In spite of the recurrent presence of decoy candidates on the ballot (six out the eleven *sarpanches* I interviewed *explicitly* accused some of their competitors of having been decoy candidates), viable candidates are not rare. Statistics I personally compiled from electoral records for all GPs in the district of Bikaner[37] suggest that many candidates are viable candidates: an average of more than three contenders in each GP had obtained more than 10 percent of expressed votes in that district during the 2005 elections.

The official electoral campaign these various candidates are legally allowed to run is short (one week), but viable candidates discreetly work at assembling a winning coalition months in advance. The *sarpanches* I met had typically "declared" themselves to their family, and then to local opinion-makers (elected officials, caste leaders, elders, schoolmasters and cooperative presidents), two to three months ahead of the election, as soon as the reservation status of their GP had been announced by the election office of the district collectorate (that is, as soon as they knew whether they were effectively *allowed* to run, as per reservation rules). But many of them also mentioned that they had been strategically planning for an election even earlier, by purposefully engaging in the type of community service described above. As a sarpanch that served as MNREGS "crewmate" confessed[38]: "As soon as the previous sarpanch had been elected, I decided I also wanted to run. If he [a member of the Scheduled Tribes] could do it, I thought I should also try. So I started speaking to people … asking around … I first convinced my uncle here. Then, some Gujjars [i.e., members of his caste]. Then we agreed that I should take more shifts on the MNREGS in order for other people to get to know me."

In describing the constituencies that they had sought to court during their campaign, the *sarpanches* I interviewed primarily referred to two

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[36] The electoral system is a classic first-past-the-post system, hence the value of adding potential decoy candidates.

[37] Electoral statistics at the GP level are not compiled at a level higher than the district. I was able to access these records of the district electorate of the Bikaner district in February–March 2009.

[38] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 9 and his two maternal uncles on March 17, 2012.

types of identity categories. Without being prompted to do so, they first unanimously narrated the story of their victory in caste terms. This was equally the case for candidates who had contested a reserved seat and candidates who had contested an open seat. While doing so, they often treated caste groups as blocks, telling me that they had received the votes of caste X and Y, but not of caste Z, which suggests that these officials – like most other important players at the local level – assumed that voting was more of a collective than an individual act. In almost all of these narratives, however, *sarpanches* also mentioned one or several groups whose vote had been split across several candidates, which in turn suggests that caste was not, in their eyes, the *only* criterion of vote choice. Echoing the declarations of most other *sarpanches*, a young official from the Phagi block described his electoral base as such: "The Jats and the Brahmins voted for me, and about 50% of the Bairwas."[39] The other kind of group that emerged from these narratives was based on location. *Sarpanches* frequently claimed to have received the votes of a specific hamlet or neighborhood within the GP, or at least a fraction of it (as in, for instance, "75 percent of X hamlet also voted for me"). Even if the correlation between location and caste is high in Indian villages, *sarpanches* did not purely refer to caste when citing these various locations. Many voters my collaborators and I interviewed indeed appeared to favor candidates who lived in their own part of the GP, regardless of caste, presumably because they saw proximity of the candidate as the promise of added benefits.[40] Interestingly, in spite of the fact that most viable candidates appear to be connected to political parties, and contrary to findings suggesting that patronage goods are distributed along the lines of partisan affiliations (Dunning and Nilekani 2013), my interviewees rarely referred to their constituents in partisan terms.[41]

While all former candidates I interviewed had first deployed efforts to convince their coethnics, it is notable that not all of them had been successful, and that many of those that had been successful had had to work hard for it, suggesting that caste solidarity was not a given. Since it is not rare to observe multiple candidates from the same caste group in these elections, candidates can, in fact, rarely assume that they will safely bag

[39] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 3, May 22, 2009.
[40] This echoes a finding in Besley, Pande, and Rao (2005), which empirically shows that villagers are advantaged in terms of public goods provision when their *sarpanch* hails from the same village or hamlet as them. This may be due to several mechanisms: villagers' better ability to monitor the official when he or she is close to them, or the official's desire to target benefits toward its neighbors or toward oneself.
[41] This may be either because partisanship does not matter as much as Dunning and Nilekani suggest or because the various caste-based coalitions that *sarpanches* refer to tend to be correlated with partisan affiliations.

the votes of their coethnics. This is made even more complicated by the fact that other types of affiliations – based on location or partisanship – may matter. When I asked a Jat *sarpanch* of the Bikaner block which community had been the toughest to win over, he did not hesitate: "Jats! Sure they knew me. But Jats did not vote for me because I am a Jat. They voted for me because I convinced them that they should trust me. We organized a meeting, where I told them they should not trust the other Jat candidate … that he does not care about development. Then they started supporting me."[42]

Given the general difficulties in rallying the votes of their own coethnics, and given the fractionalized caste structure of Rajasthani villages,[43] the candidates I interviewed had spared no effort in convincing members of other groups to support them. This was equally the case for candidates who had contested a reserved seat and candidates who had contested an open seat. Both types of candidates had typically paid a visit to the most vocal leaders of all groups, unless they had been certain of a negative outcome. In at least two cases, the winning candidates had even invited villagers of all castes to feasts, in keeping with well-established norms in Rajasthani politics (Piliavski 2014). In one of them, the then-candidate had staged an all-encompassing feast: a tent had been erected and goat meat had been served to all villagers who had answered the call, reportedly without any exceptions.[44]

In the words of the most candid of my interlocutors, the last week before the vote – that is, the official campaign periods – was less about effort and convincing than about gifts and dirty tricks. During this period, candidates sometimes paraded throughout villages in jeeps that had been equipped for the occasion with powerful sound systems, as their entourage prominently displayed the electoral symbol and chanted professional-sounding slogans. Sophisticated political maneuvering also took place during the last few days (and nights) leading up to these elections. As has been reported elsewhere (Vij 2010), competing candidates have taken recourse to a variety of licit and illicit campaign strategies in order to win these elections. Three of the *sarpanches* reportedly had had to extinguish vicious rumors spread against them. Although none of my eleven interviewees admitted to having engaged in such violations, six of them declared that *their opponents* had distributed gifts, often in the form

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[42] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 4, September 14, 2009.
[43] The average size of the single biggest group in each of the villages sampled in the quantitative section of this book was 31%.
[44] From interviews with *sarpanch* of village 1, May 12, 2009, and *sarpanch* of village 11, on December 14, 2011.

of liquor pouches. One openly accused his opponent of having distributed hundred-rupee notes.[45]

Based on these narratives, it appears clear that the financial costs of these local campaigns have now become considerable. While none of my interviewees shared the details of their campaign costs, one of them provided me with a rather vague but nonetheless informative estimate: "Between the vehicles, printing, meals and gifts, to win a sarpanch campaign, you need to invest in between one and two lakh [hundred thousand] rupees."[46] Assuming that this number was not blown out of proportion – estimates elsewhere (Vij 2010) suggest that it is not – this imprecise estimate already implies a number of important facts. It first implies that whoever gets elected would need to recover a considerable investment (worth several years of income for a typical household) while in office. While candidates receive campaign funding from the state election commission, the amounts remain extremely modest and, in the words of one candidate, "do not even allow for vehicles to be rented."[47] Second, relatedly, it is likely that successful candidates would need to borrow such an amount, given their socioeconomic standing. Although my data does not allow me to reach a definitive conclusion on this point, one may imagine that the powerful and connected local brokers described earlier play a role here. It may, for instance, be the case that villagers reach out beyond the village in preparation for an electoral bid due to the now inflated cost for campaigns to have a chance at being successful.

After an agitated last week, Election Day was usually described as rather peaceful and uneventful. Statistics from the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj department suggest that extremely few election-related incidents take place during these elections (State Election Commission Report 2010), presumably due to the presence of policemen and assessors in the village on that day. On the other hand, another statistic testifies to the importance of these elections for villagers: according to the Rajasthan State election commission, voter participation in 2005 and 2010 has been more than 77 percent, much higher than they are for general elections (for which turnout has historically stagnated between 60 percent and 65 percent). *Sarpanches* are thus chosen through a process in which most of the village is involved.

Beyond providing *sarpanches* with democratic legitimacy, the events taking place during these campaigns durably shape the incentives of *sarpanches*. As they require funds, influence, and organizational skills to

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[45] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 9, March 9, 2012.
[46] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 10, May 10, 2012. In U.S. dollars, between $1,500 and $4,000.
[47] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 10, May 10, 2012.

win these very competitive elections, successful candidates often become indebted – monetarily and otherwise – to a number of influential parties, both within and outside the village. If that is the case, we should expect their actions in office to be primarily geared toward pleasing these influential actors. In light of the extensive efforts deployed by candidates to woo voters, we may also expect victorious candidates to make decisions favorable to those communities that supported them on Election Day once they are in office. Given the heterogeneous makeup of most Rajasthani villages, the coalitions that lead successful candidates to office by definition reach across group boundaries. As a result, the winning candidate is usually elected due to the votes of villagers that are not from his own community. While caste-based reservations necessarily result in the election of a member of the targeted caste category, the *sarpanches* elected in reserved seats owe their victory in equal measure to members of other groups. Given these and other facts, the incentives of *sarpanches* – including *sarpanches* elected in reserved seats – may be more complicated than previous models of redistributive politics (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004) have suggested, as I further detail in Chapter 4.

3.3.3   A Member of the Village Council

While the incentives of *sarpanches* during the campaign dictate their behavior once in office, their behavior is also conditioned by the space left to them by other institutional actors. What *capacity* and *discretion* do *sarpanches* then have to influence the main decisions reached by the *gram panchayat*?[48] More generally speaking, what is the extent of their policy-making powers in comparison to other actors of local government? In this section, I provide a general answer to these questions before highlighting an important way in which SC *sarpanches in practice* differ from other *sarpanches*.

According to official acts, *gram panchayats* are in charge of a range of decisions. In spite of an impressive list of formal attributions, however, their day-to-day work burden remains relatively easy to summarize.[49] GPs mostly make decisions in two key areas. The first one is beneficiary selection for central and state welfare schemes. As mentioned before, each year *gram panchayats* select the names of households that are to become beneficiaries for each of these schemes. Since eligibility for many

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[48] I borrow this typology between discretion and capacity from Dunning and Nilekani (2013).

[49] Because most of these responsibilities are vaguely defined and/or remain unknown to them, the *sarpanches* we met in practice ignored most of them (an observation concurrent with what Purohit et al. 2002 had already noticed).

of these schemes is determined by the GP itself (for instance, by controlling caste certificates or measuring whether a household lies "below the poverty line"), this first implies a number of decisions regarding eligibility.[50] Second, for a number of these schemes, the GP can decide on the *order* in which eligible beneficiaries are added to some of these lists. Many schemes indeed provide household public goods – such as houses, toilets, or water taps – on a rotating basis to a limited number of households within each GP every year, until all needy households are eventually equipped.

The second area in which GPs make important and potentially controversial decisions concerns the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, such as streetlights, roads, and drains. GPs make three types of important decisions regarding infrastructure. They first decide on the type of infrastructure to prioritize. Second, they decide on the location of those infrastructure projects. Third, they decide on the subcontractors to whom each job is allocated. Each of these decisions is politically charged.

What is the specific influence of *sarpanches* on each of these decisions? According to official acts, decision-making is democratic within the village council. Each elected member of the council – including the *sarpanch* – has one vote, and decisions are taken by majority rule; decisions are then recorded and documented by the *gram sevak*, or *panchayat* secretary (Rajasthan Panchayat Act 1994). Given the frequency of ad hoc arrangements in local institutions, and the tendency of unelected officials such as *gram sevaks* to thwart or interfere in the policy-making process, however, one cannot assume that these institutions function according to this principle.

Looking closer at the daily interactions within the *gram panchayats* suggests that the decision-making process is somewhat heterogeneous, since the scope of a *sarpanch*'s influence depends, to a great extent, on her social status prior to her election. In those few villages where the sarpanch is perceived as "weak," inexperienced, or illegitimate, both the council members and the unelected secretary exert their full influence. Given the prevalence of caste-based prejudice and discrimination, it is unsurprising that GPs in which the position of *sarpanch* has been reserved for a member of a disadvantaged caste group such as the SCs would tend to fall in this category. In that case, the decision-making

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[50] This feature opens the door to the diversion of funds to illegitimate beneficiaries, as many villagers suspect. While, in theory, block-level authorities control the eligibility criteria of potential beneficiaries for each scheme, these controls on the ground may be insufficient to prevent corruption, or block-level officials may work hand-in-hand with members of the g*ram panchayat* to divert resources.

process approximates the democratic procedure formally outlined in the Act. Even though a formal vote rarely takes place, different voices are heard until a form of consensual agreement is reached. On the contrary, in villages where the *sarpanch* is instinctively perceived as "legitimate" – because of his age, his background, and especially because of his caste – the *sarpanch* tends to have an overblown influence on decision-making, and in some cases effectively rules alone.[51]

This assessment emerges from my interviews with the different actors involved with *gram panchayats*. When interviewed on the topic of decision-making in the *gram panchayat*, the three SC *sarpanches* who were part of my sample emphasized the collegiality of decisions and the need to reach a consensual agreement. One of them even openly acknowledged the weakness of his influence and the fact that one of the councilmen – a veteran politician who had previously served in various local-level positions – pulled many strings: "I'm the *sarpanch* but the council is not with me; they go with what *ward-panchji* [referring to that elder member of the council] says."[52] Such a situation is much more unlikely in *gram panchayats* headed by members of locally dominant castes, such as Rajputs or Jats. These men usually described their role of *sarpanch* with a great deal of confidence, and almost never emphasized the collegial nature of decisions in the *gram panchayat*. Instead, they often portrayed the action of the GP as their own personal action ("I installed two hand pumps, 10 street lights, and redid the road between the two hamlets," one *sarpanch* for instance told me[53]), and reduced the role of councilmen to that of mere rubber-stamps.

These intuitions were confirmed by my interviews with *panchayat* secretaries. Secretaries in charge of GPs that had been reserved for a member of the Scheduled Castes similarly tended to minimize the influence of the *sarpanch* when they described the decision-making process. They emphasized the collegial nature of the GP, but also never failed to underline their own influence on decision-making. Nevertheless, they would never have dared to make such an assertion in a non-reserved GP, especially if the *sarpanch* himself was present during the interview. As mentioned earlier, due to their comparatively high level of education and their prestigious affiliation with the state administration, secretaries often are perceived as conceited when they describe the other actors of the *gram panchayat*. Even though secretaries tend to self-define

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[51] In many of these cases, the *sarpanch* may thus be considered as wielding a "charismatic" type of authority.

[52] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 11, March 13, 2012.

[53] Interview with *sarpanch* of village 5, May 22, 2009.

their function as one of oversight,[54] there were important nuances in the way they described this role. The secretaries employed in non-reserved GPs tended to emphasize the need for the *sarpanch* and the secretary to work hand-in-hand, as equals. By contrast, the secretaries employed in reserved GPs straightforwardly emphasized their influence on the *sarpanch*, even noting – in one case – the absolute need for the sarpanch to be *guided*: "he [an SC *sarpanch*] could not do his job alone. He needs my advice about everything. Both the councilmen and myself, we do help him."[55]

The asymmetry of power across reserved and unreserved GPs, implicit in such statements, was confirmed by my observations of numerous *gram panchayat* meetings.[56] Both the positioning of the sarpanch and the degree to which he personally answered the queries of villagers differed across reserved and non-reserved villages, betraying the respective influence of different types of *sarpanches*. While most *sarpanches* were seated at the center of their council, at least one of the SC *sarpanches* I met repeatedly was in the habit of sitting at the extreme end of the long table that occupied the meeting room, which placed him at some distance from villagers, and not necessarily in their line of sight. All three SC *sarpanches* tended to redirect questions to either the *gram sevak* or to some of the most influential of their councilmen. By contrast, most other *sarpanches* confidently addressed the queries of villagers from a chair planted in the center of the room.

These observable differences across reserved and unreserved *gram panchayats* all point to a clear limitation of the reservation process: while members of disadvantaged groups can access the office of *sarpanch*, one with the potential for great influence, their actual impact on policy may be diminished in comparison to that of officials from other groups (Kumar and Rai 2005, Baviskar and Mathew 2009, Johnson 2003).

While these differences in treatment and capacity to shape policy deserve notice, they do not, however, imply that *sarpanches* from disadvantaged groups have no impact whatsoever on village life. There are several reasons why they may in fact still make a difference. The first one is that the "weak *sarpanches*" I have just described may not be as weak

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[54] This self-definition is in and of itself interesting, insofar as most *sarpanches* usually think of *gram sevaks* as administrative assistants.

[55] Interview with *gram sevak* of village 11, March 13, 2012.

[56] Gram panchayat meetings take place every two weeks in the *gram panchayat* building and are attended by the *sarpanch*, all councilmen, the *gram sevak*, and all state-employed workers posted to the village (teachers, midwives, nurses, etc.). While those "regular" biweekly meetings are less well attended than the biannual *gram sabhas*, they are also open to the public. As a result, many villagers take this opportunity to obtain documents they need or to raise issues in public.

four years into their term, as I explain later. Even the "weakest" of the SC *sarpanches* I followed over the last few years had visibly gained in confidence by the end of his term: although he originally did not raise his voice during meetings, he clearly led them after a few years in this position. The second reason may be obvious but is nonetheless worth mentioning: even a weak influence on decision-making may be better than no influence at all. Insofar as members of the Scheduled Castes would presumably not access offices in the absence of reservation, the influence of SC villagers on decision-making remains higher under reservation, in spite of these limitations. The third and most important reason is that the role of *sarpanch* in village life goes far beyond their "legislative" role in the allocation process, as I explore in the next subsection.

3.3.4   The Highest Executive Authority in the Village

In spite of the potentially limited influence of some *sarpanches* on policy-making within the GP, it can be argued that *all sarpanches* – including those relatively "weak" ones drawn from disadvantaged groups – play a prominent role in the village's affairs. In order to develop this nuance, this section introduces two conceptual distinctions regarding the role played by *sarpanches* in village life.

The first one is a distinction between what may be called "legislative" powers (i.e., decision-making or policy powers) and "executive" powers. While the previous section has insisted on the relative legislative powers of different types of *sarpanches*, it is necessary here to enumerate the extensive executive powers of *sarpanches* and to emphasize why these should not be overlooked.

The executive powers of *sarpanches* matter for two reasons. The first one is that they are extensive and as such allow the *sarpanch* to play a predominant role in village life, regardless of his background or perceived legitimacy. Second, unlike their decision-making powers, these executive powers are not shared with anyone. Since the *sarpanch's* signature and stamp are required on all official documents produced by the *gram panchayat*, *sarpanches* are indispensable to the village council and to villagers trying to obtain official documentation.[57] Even more importantly, Rajasthani *sarpanches* are the only village-level officials authorized to

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[57] Like many other state actors in rural India, they are likely to derive tangible and intangible benefits by being handed such a monopoly over the production of official titles (Chandra 2004). While such a role may seem trifling, my observations in rural Rajasthan suggest that it is not. *Sarpanches* wield the stamp that they carry in the pocket of their shirt with great pride, and villagers seem to be continuously trying to locate their *sarpanch* in order to obtain certification for a document. This presumably minor power makes the *sarpanch* both unavoidable and powerful.

disburse funds to buy materials for construction. They have the power to sign checks, a rather uncommon power among elected representatives in India.[58] As a result, all those villagers awaiting the release of funds by the *gram panchayat* are particularly focused on maintaining good relations with their *sarpanch*. Once funds have been transferred, *sarpanches* are personally in charge of ensuring that public works are implemented, and are asked to report irregularities to block-level authorities. As a result, workers and contractors on development projects need to ensure that the *sarpanch* will, at least, cooperate with them. Since the monitoring functions of *sarpanches* are not restricted to public works projects, many other villagers also need to cultivate relationships with the *sarpanch*. Since *sarpanches* can request that their *gram sevak* and a host of other state workers in the village (especially teachers) be transferred, each of these actors has a direct interest in developing a relationship with their *sarpanch*.

These various powers make *sarpanches* highly visible in village life. They also provide them with a great deal of influence on various sets of villagers, *regardless of their impact on formal decision-making within the council*. This likely means that even if powerful local interests hope to exert their influence over a "weak *sarpanch*," they cannot altogether bypass him. Since his executive powers are extensive and may allow him to unilaterally derail efforts by other officials to misallocate goods or divert funds, *sarpanches* – including weak ones – need to be on board if such manipulations are to take place.

Sarpanches also play an important and highly visible role in village life in their informal capacity as intermediaries. Given their executive responsibilities, *sarpanches* are frequently in contact with government officers at the block and district levels to ensure that funds sanctioned for the village are released. Based on the itineraries and schedules of three *sarpanches* I followed continuously for more than six months, these officials visit the block headquarters, on average, more than three times *a week* in order to ensure the timely transfer of funds to the village or to solve other issues. As village council heads, they also represent the village in various institutions and assemblies at the block and district levels, and are required to maintain relations with a host of locally powerful actors (including the police). As such, *sarpanches* constitute the focal point of contact between government officers, elected officials at higher levels of government, and the village community.

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[58] While this power was briefly taken away from *sarpanches* in 2010 – and left to civil servants at the block level – after accusations of rampant corruption emerged, the right to sign checks was given back to *sarpanches* a few months later, after the state government was placed under pressure by intense and violent protests led by *sarpanches* throughout the state (Yadav 2010).

Because block-level authorities do not receive an official below the rank of *sarpanch*, regardless of their identity, this is an area in which *sarpanches* have a clear edge over councilmen and secretaries. Due to the *sarpanch*'s unique position as an intermediary, villagers in need of assistance will typically crowd their courtyard in order to ask that they intervene in their favor during one of their upcoming meeting with block- or district-level authorities.[59]

All *sarpanches* – regardless of their background – are thus perceived as important and respected authorities in their respective villages. Insofar as they are the highest executive authority in the village, *sarpanches* are highly visible and are continuously solicited by villagers. Because of this unique position, all *sarpanches* typically command a great deal of respect among villagers, even when their influence on the decisions of the council is minor. While some *sarpanches* undeniably receive more respect than others due to their caste identity, there is little doubt that all individuals who become *sarpanches* register a net gain in respectability, due to the centrality of their function in village life. Because of the connections their executive functions require them to build at the block and district levels, they are, in addition, a potentially useful resource for any villager expecting funds or documents to be released from higher levels of government. For all of these reasons, villagers derive a good deal of prestige and respect from becoming sarpanch, regardless of their identity.

Given the prestige and power that they can derive from these exclusive executive functions, why is it then that "weak *sarpanches*" do not manage to have a greater influence on policy? Since influence in one area may be traded for influence in another, we should logically expect that *sarpanches* who are indispensable in light of their executive functions would be able to gain influence on policy. It is necessary to introduce a second important conceptual distinction in order to understand why this may not necessarily be the case. This distinction is one between the influence that *sarpanches* wield *on the day they get into office* and the influence they have carved for themselves *at the end of their term*. While the influence of strong, experienced, and legitimate *sarpanches* should be expected to remain more or less stable from the

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[59] *Sarpanches* typically receive individuals, from all castes, in their courtyard to hear their demands. They also occasionally summon feuding villagers to explain themselves. This is the case, for instance, in resolving issues related to land encroachment between neighbors. As I was able to observe in one village in Phagi, a *sarpanch* may serve as an ad hoc "justice of the peace" in such situations. After having consulted the local caste elders, the *sarpanch* (who was a Jat) decided the ownership status of a small parcel of land, a decision that was reportedly respected by villagers.

onset to the end of their tenure, and span across both the "legislative" and "executive" areas that I have defined earlier, the same may not apply to those *sarpanches* to whom I have referred in this chapter as "weak" *sarpanches*, and for whom there may instead be a learning curve. "Weak *sarpanches*," I argue, should be expected to start their tenure with influence in the executive area but with little or limited influence on policy decisions. Since they have a monopoly over a number of the executive functions they perform (they at the very least are the only ones to *sign* and *stamp*), it is unsurprising that even "weak" *sarpanches* would have executive influence from the get-go. The question, then, is whether "weak *sarpanches*" progressively manage to build on this monopoly in order to extend their influence on policy, and how long it takes for them to do so.

Based on my limited sample, it is very possible that these "weak *sarpanches*" succeed in progressively extending their influence over time. The length of their tenure as well as the rotating nature of reservation for the position of *sarpanch*, however, usually limits their ability to become as influential as other types of *sarpanches*. Each of the three SC *sarpanches* I followed revealed that they had become much better at asserting their preferences in front of other council members, and that they had had to resort to hard bargaining to do so. As a case in point, one of them had threatened to stop lobbying the officials responsible for the release of funds at the block level (the accountant and the BDO) for projects he had originally disapproved of. In spite of the possibility of such a steep learning curve, their influence on the council remained comparatively limited several years after they had stepped into their positions. It is relatively easy to understand why this is the case: the process of trading influence in one area for influence in another is a time-intensive one, particularly for inexperienced officials, and "weak *sarpanches*" actually have little time since they are almost never in office for more than a single five-years mandate (e.g., in 2009, only 6 SC *sarpanches* had managed to win an election across the more than 4,500 seats open to all candidates throughout the state of Rajasthan). Since other members of the village council are well aware of the fact that the "weak" *sarpanch* would, in all likelihood, return to being a mere citizen once his term is over, they in turn feel less obliged to concede more influence to the *sarpanch*. It is thus not that paradoxical that many *sarpanches* drawn from disadvantaged groups would simultaneously be so important in village life due to their extensive executive functions, and so ineffective in terms of their ability to influence the most important decisions taken by the village council.

3.3.5   An Upwardly Mobile Individual

While I have shown in the previous section that *sarpanches* strive to extend their influence over the council, mere power is obviously not the endgame for the villagers who hope to become *sarpanch*. There is, undeniably, a more concrete reason behind the hotly contested nature of village elections. Given the absence of clear political beliefs among these officials, it is rarely the case that the reason is ideological. As I show in this section, the direct or indirect monetary return that *sarpanches* derive from their position probably constitutes a more influential factor.

Sarpanches receive a relatively meager monthly salary (Rs. 3,000, or $60, as of 2012). A vast majority of them, however, seem able to increase their net wealth during their tenure in proportions that appear unrelated to their previous income or to their official income. *Sarpanches'* new connections, as well as their central role in assisting with local development works, almost invariably provide them with the ability to launch a profitable contracting or land acquisition business. Five out of the eight *sarpanches* on whom the first stage of this ethnographic research focused throughout 2009 had a new career after their term ended in 2010. One of the *sarpanches* interviewed in 2011–2012 had successfully launched a profitable land acquisition business after he had reached office in 2010.

The central position of the sarpanch in village institutions also likely enables these officials to embezzle public funds, especially when they already run their own contracting businesses. In spite of a generalized presumption of corruption among most villagers in most villages, hard evidence for these accusations against *sarpanches* is, unsurprisingly, scarce. Two facts can nevertheless be considered about this question. Given the exponential growth in the money flowing to *gram panchayats* with the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGS), the sums that *sarpanches* have the power to disburse have become even more substantial. Even if only a minuscule part of these funds were indecorously captured by *sarpanches* (either through wage capture or overcharged procurements of materials), the sums allocated would allow for a spectacular multiplication of that official's wealth. In connection to this point, it is notable that the *sarpanches* of Rajasthan violently resisted the implementation of social audits whose objective was to account for MNREGS-related spending in 2010, which most likely suggests that these audits would have uncovered serious mismanagement of these funds (Yadav 2010).

Regardless of whether their activities are licit or illicit, *sarpanches'* new connections provide them with new opportunities to amass wealth. Such

connections ultimately pave a path to social mobility for the official and his immediate family (Baviskar and Matthew 2009, Kumar & Rai 2005). My personal observations provide anecdotal evidence for this. The major acquisitions made by *sarpanches* and their families during their tenure suggest that in most cases they become conspicuously richer. Six out of the eight *sarpanches* that I observed during the first stage of this field research had recently acquired their first-ever sport utility vehicle, thus earning the widely popular nickname of "Bolero *sarpanches*."[60] An overlapping sample of six out of the eight *sarpanches* had also engaged in major renovation works at their main residence. These sudden and visible changes in socioeconomic status existed both among the SC *sarpanches* that I observed and the other *sarpanches*, although the degree to which these officials were able to accumulate wealth was clearly a function of their influence. Note, finally, that such conspicuous consumption was rarely observable among the simple village council members (i.e., the "ward-panchs") that I observed and interviewed.

Many villagers confirmed these observations, pointing out that their *sarpanch*'s practical role in assisting with funds disbursement from higher levels of government placed him at the center of scams and opened the door to personal embezzlement[61] and, ultimately, paved a path to social mobility for him and his family. While these assertions were difficult to verify, the ubiquity of the claim and its coherence with the aforementioned observations nonetheless suggest that there is some truth to these declarations.[62] Interestingly, however, my interlocutors rarely used the language of clear disapproval or condemnation to describe the almost automatic ability of elected *sarpanches* to become rich. More often than not, this was described envyingly as a chance or an opportunity for the *sarpanch*'s extended family. In that sense, *sarpanches* constituted twisted role models for many villagers with aspirational ambitions.

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[60] Boleros are top-of-the-line Mahindra-brand SUVs, and extremely popular in rural India.

[61] Because the *sarpanch* cannot directly capture the salaries of workers on development-related projects (such as the MNREGS, for which sums are directly deposited in workers' bank accounts), a common scam in which *sarpanches* and other local officials reportedly took part came in the form of "ghost workers" on these projects. These officials vouched that villagers had spent time working on a project in which they had not taken part, and later collected part of the amount that the "ghost worker" had received into their accounts. By far the most common form of embezzlement that was reported to me, however, related to the (excessive) sums disbursed in order to buy materials for these development projects. Because *gram panchayats* are legally obliged to paint a "price tag" on each project executed in the village, this form of embezzlement was sadly visible in many villages I visited.

[62] In that sense, one may seriously question the incentives given to *sarpanches* in a system that combines reservation with a system of rotation which most likely pushes them out of office after a single term.

3.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn from field research to depict in some detail, and with some nuances, the functioning of village-level political institutions in India and the identity of their main occupants. In this account, *sarpanches* have emerged as neither omnipotent nor powerless. While the funds they command are significant, and contain the promise of upward mobility for the official and his entourage, the activity of these individuals is constrained by a host of other actors in local politics. I have argued that this is especially likely to be true when these *sarpanches* lack the legitimacy necessary to establish their authority from the onset of their tenure, as is often the case with SC *sarpanches* – the empirical focus of the quantitative part of this study. In spite of the fact that SC *sarpanches* should be more likely to be "weak *sarpanches*" so far as decision-making is concerned, I have posited that all *sarpanches* nonetheless play a unique role in village life. Since they ultimately remain the highest executive authority at the village level, they play a visible and ceremonial role, develop connections with villagers of all groups, and maintain connections to influential officials outside the village.

Given these circumstances, what impact should we expect SC *sarpanches* to have on tangible and psychological outcomes? This is the question I address in the next chapter.

4 Theory: The Impact of Descriptive Representation

What impact should we expect policies of descriptive representation – such as reserved seats for members of the SCs – to have on the quality of intergroup relations? Should we expect them to degrade the quality of these relations, to have no effect at all, or to be a vector of positive social change? If so, how?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter proceeds in three steps. It first reviews existing theories in political science, sociology, and social psychology on the effect that a group's access to representation is expected to have on intergroup relations. In this first section, I show that contradictory intuitions coexist in the literatures on minority representation and descriptive representation, with some authors insisting that minority representation leads to decreased stereotypes and prejudice while others warn that it might instead trigger a "backlash". Reacting to this debate, the second part of the chapter shows that this theoretical opposition is limited in order to theorize over the potential effects that descriptive representation might have on intergroup relations. Reviewing a wide array of works on intergroup relations, redistributive politics, and belief change, I argue that both "backlash effects" and positives changes in stereotypes are conditional on a number of events, and that neither of these two outcomes is a likely consequence of policies of descriptive representation. However, I do *not* argue that a disadvantaged group's access to political representation should remain inconsequential, as there are other, so far relatively uncharted consequences of descriptive representation. The third section of the chapter draws on the case of the Scheduled Castes in rural India – and on my own qualitative work in Rajasthan – in order to explore these *other* psychological effects. Building *inductively* from this case, the fourth section summarizes the argument to be tested in the following chapters and lays out a number of hypotheses.

4.1   The State of the Debate: Less Negative Stereotypes or Backlash Effects?

Two contradictory theories have emerged so far from the empirical literature on the impact of descriptive representation on intergroup relations.

On the one hand, a relatively optimistic perspective has emerged, as a number of theoretical and empirical contributions have suggested that the accession of a few members of a disadvantaged group to political office should generate important *cognitive* changes (Phillips 1995, Mansbridge 1999, Hajnal 2001, Hajnal 2005, Beaman et al. 2009). In line with optimistic findings in the social-psychological literature on exposure to counterstereotypical individuals (Dasgupta and Asgari 2004, Dasgupta and Greenwald 2001, Sinclair et al. 2005) or in the literature on intergroup contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2005, these authors have insisted on the fact that stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes are malleable in response to social contexts or in response to the diversity of one's network. The following excerpt from Mansbridge (1999, pp 648-649) illustrates this logic:

In certain historical conditions, what it means to be a member of a particular social group includes some form of "second-class citizenship." Operationally, this is almost always the case when at some point in the polity's history the group has been legally excluded from the vote. In these conditions, the ascriptive character of one's membership in that group carries the historically embedded meaning, "Persons with these characteristics do not rule," with the possible implication, "Persons with these characteristics are not able to (fit to) rule." Whenever this is the case, the presence or absence in the ruling assembly (and other ruling bodies, such as the executive and judiciary) of a proportional number of individuals carrying the group's ascriptive characteristics shapes the social meaning of those characteristics in a way that affects most bearers of those characteristics in the polity.

While wordings have differed, arguments suggesting that a group's access to representation might improve stereotypes have relied on a common logic: access to political representation provides citizens with new information regarding politicians from disadvantaged groups. This new information, insofar as it contradicts prevalent stereotypes against members of a disadvantaged group, can have a revelatory or a signaling function. As citizens are exposed to a prominent member of a group with which they are otherwise rarely in contact during their daily lives, they learn about the ways of these politicians, and through these individuals about the ways of members of these groups. Insofar as this new information tends to be reassuring or disconfirming, they update their prior negative stereotypes about members of these groups and develop more tolerant

attitudes. Even though it also notes that these positive changes were often fleeting, recent evidence about the effect of the Obama victory supports this optimistic view (Welch and Sigelman 2011, Goldman and Mutz 2014). Besides, these effects are not limited to members of dominant or majority groups, as the new information disseminated by these new elected officials is likely to help them serve as "role models" among members of their own groups (Phillips 1995, Beaman et al. 2009).

Contrasting with this optimistic view, both US-centric and comparative works on intergroup relations and ethnic conflict have often suggested that descriptive representation is likely to have a more worrying impact. Over the past decades, a flurry of studies in sociology, psychology, and political science have suggested that the political inclusion of groups that have historically been excluded from political institutions can lead to strong negative reactions by members of dominant groups. These attitudinal and behavioral reactions, often characterized as "backlashes" or "backlash effects," have been described as stemming from reactions to a perceived threat. Blumer (1958) and Bobo (1983), for instance, have suggested that Americans of European descent are likely to respond negatively to the election of African-American politicians if they feel that it endangers the wealth and political power of the Caucasian-American community, or if they feel that black electoral victories may disrupt the traditional balance of racial power. Long before an Obama presidency appeared credible, both authors predicted that the election of black Americans to important leadership positions should *heighten* racial tension and result in a widespread "white backlash" against black Americans. Recent evidence suggesting that the first election of Barack Obama in 2008 did generate anxiety and less sympathetic attitudes toward African Americans lends credit to this argument (Valentino and Brader 2011).

Interestingly, this pessimistic view also seems supported by several episodes in the historical record of American racial relations. Southern whites famously responded to the expansion of black political power during the Reconstruction era with massive resistance, unprecedented violence, and a clear worsening of racial relations (Parker 1990, Foner 1984, Holt 1979). Sociological works measuring the effect of black political inclusion on aggregate levels of violence in other periods (Beck and Tolnay 1990, Jacobs and Woods 1999, Olzak 1990, Olzak 1992, Tolnay and Beck 1995) also concur with this conclusion. Olzak (1990), for instance, establishes a correlation between the political rise blacks in the U.S. South and lynching patterns. Other works have demonstrated the existence of similar mechanisms during the civil rights era (Stenner 1995), or in more recent patterns of hate crimes against other groups (Green, Strolovitch, and Wong 1998).

Beyond the case of the United States, both realistic (Coser 1956, LeVine and Campbell, 1972, Sherif, 1966) and emotion-based (Horowitz 1985, Petersen 2002) theoretical perspectives on conflict have suggested that the accession of new groups to power in ethnically diverse contexts could trigger negative and violent reactions. In the view of these theoreticians of conflict, antagonistic attitudes are the product of concerns about social status and the maintenance of the existing hierarchy of groups. In that sense, periods of transition in which an established group might have a lot to lose, given the assertiveness and the perceived upward mobility of another group, may generate antagonism and violence. According to this hypothesis, we should thus expect the implementation of descriptive representation to generate heightened antagonism and even violence, as "threatened" established groups resist any change perceived as having potentially negative consequences for their future welfare.

4.2   A Limited Framework

While these contradictory intuitions have so far framed the debate on the potential effects of policies of descriptive representation, this theoretical framework appears limited for a number of reasons, which need to be detailed.

While this section will develop these four points in turn, let me first provide a brief summary here. First, less negative stereotypes and "backlash effects" do not necessarily constitute competing outcomes. While these two reactions are unlikely to be simultaneous – that is, individuals' beliefs about members of a disadvantaged group are unlikely to become less stereotypical or less prejudiced as "backlash-type" behavioral reactions are taking place – both reactions may happen *over time* to the same individuals. Second, the key assumption of many theories of conflict may be flawed: contrary to what models of conflicts and redistributive politics often assume, we should *not* necessarily expect a group's access to representation through policies of descriptive representation to affect redistributive outcomes, or even to affect *perceptions* of redistribution. This is because redistributive effects are *conditional* on a host of demographic, political, and institutional factors, and as such, are relatively unlikely to take place. As a result, I argue that "backlash effects" are themselves conditional on *many* factors, relatively unlikely to happen, and most importantly that they should be expected to take place in some contexts but not in others. Third, an absence of backlash does not necessarily imply that policies of descriptive representation should *improve* stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes. This is because stereotypes are generally sticky, and changes in patterns of political representation constitute a

relatively unlikely factor of social change when negative beliefs are deeply anchored. Fourth and finally, I argue that other important group-related beliefs – beyond stereotypes – may be affected by this experience, in a way that may eventually transform intergroup relations. In sum, I argue that a group's access to representation, assuming it does not generate strong backlash-type reactions, can improve intergroup relations not through one but through several distinct psychological mechanisms.

4.2.1   Competing Hypotheses?

The first and important way in which this theoretical framework appears limited relates to the purported relationship between stereotypes and "backlash effects." Simply put, less negative stereotypes and "backlash effects" do *not* constitute competing hypotheses.

Intuitively, it seems unlikely that these two types of reactions would be simultaneous: if and when a disadvantaged group's access to representation fuels antagonistic emotions and behaviors, individuals are unlikely to receive and process the kind of information that may potentially lead them to update their hostile or discriminatory beliefs. That is, positive cognitive effects are unlikely to happen in the midst of a strong backlash-type reaction.

This, however, does not imply that positive cognitive effects cannot take place *after* "backlash effects" occur, if and when they occur. Insofar as they are not mutually exclusive, both types of reactions may in fact happen over time to the same individuals. Members of a dominant group may, for instance, feel threatened or angry when they first hear that a member of a stigmatized group will govern them, before being affected by cognitive changes after having experienced the leadership of that individual. More generally speaking, even if "backlash" effects and "positive" changes in group-related beliefs have sometimes been seen as alternative hypotheses (Hajnal 2001), they are *not* radically opposed reactions, insofar as they should be treated as phenomena of a different nature. Although they have rarely been precisely defined, "backlash effects" are typically described as stemming from the *affective* or *emotional* dimensions of prejudice (Petersen 2002, Horowitz 2001), while positive changes in stereotypes stem from the *cognitive* dimension of these intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). The timing of such reactions further suggests that the two phenomena are of a different nature: while backlash effects are seen as *short-term* reactions that take place in periods of transition in which information is scarce or uncertain, cognitive effects are described as the result of exposure to counterstereotypical individuals over time – that is, after citizens have been exposed to members of

disadvantaged groups, and after they have had sufficient time to acquire new information through this experience. Distinguishing between these long-term cognitive changes and more short-term emotional reactions, as well as taking the temporality of each of these reactions into account, thus appears necessary in order to build a more complete argument about the impact of descriptive representation on intergroup relations.

4.2.2   The Conditionality of "Backlash Effects"

A second limitation of this theoretical framework concerns the conditions under which one should expect to observe "backlash effects." Authors emphasizing the likelihood that descriptive representation leads to such effects highlight the fact that a new group's access to political representation "threatens the status quo" – that is, the existing distribution of material resources across groups (see, e.g., Bobo 1983). This is the reason, in these arguments, that often leads members of dominant groups to react violently and passionately against efforts to include new groups: because they fear that the accession of a new group to power will deprive them from their long-established material advantage.

 Yet such reasoning relies on a major assumption. That a group's access to political representation effectively leads to a redistribution of resources, or even that it leads to a *perception* that some minor form of redistribution will be taking place, indeed remains an assumption. Some policies of descriptive representation simply do *not* lead to any substantial redistribution (Jensenius forthcoming). Besides, it may not even be *perceived* as such. When and where redistributive effects do not occur, "backlash effects" are simply unlikely to take place and majority members are likely to carry on with their lives, without much opposition to the access to political representation of a new group. This, in turn, highlights the very conditionality of these "backlash effects." If the inclusion of a new group does *not* threaten the status quo, and is *not* perceived to, there may be no major reason to expect a violent and negative reaction from members of dominant groups. The following subsections detail why this is the case.

4.2.2.1 *Does Access to Representation Affect Redistribution?*   Institutional efforts to ensure descriptive representation – what I have called policies of descriptive representation in Chapter 1 – have often been seen as an important tool for redressing persistent inequalities based on group identities. In settings in which social and economic discriminations remain profound and ethnicity-based inequalities remain apparent in both education and labor markets, the provision of formal political power to disadvantaged groups may shift policy outcomes in their favor

(Duflo 2005). Such an effect has been seen as especially likely in settings where the distribution of state resources is organized along the lines of ethnicity, as in "patronage democracies" (Chandra 2004), or in polities in which suspicions of ethnic favoritism are widespread (Posner 2004). It has also formed the basis of many arguments justifying the need for gender quotas (Phillips 1995, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Provided substantive powers come attached to these institutional efforts, making representation more inclusive may change policies and increase the targeting of material benefits to members of disadvantaged groups.

Whether such redistribution results from these efforts is not straightforward, however. Such arguments have, explicitly or implicitly, relied on simple citizen-candidate models that assume that the preferences of individuals are more homogenous within social groups than across them. Assuming such preferences, policies of descriptive representation should trigger distributive changes favorable to that group. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) reach this conclusion in a landmark theoretical analysis of the impact of gender-based quotas. In their model, women trade off the cost of running for office against the benefit of implementing their desired policies if elected. In keeping with the two simple assumptions that (1) preferences are more homogenous within social groups than across social groups, and (2) officials elected on these quotas are able to influence policy choices, the authors predict that gender-based quotas should improve the welfare of the median female voter. Generalizing from the case of gender-based quotas, this simple model implies that variation in the social identity of political representatives should generate redistributive effects. In other words, members of traditionally underrepresented groups should be better off when one of them is in office.

Yet, from a theoretical standpoint, there are several reasons why a disadvantaged group's access to political representation may *not* lead to any significant redistribution. This is because models such as Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) have at least three important limitations, which can be enumerated here.

As acknowledged by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) themselves, the first limitation of a simple citizen-candidate model of politics derives from the fact that it "ignores possible effects on incentives, which would arise naturally if we embedded this model in a several-period model" (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004, pp. 14–20). In their straightforward one-period model in which members of different groups may value distinct policy outcomes, it naturally derives that politicians have both the preferences and the electoral incentives to target benefits to their group members. Thus, quotas should alter policy in favor of marginalized groups (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

This conclusion, however, is far from obvious once we consider the more complex real-world incentives of politicians competing over several periods. The *incentives* of elected politicians from disadvantaged groups are often more complex than what stylized models assume. Consider, first, the possibility that these elected officials have loyalties others than their assumed ethnic (or gender) loyalties. Suppose, for instance, that they belong to long-term political coalitions or to a party. If elected politicians from disadvantaged groups are also part of such a coalition or are motivated by a party line, they may *not* be likely to favor their coethnics in office. If partisanship or coalition-building play a role in politics, especially if the relevant parties are multiethnic in nature (i.e., composed of and targeting multiple groups), a group's access to representation is already less likely to generate any distributive effects (Preuhs 2006, Dunning and Nilekani 2013). Whether or not the political coalitions that politicians elected through policies of descriptive representation join are multiethnic (or more generally, heterogeneous) in turn depends on a variety of factors. The first one is obviously the ethnic makeup of the electorate. A simple intuition here is that the incentives to assemble a multiethnic coalitions would undeniably be greater when the electorate is fractionalized into a larger number of salient ethnic groups. Second, specific institutional features may increase the incentives for candidates or parties to join a coalition comprising several groups (Jensenius forthcoming). If and when they do, redistributive effects should be less obvious.

Besides, regardless of the kinds of coalitions elected politicians from disadvantaged groups join, the institutional arrangement allowing them to reach office matters. Details of the policies of descriptive representation through which members of disadvantaged groups reach office can condition their incentive to exercise effort, let alone to redistribute to their coethnics. Term limits have, for instance, been shown to shape the incentives of incumbents (Besley and Case 1995, Johnson and Crain 2004, Partasarathy n.d.), as the possibility of reelection incentivizes incumbents not to "shirk," as they need to develop a reputation among a plurality of voters; in doing so, it affects their policy choices and distributive decisions. Beyond term limits, many other institutional features of the system in which members of disadvantaged groups access offices similarly condition their incentives to adjust the status quo. Insofar as the electoral system and the electoral formula condition the likelihood that representatives cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995), it conditions the likelihood that they deviate from the party line. Similarly, decisions over the boundaries of electoral districts, insofar as they determine whether politicians from these groups campaign in front of their

coethnics or in front of a more fragmented population, similarly condition their incentives to target their coethnics once in office.

Beyond the fact that they fail to capture the potentially complex and conditional incentives of elected officials from disadvantaged groups, a second important limitation of these models comes from the fact that they assume that all elected politicians have the same ability to impose their preferred policies. Building on the typology introduced by Dunning and Nilekani (2013), officials from disadvantaged categories need to have both *capacity* and *discretion* in policy-making in order for distributive effects to take place. *Capacity* is established either if the elected politician personally presides over the distribution of important state resources, or if their role allows them – even indirectly, through deliberation with others in a committee or a council – to influence the decisions made regarding the allocation of these important resources. If policies of descriptive representation are restricted to political offices and institutions that are only responsible for the allocation of a small portion of state resources, it quite obviously follows that distributive effects should be more difficult to detect. Redistributive effects thus require *capacity*. But they will also be much more likely to emerge if the officials from disadvantaged groups that access these institutions also have *discretionary* powers. That is, if they can make decisions on their own, independently of what other influential institutional actors may advise or pressure them to do, either through coercion or because it provides these actors with an edge in a bargaining process.[1] In the absence of *capacity* (presence in an institution that controls large resources) **and** *discretion* (the ability to single-handedly allocate these resources), redistributive dynamics are much less likely to occur.

The third reason why a group's access to representation cannot be assumed to lead to redistribution relates to the fact that identity categories can be complex. Models such as Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) implicitly assume that politicians who benefit from policies of descriptive representation are associated with one, and only one, identity – that is, they disregard the possibility that politicians either belong to several crosscutting groups, or that they belong to several groups nested one into another, or that they embrace an identity that is different from the one that is socially ascribed by the quota. These models rely on the assumption that preferences are more homogenous within than across ethnic groups, but it is crucial to think about what the "politically relevant group" of those elected officials might be (Posner 2004). Importantly,

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[1] Members of both the legislative and executive branches may have discretion, although it is more obvious in the case of officials serving in executive positions.

this may not be the group that corresponds to the legal identity dimension that conditioned their access to office. Several dimensions of politicians' identity may influence their preferences once in office, regardless of the one they "activated" (Posner 2005, Chandra 2006) in order to be eligible for a quota. Accordingly they may have an interest in cultivating the vote of not one but several of the groups in which they themselves can claim membership. Besides, in some demographic or institutional contexts, they may have a different incentive to target a smaller group nested within the larger category to which they also belong.

Altogether, these various points suggest that policies of descriptive representation are in fact relatively *unlikely* to generate redistributive effects, or at least that such effects are conditional on a large number of institutional, demographic, and contextual variables. This at the very least suggests that that "backlash effects" should be expected to take place in some contexts but not in others.

4.2.2.2 *Is Access to Representation Perceived to Affect Redistribution?* Regardless of the actual effects that descriptive representation might have on redistribution, should we not expect that descriptive representation will at least increase *perceptions* that a reordering of the social system has happened, is happening, or will happen? Answering this question is important insofar as a mere *perception* that the inclusion of a new group will lead to redistributive effects could, in and of itself, generate "backlash effects." This is after all what emotion-based theories of conflict (Horowitz 1985, Petersen 2002), through their emphasis on the various psychological and emotional mechanisms triggering antagonistic reactions, presume.

In doing so, these authors have often implied that prevalent suspicions of redistribution may be somewhat unrelated to the actual distribution of resources, or to efforts to alter it. This disconnect is coherent with the timing of such reactions: since these reactions often take place before or during the access of members of new groups to offices, they by definition have little to do with the actual policies implemented by these new officials. Since suspicions of ethnic favoritism are prevalent in multiethnic polities (Posner 2005), the arrival of a new group in office may be sufficient to trigger such effects, independently of the policies implemented by these individuals. Yet, while such perceptions likely exist in many contexts, and while the timing of "backlash effects" suggests that *perceptions* are often sufficient to generate violent negative reactions (Petersen 2002), a group's access to representation should not systematically be expected to generate such threatening perceptions. This is because such perceptions are equally *conditional* on a number of factors.

They are, first, a function of time and of the experience that members of dominant groups have already accumulated in regards to policies of descriptive representation. If members of dominant groups know from experience that the political inclusion of members of disadvantaged groups does not affect their own livelihood, that the effects of such inclusion are – for any of the reasons stated in the preceding section – generally weak, or that the new powers given to members of disadvantaged groups can be checked or counterbalanced within or outside political institutions, we should not expect them to feel threatened. If so, they should not see the need to engage in an otherwise costly "backlash." More generally speaking, we should expect potential "backlash effects" to be more likely the *first* time members of a stigmatized group access representation. "Backlash effects" should thus be more likely to occur around the time institutional arrangements to better include a group are discussed, or around the time these efforts are first implemented, than a few terms into their implementation. Wherever policies of descriptive representation do not fundamentally threaten the status quo – for any of the reasons stated in the preceding section – we should expect that there would be a learning process among members of dominant groups. In sum, we should not expect to observe backlash effects in the long run if experience has over the years shown that policies of descriptive representation do not fundamentally reshuffle the social order.

Such threatening perceptions are, in addition, likely to be restricted to contexts with some specific social or institutional characteristics. Perceptions of threat sometimes rely on little concrete information; for example, a number of Americans felt threatened by their perception that Barack Obama was a "Muslim president." Perceptions that a group's inclusion threatens the established hierarchy of groups are, by contrast, enabled by a number of demographic and socioeconomic factors. Such perceptions should, first, be more likely to emerge when the group that is granted access to political representation is numerically strong, at least on a local basis (thanks to a form of territorial concentration). Second, such perceptions should be more likely to emerge when disadvantaged and dominant groups are relatively proximate in the socioeconomic hierarchy of groups, or in a context of economic competition between groups. In such contexts, the increased political competition induced by descriptive representation may come to embody competition on other grounds. Third, as many of the aforementioned examples of backlash in the American South suggest, such perceptions should be more likely to emerge in difficult economic contexts. By contrast, it is less obvious why dominant groups would develop perceptions of threat when the group to be included is either numerically small, has no territorial concentration,

or does not constitute a credible competition to their social or economic dominance. Where and when this is the case, citizens from dominant groups should be relatively unlikely to develop *perceptions* of threat. As a result, "backlash effects" should in turn be less likely to take place in such contexts.

Altogether, these arguments thus suggest that "backlash effects" are much more conditional than what many theoreticians of ethnic conflict have so far implied. This in turn suggests that we cannot anticipate them to be systematic, and that they should be expected to take place in some contexts, but not in others.

4.2.3   Can Political Representation Change Stereotypes?

Where and when "backlash effects" do not take place, does this necessarily open the door to positive changes in the form of less stereotypical views? As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, several authors have suggested that the peaceful implementation of descriptive representation could have a beneficial effect on stereotypes and, thanks to revisions of stereotypical beliefs, on prejudice and discrimination.

Yet this is a perplexing prediction, in light of what we otherwise know about stereotype change and in light of the eventually minor impact that political representatives often have on their citizens' cognitive environment. Simply put, stereotypes are generally sticky, and changes in patterns of political representation may not constitute events sufficiently important in citizens' lives to reverse deeply anchored beliefs. As a result, stereotypes may not be the most obvious beliefs on which descriptive representation should impulse change.[2]

A broad review of the social-psychological literature on stereotype change should indeed lead us to doubt the potential transformative power of policies of descriptive representation. Most of what we have learned over the past sixty years about the way in which stereotypes can change suggests that a group's access to representation should be rather unlikely to contribute to an improvement of stereotypes. Stereotypes do not change easily, and decades of studies in social psychology insist on the stickiness of stereotypes and their ability to resist new disconfirming

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[2] This argument is different from an argument that would suggest that members of disadvantaged groups may not change stereotypes simply because they may not behave in counterstereotypical manners. While this is eventually an empirical question, I *assume* here that they do. That is, I assume that their sheer presence in office enables the revision of many stereotypes, regardless of their actions and policy decisions. In this context, my concern is with the reactions of members of dominant groups: assuming counterstereotypical behaviors, I argue that they may *not* revise their stereotypical views.

information. According to these works, racial stereotypes are learned early in life (Bargh 1999). They are also too deeply ingrained (Allport 1954, Devine 1989, Fazio et al. 1995) and too stable (Fiske 1998, Rothbart and John 1993) to be swayed by new information acquired through exposure to a single member of a disadvantaged group in a stereotype-inconsistent position, during a limited amount of time.

Even if the actions of said individual do not fit pre-existing stereotypes, a long tradition of work has shown that members of dominant groups can use an array of tactics to try to maintain their beliefs and create cognitive consistency (Hamilton 1981, Macrae, Hewstone, and Griffiths 1993). They can ignore events that disconfirm their current views or discount contradictory evidence as an exception to the rule (Macrae, Hewstone, and Griffiths 1993, Weber and Crocker 1983). They may also develop strategies for resisting threats to their stereotypic assumptions about individuals. Through attributional and other interpretative biases (Bodenhausen and Macrae 1998, Hewstone 1994, Maass and Arcuri 1992), they may come to construe the atypical individual in ways that render his or her behavior more in line with expectations, or as being due to temporary, external, or situational constraints. Perceivers may still be adept at viewing the counterstereotypical individuals as not reflective of the group as a whole (Allport 1954, Kunda and Oleson 1997, Weber and Crocker 1983) – that is, they may "subtype" them. Given the intractability of racial stereotypes and the enduring nature of racial prejudice described in these works, it may thus be relatively unlikely that a single minority politician could change the way people think about members of disadvantaged groups. If this is true, we should expect that members of dominant groups would deal away with counterstereotypical information about members of these groups by either ignoring this information or by "subtyping" these counterstereotypical individuals. In the case of descriptive representation, this subtyping may, for instance, imply that members of dominant groups acknowledge the value of their new officials while classifying these individuals as fundamentally unrepresentative of their group.

More recent works have often insisted on the malleability of stereotypes rather than on their stability. Generally speaking, numerous scholars have argued in the last two decades that self-reported attitudes and beliefs vary as a function of a host of changes in people's internal states (Chaiken and Yates 1985, Forgas 1992, Petty, Schumann, Richman, and Strathman 1993, Schwarz and Clore 1983; Wilson and Hodges 1992), and changes in their social environment (Feldman and Lynch 1988; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; Hatchett and Schuman, 1975, as cited by Dasgupta and Rivera 2008). Besides, studies have also demonstrated the

sensitivity of automatic attitudes and beliefs (i.e., IAT-based measures) to a wide range of motivational, strategic, and contextual influences (Blair 2002).

Doing so, these works have however invariably presented positive changes in stereotypes as being *conditional* on a variety of factors. Recent studies about exposure to counterstereotypical information – of particular interest to this study – have, for instance, argued that stereotypical biases can be overridden, yet only under very specific circumstances (Dasgupta and Asgari 2004, Dasgupta and Rivera 2008). Namely, these studies have argued that exposure to counterstereotypical individuals may have a positive impact when perceivers are "highly motivated to be accurate in their impressions" (Fiske 1998, Moreno and Bodenhausen 1999), when stereotype-inconsistent information is dispersed by a large number of counterstereotypical individuals (Moreno and Bodenhausen 1999, Johnston and Hewstone 1992, Weber and Crocker 1983) or in circumstances in which exposure to counterstereotypical exemplars is extremely frequent (Dasgupta and Asgari 2004) or of an intimate nature (Pettigrew 1998). While this depends on the level of politics at which descriptive representation is implemented, politician-citizen relations likely fulfill few or none of these conditions.

Theories emphasizing the importance of intergroup contact for prejudice reduction (Pettigrew 1998, Miller et al. 2004, Tropp and Pettigrew 2004) – also of direct interest to this study, insofar as the main effect of policies of descriptive representation may be to increase contact[3] – do not necessarily provide a more optimistic outlook as to the transformative potential of descriptive representation. While hundreds of studies have demonstrated the potential importance of intergroup contact for prejudice (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005, Tropp and Pettigrew 2008), the effects of intergroup contact on the *cognitive* components of prejudice (i.e. *stereotypes*) have remained weak at best (See Pettigrew and Tropp 2008 for a meta-analysis on this point).[4] Besides, the four conditions originally determined by Allport (1954) in which intergroup contact has originally been shown to reduce prejudice – "equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and support of an authority" – are very unlikely to exist in most real-world situations in which group inequalities are large and in which a stigma is attached to membership in the most disadvantaged of these groups. Depending on the level at which descriptive representation takes place, and the social

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[3] I return to this important point later in the chapter.
[4] As suggested in Tropp and Pettigrew 2005, this indicates that intergroup contact matters for its impact on the affective and emotional rather than on the cognitive components of prejudice.

context in which this happens, descriptive representation may not generate sufficient contact – or at least the *kind* of contact – that may be likely to improve stereotypes and decrease prejudiced attitudes.

Altogether, these elements point to the same conclusion regarding the potential effect of a group's access to representation on stereotypes. Stereotypes – although malleable – are very hard to reshape, because a variety of psychological mechanisms prevent such welcome reshaping. Because of this, they are in general unlikely to evolve as a result of a relatively minor change in citizens' cognitive environment. While they may nonetheless evolve under certain conditions, it is unclear whether we should expect these conditions to be met simply by ensuring that a few members of a disadvantaged group access political offices. Accordingly, the type of rational belief update – new information automatically leading to a decrease in "statistical discrimination" – described in Beaman et al. (2009) and hinted at in Mansbridge (1999) should remain an uncertain consequence of descriptive representation, especially in the relatively short time span covered by a political mandate.[5] While this is eventually an empirical question, and one that this book explicitly tests (Chapter 7), there is thus no strong case that should lead us to expect that policies of descriptive representation should impact stereotypes.

4.2.4   *Looking Beyond Stereotypes: The Broader Impact of Representation on Intergroup Relations*

While a disadvantaged group's access to representation may be unlikely to improve stereotypes and reduce prejudiced attitudes among members of dominant groups, it may nonetheless have a beneficial effect on intergroup relations through other psychological pathways – so far occulted in the theoretical debate about this question. Both the social-psychological literature on intergroup relations and popular sources suggest that a group's access to prominent positions of power may indeed affect intergroup relations through a number of different mechanisms.

Descriptive representation has been hypothesized to impact a wide variety of group-related beliefs and emotions. Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1981, Tajfel and Turner 1979), the literature on ethnic politics (Horowitz 1985), has, first, suggested that a group's access to representation could generate important "psychic benefits." Usually understood as changes in the perceived status or worth of one's group, these "psychic benefits" of political power have usually been defined in

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[5] This may not be true in the longer run. I return to the long-term impact of descriptive representation on stereotypes in Chapter 9 and suggest a more optimistic hypothesis.

opposition to the "material benefits" that individuals may derive when a member of their social group is in power. They have appeared especially likely to exist in the case of previously stigmatized and excluded groups for whom the symbolic meaning of accessing power for the first time may hold a distinctive flavor. Drawing on Horowitz (1985), the more recent comparative scholarship on ethnic politics (Chandra 2004, Dickson and Scheve 2006, Petersen 2002, Posner 2004) has similarly implied that ethnic mobilization – and its likely consequence, political power by a coethnic – should be conducive to important "psychic gains" of this type.

In Horowitz's view, the prestige and status conferred to one individual by political power translates into "psychic gains" for most other members of the group in question. In this view, as in the views of later works on ethnic conflict and ethnic politics (Chandra 2004, Dickson and Scheve 2006, Petersen 2002), these psychic gains are most often characterized as gains in either forms of "self-esteem." This "self-esteem" is the product of comparisons with other groups. When a member of their group is in power, individuals develop more positive emotions in regards to the standing of their group in comparison to the standings of other groups. The idea that a single individual's access to political power *can* change perceptions of that individual's group-worth has also been present in other literatures. Many works on the impact of "minority representation" in American politics have, for instance, described the feelings of pride and self-esteem that African-American constituents sometimes derive from their representatives. A number of survey-based works have empirically measured the effect of black leadership on group pride (Marschall and Ruhill 2007, Marschall and Shah 2009); taking a different methodological outlook, Fenno (2003) has described the rich "symbolic connections" created by African-American members of Congress, noting, for instance, that

When an identifiable group has been excluded, as blacks have been, inclusion via descriptive representation constitutes an early, recognizable step along the way towards fulfilling group aspirations. Representation by a member of the group means first-class status for the group.[6]

Finally, building on similar intuitions, and very often on the same case – namely, African Americans – several important works in the normative literature justifying the need for "descriptive representation" (Williams 1998, Mansbridge 1999) have explicitly argued that the experience of political power by a member of such a group is valuable because it may generate "symbolic benefits" among their fellow group members. In

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[6] Fenno (2003), p 34.

these authors' descriptions, these benefits also come in the form of more positive perceptions of group worth, group position, or group esteem.[7]

Such changes in self-perceptions of *group worth* or in *self-esteem* among members of a disadvantaged group are conceptually different from potential changes in self-stereotypes. As such, they already suggest that the theoretical framework with which I started this chapter may be incomplete.

Besides, many other beliefs may be influenced by descriptive representation. Beyond beliefs *about* members of the newly represented group, a range of descriptive and normative beliefs *related to the nature of intergroup relations* between the various groups may also evolve, among members of all groups. To understand the nature and the variety of such beliefs, simply consider the following reflections, heard in the wake of Barack Obama's first presidential victory in 2008[8]:

"Whenever white persons said something, I was always looking out for their ulterior motives. Now I find that I take white people's statements more on face value."

"I feel a lot more comfortable starting up a conversation with black people on the streets now than I did before."

"It feels like there's a possibility for my little girl that wasn't there for me."

"I did not vote for him, but [his victory] tells me that things are changing between blacks and whites"

As can be seen from this rather astonishing set of quotes, a group's access to political representation may affect a diversity of beliefs relevant to interactions between members of a disadvantaged group and members of dominant groups. In the first instance, the quote suggests that the experience of political power by an African-American man could contribute to improving beliefs about members of dominant groups (here, White Americans) among African-American citizens. The second quote,

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[7] Beyond these scholarly literatures, political actors have, on various occasions, appeared conscious of the impact that access to political representation could have on self-esteem among members of a disadvantaged group. The Mandal Commission, which debated the need to extend caste-based quotas in India at the beginning of the 1980, was one of them: "In India, Government has always been looked upon as a symbol of prestige and power. By increasing the representation of certain communities in government, we give them an immediate feeling of participation in the governance of the country. When a backward class candidate is in office, the material benefits to his community are usually limited. But the psychological spin off of this phenomenon is tremendous; the entire community of that backward class candidate feels socially elevated. Even when no tangible benefits flow to the community at large, the feeling that now it has its "own man" in the "corridors of Power" acts as a morale booster."

[8] From a series of *New York Times* articles on racial relations that appeared in the wake of Barack Obama's election: "Many blacks find joy in unexpected breakthrough" (June 5, 2008), "Talk about Race? Relax, it's ok" (January 15, 2009), "Voices reflect rising sense of racial optimism" (May 3, 2009).

from a white respondent, can be interpreted as evidence that intergroup interactions were perceived as less problematic, or less prone to conflict, after an African-American man became president. The third quote, from an interview of an African-American man, suggests that individuals from a newly represented group may develop new socioeconomic *aspirations* as a result of descriptive representation, for instance if they take this access to power as symbolic of other positive changes to come.[9] Finally, the last quote, from a White American man, implies that this change in the acknowledged identity of the American president may have acted as a signal that norms of racial relations are changing – maybe suggesting that he felt that some of his own attitudes and behaviors needed to change.

Interestingly, each of these beliefs may have an effect on everyday interpersonal relations – between whites and blacks in this context. A belief that whites are worthy of trust can prompt new behaviors among blacks; a belief that one's children will benefit from new opportunities can similarly help develop new ambitions, and new behaviors. Finally, in connection to a point central to my argument – and to which I return – a belief that norms of intergroup relations are changing may prompt different behaviors among members of dominant groups, insofar as a desire to conform to the norm constitutes a major predictor of behavior (Asch 1952, Sherif 1936, Miller and Prentice 1996, Miller and Prentice 2016; see also Tankard and Paluck 2016).

Since few scholars have investigated these "other" psychological consequences of descriptive representation, this probably does not constitute an exhaustive typology. This brief enumeration, however, already implies that policies of descriptive representation can affect the psychology of group relations *through several pathways*. It can affect the beliefs of members of dominant groups as well as the beliefs of members of the newly included group, each of which can contribute to transforming intergroup relations. More importantly, each of these beliefs can be seen as playing a role in the extent to which members of dominant groups discriminate or engage in hostile behaviors, and in the extent and the manner in which members of disadvantaged groups react to this treatment. This in turn implies that descriptive representation can affect a variety of "discrimination-inducing beliefs" and emotions, and in turn that it may transform patterns of intergroup relations in a number of ways.

I explore what these other avenues for social change may be in Section 4.3.

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[9] Interestingly, Fenno's inspired ethnographic account of black representatives (Fenno 2003) also described "aspirations" they can generate among their community. Aspirations are also explored in Beaman et al. (2009).

4.2.5 *The Need for* Inductive *Research*

I have made the case in this section that pitting potentially positive changes in stereotypes against the risk of "backlash effects" provides us with a limited theoretical framework to think about the impact that descriptive representation might have on intergroup relations. There are several reasons for this. First, the two may not be competing hypotheses as much as reactions of a different nature. As such, they cannot be opposed insofar as they may happen over time to the same individuals. Second, both "backlash effects" and improvements in stereotypes may be less automatic consequences of descriptive representation than what theoreticians of these different arguments have so far suggested. Third and finally, descriptive representation may affect intergroup relations through a number of other mechanisms. If descriptive representation does affect, as anecdotal evidence suggests, discrimination-inducing beliefs other than stereotypes, it has the potential to improve the quality of intergroup relations through channels that so far remain uncharted.

Given the limitations of the current literature, inductive research can help develop a more precise, more nuanced, and more encompassing argument about this question. A focused exploration of one case can help develop a more precise answer to several of the questions raised in this section. First, when and where are "backlash effects" likely to happen?[10] Second, how does descriptive representation affect the psychology of intergroup relations? Is it likely to affect stereotypes and/or other discrimination-inducing beliefs? If so, which ones? Finally, are these potential psychological effects likely to have an impact on discriminatory and hostile behaviors?

The next section details my answers to these questions. I subsequently use these answers to build an argument, which I present in the last section of this chapter, and subsequently test in Chapters 5 to 8.

4.3   Political Representation and Intergroup Relations: The Case of SC *Sarpanches* in Rural Rajasthan

As noted in Chapter 2, members of the Scheduled Castes (hereafter SCs) remain discriminated against on a daily basis in rural India. Even though untouchability has been constitutionally banned since independence, and the SCs have been granted numerous government benefits through

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[10] While immersive research focused on a single case is not suited to *test* a hypothesis about this question, it is well suited to retrace the specific causal process that led to the occurrence of a specific event (in this case, the relatively peaceful reactions of members of dominant castes to the installation of quotas in rural India).

reservation policies and various targeted schemes, significant discrimination persists (Deliege 1999, Hoff and Pandey 2006, Kapur et al. 2010, Narula 1999, Shah et al. 2006). In an effort to counter this dismal reality in rural areas, the 73rd constitutional amendment mandated that Indian states reserve seats for members of the SCs (among other groups) in all village-level political institutions. In spite of initial opposition from traditionally "dominant" caste groups (Mathew 2000, Purohit, Chaturvedi, and Lodha 2002), these political quotas have now been implemented during several electoral cycles in most Indian states. By restricting (for a fraction of the seats) the right to be a candidate to members of the SCs, "reservations" have guaranteed the election of thousands of SC candidates who would almost certainly never have been elected otherwise.

How did these efforts to grant access to members of a disadvantaged group impact the psychology of intergroup relations, and beyond, discriminatory behaviors? This section answers this question in two steps. Insofar as the redistributive effects of descriptive representation condition the types of reactions that might be observed (and whether "backlash effects" should be expected), the first part of this section focuses on the *material* and *redistributive* consequences of village-level reservations for the SCs. Drawing on the case of SC *sarpanches*, I argue that the relatively inconsequential nature of local-level reservations explains their relatively peaceful implementation and the absence of a lasting "backlash." If "backlash effects" do not occur, how should we expect reservation to impact intergroup relations? The rest of this section addresses this question. Drawing on qualitative evidence and secondary sources, I first highlight a number of changes in village life under reservation (Section 4.3.2). I then argue that these changes may contribute to the transformation of several key discrimination-inducing beliefs (Section 4.3.3) and finally that these beliefs may have an impact on the practice of untouchability (Section 4.3.4).

4.3.1   *The Likely Absence of Redistributive Effects and Its Consequences*

Are local-level political reservations for members of the SCs likely to generate redistributive effects? Building on the account of local-level representation presented in Chapter 3, I argue that a number of institutional features of the system of local-level reservations for members of the SCs should prevent it from generating such effects. Besides, I argue that it is equally unlikely to generate *perceptions* among members of dominant castes that their overall social dominance is under threat. In line with the idea that "backlash effects" are *conditional* on either redistributive effects or perceptions of redistributive effects, this leads me to hypothesize that

local-level reservations for members of the Scheduled Castes should *not* be expected to generate strong negative reactions in the long run.

4.3.1.1 *Local-Level Reservations: A Weak and Unlikely Attack on the Status Quo*   Political reservations, like other policies of descriptive representation, have been seen as instruments for redressing persistent group inequalities. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, several influential models have provided theoretical rationales for why this might be a likely consequence of these policies. Yet redistributive effects of descriptive representation are also conditional on a number of political, social, and overall institutional factors. As suggested by my account of local-level institutions (Chapter 3), village-level political reservations for members of the SCs – and more generally speaking, Indian-style reservations – are rather unlikely to fulfill these conditions.

It is not clear, first, that SC *sarpanches* would have any incentive to redistribute to their fellow SCs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, politicians competing for the position of *sarpanch* typically belong to a coalition in which several caste groups are included. In the interviews of (both SC and non-SC) *sarpanches* that I conjointly conducted with Shankare Gowda and Gopal Singh Rathore since 2009, these coalitions frequently came up as these officials painstakingly attempted to explain how they had engineered their victory. In these discussions, the need to belong to a coalition that transcends caste boundaries has usually been presented as a function of two joint facts. The first one is that most *gram panchayats* in Rajasthan are extremely fractionalized and that the votes of several caste groups are usually required in order to become *sarpanch*. This is true even though *sarpanches* are elected in a straight first-past-the post system: as one Jat *sarpanch* confessed, "you do not go very far with your own group around here … to win you need 30% of the votes at least. To be confident you need more. Jats are only 15–20% here."[11] The second relates to the fact that reservations are implemented on a rotating basis, and that rotation makes the incentive to join a coalition even stronger. Building on Dixit et al. (2000), Dunning and Nilekani (2013) argue that rotation provides an incentive for various groups to join forces to ensure that the benefits received by members of these coalitions remain constant over the course of several electoral periods, even though the identity of the individual in office will change during each electoral period.

Beyond the fact that SC *sarpanches* may not have clear incentives to target their fellow SCs, they likely do not have the same *ability* to do so. In the absence of *capacity* (presence in an institution that controls

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[11] Interview village 4, April 23, 2009.

large resources) ***and*** *discretion* (the ability to single-handedly allocate these resources), redistributive effects are much less likely to exist. As suggested in Chapter 3, this is in practice relatively unlikely to be the case for many SC *sarpanches*. Sarpanches, including SC *sarpanches*, on paper allocate relatively important resources, as decisions made by *gram panchayats* can significantly improve the livelihood of village households. But in many cases *sarpanches* do not have *discretion* over the delivery of state benefits, as they do not single-handedly decide of the allocation of those resources, since other members of the village councils, the village secretary, and officials at the block level frequently play an oversized role, especially so when the *sarpanch* is a "weak *sarpanch*" (Chapter 3). This also points to the fact that potential redistributive effects ensuing from reservation should, if anything, be marginal.

Third, as suggested in Chapter 3, SC *sarpanches* may relate differently with members of their own subcaste (*jati*) within the SCs and with members of other SC subcastes. Members of a *sarpanch*'s own subcaste were, generally speaking, very likely to be part of a multiethnic coalition or partisan formation than members of other subcastes within the SCs. This also suggests that the incentives of SC *sarpanches* should differ depending on whether we talk about this official's own *jati* or other *jatis* that also fall under the broad category "SC". If the incentives of SC *sarpanches* are driven by their membership in the kind of coalitions I have described earlier, and if we consider that members of a *sarpanch*'s own *jati* are likely to be part of that coalition, we should expect members of the *sarpanch*'s own *jati* to be favored while we should expect members of other SC castes not to. In other words, once we differentiate between different SC *jatis*, it can be predicted that some of these subcastes (the *sarpanches*' own subcastes) should be much more likely to benefit from reservation than other subcastes would.

In sum, these various theoretical intuitions suggest that the redistributive effects of reservation for SCs should be minimal, limited, or entirely nonexistent. Effects are only likely to be observed where and when SC *sarpanches* have both capacity and discretion over the delivery of state benefits, which may not be the case in all SC-led village councils, as suggested in Chapter 3. Second, even if SC *sarpanches* have capacity and discretion, their incentives may not be geared toward favoring members of the SCs at the expense of other villagers. This is especially likely *not* to be the case where and when the *sarpanch* also has a partisan or a nonethnic affiliation, since the official's incentives would then be to target all members of her coalition, whether or not they are coethnics. Finally, in line with this incentives-driven argument relying on the existence of multiethnic coalitions, I have suggested that we should differentiate among

members of the *sarpanch*'s own *jati* and members of other groups that are also included on the list of SCs. Given that members of the *sarpanch*'s own *jati* are likely to be part of her winning, multiethnic coalition, we might observe redistributive effects toward this population but not toward other members of the SCs.[12]

In other words, the redistributive effects of reservation for the SCs should be conditional, limited, and, if existing, concentrated within a specific *jati* within the broader category "SC".[13] In line with the idea that "backlash effects" are *conditional* on either redistributive effects or perceptions of redistributive effects, this should lead us to hypothesize that local-level reservations for members of the Scheduled Castes will *not* generate strong negative reactions in the long run.

4.3.1.2 *The View from the Ground: Dominant Castes' Unfazed Reactions to Reservation*   While we have no theoretical reason to expect that local-level reservations would generate redistributive effects, our interactions with villagers from dominant castes on the ground in 2009–2011 suggested that these reservations did not even generate *perceptions* that such redistributive effects might take place, and hence did not provide the fodder that could have fueled strong "backlash effects."

There is no clear evidence to suggest that "backlash effects" were generalized in Rajasthan at the onset of the reservation system in 1995, when we might have expected them the most. Several well-publicized incidents suggest that principled opposition to reservations for SCs led disgruntled upper castes to engage in violent reactions against that official or against his community in a handful of places across the state. Fortunately enough, incidents of this type have remained rare from a quantitative standpoint.[14] Besides, the complete absence of such backlash among

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[12] This argument, while largely coherent with Dunning and Nilekani (2013), also subtly differs from these authors' analysis. I agree with the authors that parties and coalitions do matter; that *sarpanches* have an incentive to seek votes from a multitude of groups, and thus that their incentives for favoring their coethnics once in office are rather limited. My fieldwork-based theories, however, also suggest that the discretion of SC *sarpanches* may be limited in the first place, a point somewhat overlooked by Dunning and Nilekani (2013). As described in Chapter 3, in spite of their centrality in village life, observations suggest that SC *sarpanches* may not have the same amount of influence *on policy-making* as do *sarpanches* from dominant castes, precisely because of their social status. Since they have a limited influence on decision-making, SC *sarpanches* should be even less likely than others to be able to redistribute resources to their coethnics. This makes it even less likely than they would, even if their incentives prompted them to do so.

[13] I review the existing evidence on the redistributive impact of reservation in Chapter 6 and I look at this impact across different SC subcastes.

[14] The archives of Dalit NGOs (NCDHR and CDR Jaipur) suggest that several incidents of this type occurred around or after the 1995 or 2000 *panchayat* elections throughout Rajasthan. Without minimizing their relevance to debates about the persistence of

members of dominant castes at the time of our fieldwork (most of which took place between 2009 and 2011) indicated that a potential backlash had long died down, if it had ever existed.

In most villages we visited in 2009, the modal tone adopted by members of dominant castes about reservation was one of resignation and acceptance. Reservations, while controversial, had become politics as usual. While they largely continued to oppose reservation on principle, when prompted to provide their opinion, informal leaders from dominant castes had gotten used to the rotation system and silently accepted its implications. As one elder Rajput leader put it to us in a village of Jaipur district, "This is the way it is here in India. Everybody has a shot!" This weak but genuine embrace of the system is better illustrated by some of the interactions we had with members of dominant castes in the fall of 2009, as the elections of January 2010 were approaching. As Gowda and I visited a series of villages of the Bikaner district during that period, we already had a sense of the reservation history of each of the villages. In one *gram panchayat* that we (correctly) predicted was about to be assigned to reservation for a member of the Scheduled Castes, we thus broke the news down to a group of five or six Jat men with whom we had been discussing for a few hours. While we hesitantly enunciated that fact, fearing to hear yet more abuse against members of the SCs, or worse, their reaction was astonishing: this clearly was big news to many of these men, who had not done the calculations we had done to reach that conclusion.[15] Yet, past a very brief moment of excitement and quick chatter about the news ("Who will Harijans find as candidate?" wondered one man), these men remained relatively unfazed by the news. In a way that later appeared to us to appropriately summarize the collective mood, a young Jat man declared: "Obviously we would prefer if it was not so. But that is the way it is nowadays. Everybody has a chance. We wish we had more of a chance, but this is good for them this time … next time will be good for us." While this does not imply that these villagers approved of reservation – most would likely vote against if given the choice – this clearly does not fit the pattern of what theoreticians of ethnic conflict have referred to as "backlash effects."

There are likely two causes to the temperance of these reactions. The first one is that reservations have over time acquired a form of legitimacy.

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untouchability, it is important to note that such incidents were relatively rare then, and even rarer in the 2000s. More than 1,500 seats of *sarpanches* are reserved for the SCs in Rajasthan in each electoral period. The overwhelming majority of these cases did not trigger any opposition of this type among members of dominant castes.

[15] Interestingly, most villagers are entirely unaware of the demographic rules –detailed in Chapter 5 – according to which reservation status is determined.

To some extent, reservations are politics as usual in contemporary India, including in rural Rajasthan. While the reserved villages we visited in both the qualitative and the quantitative part of this study had never been reserved before, reservations at the local level had been implemented in other villages of the same districts as early as 1995. Besides, political reservations for other positions, such as state legislators, have existed in India for decades. As a result, many of the upper-caste villagers or officials with whom we interacted after 2009 had likely already formed a sense of the long-term consequences of reservation policies. This may be the reason why they had developed, at the time of our visit, reassuring, stoical, or cynical beliefs about the limited impact that reservation might have on the *gram panchayat*.

The second and related cause of these moderate reactions likely had to do with the fact that members of these dominant castes by now knew that reservations did not genuinely threaten their positions. Almost no villagers from dominant castes, even those who expressed frank and principled opposition to the idea of reservation in public, appeared to experience reservation for the position of *sarpanch* as a real threat to the status quo. There are several reasons to this, which by now should have become clear. First, most upper-caste villagers were well aware of the complex incentives of SC *sarpanches*, and eventually of their limited powers. The upper-caste villagers who had voted for the winning SC candidate often mentioned this fact or referred to the SC *sarpanch*, as "our *sarpanch*," implying that the *sarpanch* was either what I have called in Chapter 3 a "weak *sarpanch*" or that they were themselves part of that *sarpanch*'s winning coalition, which is to say that they were unlikely to feel excluded from possible targeting. Many others simply liked to present themselves as *connected* to the SC *sarpanch*, in a way that could not have possibly implied that the presence in office of this individual was perceived as a threat. A possible explanation for this can be found in another element of the discourse of upper-caste villagers; as implied in Chapter 3, many of these villagers systematically minimized the powers and the role of their SC *sarpanch*, even when they were confronted with contradictory evidence suggestive of the fact that the *sarpanch* performed a certain task, or was in touch with higher-level officials. Second, insofar as most of these villagers were confident that the other (non-SC) members of the council would prevail over or influence their SC *sarpanch*, they never appeared exceedingly worried that reservation would radically overturn the table.

Last, but not least, because villagers were aware of the rotational nature of reservation, and of the fact that a SC *sarpanch* did not stand a chance of being reelected once the seat would be open to candidates from all castes, they had no major reason to fear that reservation might

have an impact *over the long run*. Insofar as they knew its potential ability to reduce intergroup inequalities to be limited in the first place, and insofar as they were aware that reservation was not meant to become a permanent feature of village leadership, even the staunchest opponents to SC reservation did not perceive it as worthy of a strong reaction, at least at the end of the 2000s. As one elder Jat leader of Bikaner put it to Gowda, rather derisively, when he questioned him on his attitude toward reservations: "We don't like this [reservation] and we'd prefer it did not exist, but at the end of the day, it just does not change very much. We know him, he does help when we tell him what we need him to do … and anyways, in a few years he is gone. And never coming back!"

As should be clear by now, the institutional choices made by the statesmen who redesigned village-level institutions at the beginning of the 1990s weigh heavily on this absence of strong reactions among members of dominant groups. In this specific case, members of a disadvantaged group were allowed to access positions that are visible and symbolically important but that eventually allow them to engage in little – if any – redistribution at all. Besides, even if it did allow them to engage in such redistribution, it would be on a very temporary basis (one term). This limited ability of reservation to challenge the status quo, whether it was intentional or not, explains the absence of strong negative reactions among most members of the upper castes.

4.3.2   Beyond Material Benefits: The Other Consequences of Reservation

While reservations for the SCs are unlikely to generate redistributive effects on a large scale, and as such are unlikely to trigger "backlash effects" among members of dominant groups, it does not follow that they should remain inconsequential. On the contrary, the absence of violent negative reactions and the peaceful coexistence with a leader from a disadvantaged group opens the door to other visible changes, which can be hypothesized to have a *positive* effect on the treatment of members of the disadvantaged group. Drawing on secondary sources, this section first reviews the India-specific literature suggesting that such tangible changes may take place. Drawing on qualitative evidence from my own field research in Rajasthan, I then highlight a number of tangible changes in village life under reservation.

4.3.2.1 *The Impact of Lower-Caste Representatives in India: Existing Theories*   Members of the SCs have accessed many elected offices since the installation of political reservations and since the rise of lower-caste

parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). What changes when they do access these positions?

The literature on lower-caste politicians in India has outlined several changes brought by the election of politicians from socially disadvantaged caste groups. This literature has first noted the impact of reservations on the emergence of a small elite group within these castes. Authors interested in the politics of reserved parliamentary constituencies (McMillan 2005, Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998, Galanter 1979, Galanter 1984, Gopal Jayal 2006, Saberwal 1972, Narayana 1974, Narayana 1978) have almost invariably emphasized the fact that reservations allowed for the emergence of an elite within these groups. Insofar as reservation provides parties with an incentive to recruit leaders within categories against which they might otherwise discriminate, this elite-formation has typically been seen as beneficial in terms of co-optation into the major political parties.

But if political power is associated – as it is in India (see also Chapter 3 on this) – with important monetary returns, the emergence of an elite may also be thought of in purely socioeconomic terms. When providing members of disadvantaged groups with political positions, the political system also ensures that the gains associated with office-holding are shared across the elites of a larger number of groups. In India, one of the most underestimated consequences of the emergence of Dalit and "backward castes" politicians – the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, being the ultimate example – has been the emergence in the public space of immensely rich individuals drawn from these groups (Bose 2008). This emergence, given its visual impact through the oft-lavish presentational style of these politicians, constitutes a remarkable change in the cognitive environment of Indian citizens. In a context in which the characteristics of disadvantaged groups tend to be associated with stereotypes of powerlessness and poverty, it is difficult to think that such changes would not have meaningful consequences on the psychology of inter-caste relations.[16]

Beyond the emergence of a rich and powerful elite within these groups, many India scholars have been more directly interested in the ability of the new generation of Dalit politicians in North India (Pai 2000, 2002, Weiner 2001, Kohli 2001, Varshney 2000, Jaffrelot 2003, Jaoul 2007, Jeffrey et al 2008) to improve the treatment of Dalits. This literature has

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[16] This impact of descriptive representation on elite-creation is also a theme that has been developed in the context of American politics, where the normative scholarship on minority representation has sometimes emphasized the importance of majority-minority districts in the emergence of a critical mass of black elites within the main political parties (Williams 1998, Mansbridge 1999, Fenno 2003).

investigated the extent to which the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (the party that has most clearly claimed to represent members of the Scheduled Castes) and the different tenures of Mayawati (the head of the BSP and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh) have been able to change the situation of members of the Scheduled Castes on the ground. Relying mostly on ethnographic or archival methods, these scholars have pointed to a series of potential "non-material" gains for members of the SCs. In spite of important nuances in wording, most authors seem to converge in arguing that access to political power has generated some non-material benefits, in the forms of increased "cultural respect," "dignity," or "symbolic social change" in the relations between Dalits and others.

While this literature has so far not precisely defined what concrete changes in interpersonal relations these changes imply, part of the changes described by these authors relate to changes in patterns of inter-caste contact. What the accession of Dalit political leaders to political offices has likely meant in terms of inter-caste contact is worth emphasizing. Dalit elected officials may first have brought qualitative change to inter-caste relations, since their accession to political offices occasioned uncommon forms of contact between members of different caste groups. Mayawati's role as chief minister has in that sense provided plenty of examples of such uncommon forms of contact with a member of the Scheduled Castes. "Upper-caste" leaders that visit her residence are reportedly made to wait for a few hours before they are allowed to share tea with her, for instance (Bose 2008). These changes in inter-caste contact may also be thought of in more quantitative terms, since the accession of a Dalit to political office provides more frequent occasions for inter-caste contact. Mayawati's example here is also instructive. Bose (2008) shows that before she stepped in as chief minister for the first time in 1995, many of Mayawati's interlocutors had never had proper interactions with a Dalit, let alone a Dalit political leader. While these changes can take place between citizens and the "new" politicians drawn from a disadvantaged group, these changes in inter-caste contact may also take place among citizens from different groups, as they campaign together for that candidate or are employed in her service. The example of the Dalit-Brahmin alliance engineered by Mayawati to retain power in Uttar Pradesh is a prime example of this. As a leader from a disadvantaged group gains political prominence, forms of contact between groups may be encouraged in unexpected ways.[17]

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[17] Again, Fenno's account of black members of Congress (Fenno 2003) provides rich evidence for this intuition in another context. As African-American members of Congress

Besides, India scholars have often seen the accession to powerful positions of members of disadvantaged groups as meaningful in light of the new *linkages* with state authorities that it creates. Krishna (2003, 2004), for instance, argued that the rise of a new generation of Dalit politicians has, at a minimum, provided the community with better access to local authorities. Elected officials from disadvantaged groups, even if they have relatively few powers, and even if they remain under the influence of political actors from other groups, may thus be important because they provide members of their group with a direct link to authorities on whom their livelihood and security often depends.

4.3.2.2 *Changes in Village Life under SC Leadership*   Echoing these theories in the literature, my own field research in Rajasthan suggests that tangible and visible social changes do take place at the village level whenever the position of *sarpanch* is reserved for a SC villager. While I have argued that many SC *sarpanches* could be considered "weak *sarpanches*" (Chapter 3), and as such should be even less likely than others to have an impact on policy, I focus here on developments that are likely to change the nature of intergroup dynamics under a SC *sarpanch*, *regardless of the ability of that sarpanch to affect policy*.

Four such changes can be enumerated. The first one derives from the general ability of *sarpanches* to accumulate wealth during their tenure. Given the problematic facts about wealth accumulation exposed in Chapter 3, reservation of the office of *sarpanch* for a member of the SCs often ensures that at least one household within that category will display – potentially in the most ostentatious manner – ownership of a number of goods that members of these castes typically do not possess. Three of the four SC *sarpanches* I followed had, for instance, acquired a vehicle after they had become *sarpanch*. All four of them had "beautified" or extended their homes. In addition, two of the three *sarpanches* who owned land had acquired shiny new tractors. Finally, although this was impossible to verify, many of my interlocutors mentioned that these individuals' presentational style had changed since their election. Because they now usually delegated the most tiresome agricultural tasks to other members of their household, they often sported immaculate white *kurtas* and neatly combed hair that did not correspond to the stereotypes about the appearance of their neighbors in the SC *basti* (hamlet). In sum, then, reservation did not only lead to a transfer of political power

do constituency service, campaign, and are inaugurated, they venture into areas in which African-American citizens are rarely seen and develop relationships with various groups that rarely formally interact with any African Americans.

to members of a caste that was previously deprived of it; it also led to a transfer of wealth. Given the average socioeconomic gap between SCs and non-SCs and the persistent levels of poverty affecting SC communities (Chapter 2), such an abrupt and visible display of social mobility for an SC household represents an important change in villagers' cognitive environment.

Second, my observations suggest that reservation for a member of the SCs leads to uncommon forms of intergroup contact with at least one member of the Scheduled Castes. The election of a SC *sarpanch* implies a major reversal of traditional caste-based roles in the village. When a village is reserved, villagers may observe a member of the SCs sitting ceremoniously on a dais, providing his opinion or signing off on the council's decisions. Villagers who do not attend meetings or are not engaged in the political life of the village are also frequently exposed to sights that would have been unlikely before reservation was implemented. Because the *sarpanch* and his entourage walk through village streets in order to assess various public works, or visit informal local leaders, they may see members of the SCs in streets on which they otherwise dare not venture. The election to a position of relative power of a member of a group that had previously never even stood a chance to speak in public thus exposes villagers to a number of counterstereotypical sights. The conjunction of each of these apparently minor changes represents a significant change to the social and cognitive environment in which villagers live.

Third, it is likely that the ascension of a SC villager to the position of *sarpanch* increases the frequency of contact between some SC and some non-SC villagers. Given the social role played by the *sarpanch* in the village, reservation first appears to increase the frequency with which non-SC villagers enter the SC hamlet. In order to lobby or otherwise get in touch with their *sarpanch*, villagers from all castes visit him in his courtyard, or in some cases go inside his home.[18] Interestingly, reaching the *sarpanch*'s courtyard requires villagers to take roads that they would never usually take, and to pass by homes they would usually not pass by (in Rajasthan, SC hamlets are usually at one end of the village, without being properly outside of it). In that sense, the relatively frequent visits that elders and household leaders from all castes pay to the *sarpanch* may subtly redefine the geography of the village: areas that were previously considered unworthy of a visit (because they were reportedly "backward") are now routinely visited. In addition, once they were sitting or

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[18] While non-SCs' entry in SC homes is not always taboo (contrary to SCs' access to non-SC homes), some of the behaviors that may take place during such visits may be. Non-SC villagers may, for instance, be offered tea or a puff from a common pipe, or be asked to sit on a cot bed with some of the SC villagers in attendance.

waiting in the *sarpanch*'s courtyard, the non-SC villagers we observed often struck up conversation with the other villagers present, including those from the SCs, often overrepresented in the *sarpanch*'s own home. Accordingly, while not all men within a household visited the *sarpanch*, for those who did, the overall level of contact with members of the SCs was certainly greatly increased. In reverse, the necessary visits and consultations made by the *sarpanch* and his entourage across the village often implies that several members of the SCs have access to areas of the villages in which SCs are otherwise rarely seen, which further increases the frequency of contact.

Finally, reservation for an SC *sarpanch* appears to create a new channel of communication between the village's SC community and local institutions. Because of low upward social mobility and economic dependence on wealthier villagers, SC communities often remain deprived of access to local institutions (local political institutions at higher levels of government and various administrative officers, including police services). This lack of contact with the outside world often contributes to their plight. In the absence of contacts outside the village, SC villagers that are blatantly discriminated against, cheated, or verbally abused (Chapter 2) will find it difficult to lodge a complaint, let alone get potential offenders punished under the stringent anti-untouchability acts on the books. Reservation for an SC *sarpanch* appears to improve this state of affairs by creating an obvious channel of communication between the village's SC community and these various institutions. Because *sarpanches* attend numerous meetings at higher levels of government and are typically engaged in a multitude of deals with various actors of local politics and business, reservation offers the SC community access to a network of relatively powerful individuals that was previously out of reach. In that sense, beyond the personal benefits that an SC *sarpanch* may derive from these important connections, another by-product of reservation may come in the form of an extra measure of linkage for the SC community. Given the crucial importance of these links in the event of a conflict between an SC villager and another person, this undeniably constitutes an important change in village life.

While my observations suggested that this linkage was not likely to extend to police forces – whom all my SC interlocutors, including *sarpanches*, systematically accused of bias – these links may still imply fairer treatment by police forces, insofar as the *sarpanches*' new contacts at the block level could intercede in favor of the SC community. In addition, these trends were likely reinforced by the fact that both the local press as well as district and state level institutions in charge of enforcing anti-untouchability acts appeared – as of 2009 – to pay somewhat closer

attention to villages that were headed by members of the SCs.[19] Because an incident in a reserved village would probably generate a stronger outcry and symbolize the inability of authorities to enforce these technically tough anti-untouchability laws, potential violations in these villages appeared to attract more attention.

4.3.3   The Impact of Reservation on Group-Related Beliefs

How do these tangible changes in village life affect the psychology of untouchability? Do these psychological changes in turn affect the nature of day-to-day interactions between members of the SCs and members of dominant castes?

In this section, I draw on my field research to suggest that reservation for a member of the SCs has the potential to affect a number of group-related beliefs, some of which have so far been given little attention. As mentioned in Chapter 1, focusing on *beliefs* allows me to focus on more tractable outcomes, which I am subsequently allowed to measure in order to generate tests, presented in the rest of this book (Chapters 5–8). While the beliefs I describe here may not constitute an exhaustive list, they progressively emerged during my field research as the most likely changes that might have derived from the experience of reservation.[20] Besides, insofar as these beliefs are what I have called in Chapter 1 "discrimination-inducing beliefs" I also argue that they have the potential to update a number of behaviors related to untouchability, both among members of the SCs and members of dominant castes.

4.3.3.1 *An Impact on Stereotypes?*   As discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 2 and 3, a number of concrete developments happening under reservation suggest that reservation could expose villagers to counterstereotypical sights and/or endow some members of the Scheduled Castes with a new image. A first hypothesis is thus that reservation should affect stereotypes about members of the Scheduled Castes (among members of dominant castes), as well as self-stereotypes among members of the SCs.

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[19] From private interview with Satish Kumar of the Center for Dalit Rights, Jaipur, October 12, 2009.

[20] This implies that some of the potential psychological consequences of descriptive representation reviewed in Section 4.2.4 did not appear salient in the context of local-level reservation for the Scheduled Cases in Rajasthan. While they took pride in their SC *sarpanch*, few members of the SCs appeared to derive "aspirational beliefs" from this example. This does not necessarily mean that such beliefs should not be expected to exist in other contexts, but more simply that they were unlikely to emerge in this one.

Insofar as reservation provides members of dominant castes with new information about members of the Scheduled Castes, there is ground for the first part of this hypothesis. The living example of an SC *sarpanch* provides new information regarding the ability of members of the SCs to play a meaningful role in politics. The example of the SC *sarpanch* also shows that members of the SCs do not restrain themselves from entering the realm of politics, and hence that they may not be stereotypically deferential and silently accepting of caste hierarchy. Insofar as most SC *sarpanches* perform as well as non-SC *sarpanches*, their example may inform beliefs according to which "SCs do not have the skills or the education level" necessary to run the village. The living example of a member of the community holding a position that had escaped the community for decades provides new information relevant to the belief that SCs are "unable" or "unfit" for the job.

Beyond information relevant to the ability of SCs to play a role in politics, reservation also, more generally, provides new information relevant to more general beliefs about the Scheduled Castes. The example of an SC performing a counterstereotypical role appears to deliver new information relevant to frequently heard beliefs according to which members of the Scheduled Castes are usually described as "lazy," or as lacking intelligence, independent-mindedness, and confidence. All this new information that becomes available under reservation – to members of the Scheduled Castes and members of dominant castes alike – may have a powerful impact on stereotypical beliefs. As suggested earlier, findings in social psychology about the way in which certain patterns of "intergroup contact" (Pettigrew 1998, Miller et al. 2004, Tropp and Pettigrew 2004) or exposure to counterstereotypical individuals (Dasgupta and Asgari 2004, Dasgupta and Rivera 2008, Wittenbrink et al. 2001) could have a beneficial effect on stereotypes provide a potential theoretical backbone for this argument.

There are thus credible theoretical reasons to expect that reservations could contribute to changing a number of caste-related stereotypes. Some of our observations and interactions with villagers from dominant castes that had experienced an SC *sarpanch* were equally encouraging on that front. While most villagers were critical of their SC *sarpanch* and prompt to label him as uneducated or incompetent, many others – especially youth – were also ready to acknowledge the relative achievements of that official. Besides, while villagers from dominant castes often *started* by raising objections to their SC *sarpanch*, they eventually came to a more moderate position. Finally, while harsh statements were common in *public* discussions, many eventually adopted a more nuanced position in private interactions. A specific example is best to illustrate this kind

of subtle nuance in the discourse of many upper-caste villagers. As was the case of many of our interactions, a discussion[21] Gowda and I started engaging with a Jat middle-aged man became public, and to some extent a source of attraction and entertainment for bored villagers waiting for tea or for a card game. As often was the case, the upper-caste villagers present around us did not at first spare their *sarpanch*, pointing at his utter lack of education and his inability to "pressurize [sic]" higher-level officials. According to these men, reservation had hurt the reputation of the village, or was plain undignified. While this harsh tone was not surprising to us a few months into our fieldwork, the rest of the conversation was less expected. After we rather quietly suggested that their current SC *sarpanch* (a young and dynamic SC *sarpanch* by the name of Ram Meghwal, whom we had shadowed for a few days the previous week) had done as much for the village as any of the previous *sarpanches* as per the *gram panchayat*'s records, many of the Jat villagers that had initially been very vocal and negative about their sarpanch *instantly* recognized that their SC *sarpanch* was as competent and able as the previous ones. This surprisingly positive take was obviously explainable by the fact that the previous occupants of the office – as we soon learned through a flurry of jokes and insinuations – had been amassing serious wealth while in office. Even though they continued to voice their opposition to reservation and to their *sarpanch*, these villagers thus also easily admitted that their SC *sarpanch* had not performed that poorly compared to low standards set by the previous occupants of the office. Given how common this type of nuance and apparent contradiction was in the discourse of upper-caste villagers, it is credible to hypothesize that villagers who attended village meetings – in which these counterstereotypical behaviors were on full display – or were in daily contact with their *sarpanch* did end up with different perceptions of members of the Scheduled Castes.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, evidence from social psychology should, however, lead us to remain cautious. A single individual's access to office may not be sufficient to change beliefs about all members of his group. And many of our interactions with members of dominant groups also pointed in a more pessimistic direction. Openly prejudiced non-SC villagers faced with the fact that their SC *sarpanch* was as competent and able as most other *sarpanches* also often appeared to "subtype" that individual, or limit the extent to which this information might be relevant. This is, for instance, what they did when they appeared to attribute the qualities of Ram Meghwal to the peculiar circumstances of his election, or to the identity of his main advisers (incidentally, upper-caste villagers),

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[21] The discussion took place on June 23, 2009 in village 8.

hence limiting the potential for generalization from that specific experience. In most cases, however, villagers' reactions were even simpler: the stereotypes and prejudice that they had about their SC *sarpanch* and about SC villagers were openly expressed, often in strong terms. During the qualitative component of this study, this did not *obviously* appear to us to differ in villages that had experienced or were experiencing reservation. During several of our interactions with these villagers, they did not even refrain from stereotyping the SC *sarpanch in his presence*. In other words, other elements in my field research suggest that the stereotypes held by members of dominant castes may *not* have improved under reservation, in spite of the obvious role reversal and additional contact implied by this institutional mechanism.

Insofar as subtyping and other mechanisms limiting the potential impact of new information should be more limited among members of the SCs, we may be more optimistic regarding the impact that reservation might have on *self*-stereotypes. During the informal discussions about the impact of reservation that Gowda and I prompted in SC *bastis*, SC villagers frequently insisted on the *ability* of SCs to play a meaningful role in politics. This suggests that the visible example of an SC *sarpanch* appeared to prompt SC villagers to reevaluate, often very vocally, common beliefs about the "restraint SCs should show in politics," about potentially "negative consequences of handing the village to a member of a community as backward as the SCs," or about the fact that "SCs do not have the skills or the education level" necessary to run the village. Maybe significantly, we never heard such statements in those villages where an SC *sarpanch* was or had been in power. The living example of a member of the community holding a position that had escaped the community for decades had made it difficult to affirm that SCs were "unable" or "unfit" for the job. This minor change might, in and of itself, be the sign that members of the community had developed new beliefs about themselves, in politics and beyond.

It is indeed likely that reservation also overturned more *general* negative self-perceptions about the qualities and the ability of SCs. The example of an SC performing a counterstereotypical role likely inspired the revision of *general* beliefs about the qualities and abilities of *other* individuals of the SCs, and have contributed to overturning a number of overarching and common self-stereotypes about members of the SCs; namely, in this case, as we often heard, that SC villagers are usually "lazy," or that they "lack intelligence," "independent-mindedness," and "confidence." This hypothesis appeared to us especially clearly during our visits to the SC-led villages we had selected, where the young, educated, and usually proud members of the *sarpanch*'s community frequently spelled it

out to us. Citing ideas of "self-respect," many SC youths claimed that this access to a relatively prestigious political office was "showing each of us that what people say about us is not necessarily true." Statements of this type cannot be taken entirely at face value. Besides, the age and subcaste group of the villagers that were making these statements probably suggest that more positive self-stereotypes may be conditioned on how closely particular villagers identify with the *sarpanch*. In spite of these limitations, it nonetheless appears possible that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* would have improved these self-perceptions within the SC population of these villages.

4.3.3.2 *An Impact on Perceived Norms of Interactions?*   Beyond *stereotypes*, there exists, however, another channel through which reservation may change the nature of interpersonal relations between members of the Scheduled Castes and others. Policies of descriptive representation such as reservations may impact *other* group-related beliefs that potentially contribute to the persistence of untouchability-related behaviors. This mechanism relates not to individuals' preferences or to their inner levels of prejudice, but to the strategic beliefs that regulate their day-to-day behaviors. In this section, I argue that descriptive representation may impact two of these beliefs. Namely, I argue that reservations can impact individuals' perceptions of what *social* and *legal* norms of inter-caste interactions are.

I first argue that reservation may be expected to impact *perceived social norms of intergroup interactions.* In the case of caste-based reservations in rural India, this implies that under reservation, members of all groups should perceive that members of dominant groups are more tolerant and less discriminatory in their interactions with members of the Scheduled Castes.

Classical works in psychology have demonstrated the human tendency to adjust one's behavior in order to fall in line with perceived social norms (Asch 1952, Sherif 1936, Miller and Prentice 1996). As shown in these and scores of later studies, individuals are motivated to understand the norm in order to avoid social sanctions or rejection when their behavior deviates too far from the norm (Blanton and Christie 2003, Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Accordingly, perceptions of norms provide a powerful avenue to encourage social change (see Tankard and Paluck 2016 for a review). This should be especially true if one considers that changing how individuals feel is harder than changing what they perceive to be the behaviors of others around them. Because perceptions of norms are subjective, only partly based on real facts, and because they have been shown to be relatively dynamic (Tankard and Paluck 2016), they are potentially

more malleable than stereotypes and prejudice, and hence constitute an avenue of choice to encourage social change.

A number of different factors can prompt the evolution of perceived norms (Tankard and Paluck 2016). Perceived norms are particularly likely to evolve if the behaviors of social referents, local leaders, and locally influential individuals evolve (Paluck and Sheperd 2012, Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955, Banerjee et al. 2014), especially if those individuals are perceived to be legitimate (Hogg and Reid 2006, Hogg 2010) and/or resemble individuals trying to ascertain what the norm is (Goode, Balzarini, and Smith 2014, Stangor et al. 2001, Goldstein et al. 2008) – that is, if they belong to the reference group with which individuals trying to ascertain what the norm is self-identify.[22] More common group members can also influence perceived norms, insofar as their public behavior can challenge what the norm is perceived to be (Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990). More generally speaking, primary exposure to norm-deviating behaviors, and/or to its effect on the physical environment in which one lives, appears to change the perceived norms (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg 1998, Cialdini et al. 1990, Croson and Shang 2010).

Perceived norms may also evolve as a result of institutional signals. As mentioned by Tankard and Paluck (2016),

An institution's decisions and innovations can signal which behaviors or opinions are common or desirable in a group. Institutions may change perceptions directly, as when individuals make a direct inference about norms based on an institutional signal. Institutions can also change perceptions of norms indirectly, as when individuals observe a change in the incidence of a behavior due to an institutional change, and update their understanding of norms accordingly.

While empirical support for a causal impact of institutional signals on behaviors is so far lacking, some studies nonetheless suggest that institutions influence personal views. Citizens do infer that the decisions of lawmakers comply with or drive the direction of society (Jackson et al. 2012; Tyler and Jackson 2014). For example, qualitative work has demonstrated that after a university administration introduced a ban on outdoor smoking on campus, students viewed smoking as less common and accepted at the school (Procter-Scherdtel and Collins 2013). Students may infer directly from the ban that smoking must not be normative and indirectly that smoking is less normative because they observe fewer people smoking on campus. In another domain, individuals perceived Americans to be more supportive of same-sex marriage following a U.S.

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[22] Note, however, that social referents may also be fictional, as shown in Paluck (2009a, 2010a, 2010b).

Supreme Court decision in support of same-sex marriage (Tankard and Paluck 2015).

How does this line of argument apply to reservation for members of the SCs in Rajasthan? Why would reservation change perceived norms of interaction?

The reasoning behind this argument derives from the tangible changes in inter-caste contact that I have described earlier in this chapter. These tangible changes in inter-caste contact prompted by reservation include limited but significant departures from discriminatory norms of interaction with at least one member of the Scheduled Castes (the *sarpanch*). Because villagers require their *sarpanch* to sign forms, they enter the courtyard of a former "untouchable." Because the *sarpanch* is the highest executive authority in the village, and at least some villagers require his cooperation, they address him respectfully and sometimes even invite him to their children's weddings. Reservation thus means that a number of discriminatory norms of behaviors are automatically broken in villagers' interactions *with one individual*. As briefly noted earlier, these observable departures from norms of caste discrimination often extend beyond the sole person of the *sarpanch*. As the *sarpanch* receives better treatment, so does his entourage. As informal village leaders from all castes treat the SC *sarpanch* with respect and deference, they cannot but extend this better treatment to his brothers, uncles, and sons, who can often be seen at his side. Because villagers altogether observe many more instances of uncommonly tolerant behaviors under reservation, especially by villagers, neighbors, and local leaders who constitute obvious "social referents," their overall perceptions may logically evolve in that direction.

The discussions Gowda and I led on the recent changes in caste relations across reserved and unreserved villages also suggested that there might be support for this hypothesis. In the three SC-led villages we repeatedly visited, villagers indicated that they sensed subtle changes in the behaviors of some members of the dominant castes after an SC was elected *sarpanch*. In several cases, villagers reported changes in patterns of daily greetings received from members of dominant castes, with the traditional Hindu salutation "Ram Ram" being increasingly used by "upper caste" men when they met SC elders in the village's streets. Others insisted that patterns of contact between SCs and others had changed somewhat since the arrival in office of a member of the SCs, with villagers from the upper castes now routinely having to enter the SC hamlet to reach the sarpanch's courtyard to discuss their problems. In two of the villages, our interlocutors related in great detail, and with great interest how initially reticent upper-caste members caved in and let the SC *sarpanch* sit in a chair at village meetings. Even if many SC villagers were unable to cite

concrete examples of improvement, most nonetheless insisted that SCs (often designated here as members of the *sarpanch*'s subcaste rather than "SCs") were "getting more respect" from members of the "upper castes" when they were asked to react to others' declarations.[23]

While these examples suggest that changes might have derived from some very real changes in patterns of interaction, these perceptions of improving social norms of interaction may also evolve in a way that is not entirely related to actual changes. This is because the very visible example of the better treatments received by the *sarpanch* and his entourage may spread the more general perception among villagers that members of the Scheduled Castes are treated with more respect, even though actual changes concern a limited number of actors in the *sarpanch*'s direct entourage. This is especially likely to be the case if villagers observe influential villagers – caste elders, councilmen, and others – treating the *sarpanch* or his entourage with more respect. Insofar as individuals primarily perceive social norms based on the behaviors of individuals that they consider as "social referents" (Paluck and Sheperd 2012), a few departures from the norm by important individuals may generate a strong effect on the *perception* of these norms, regardless of the depth of the actual changes in norms of inter-caste behaviors.

In addition to its impact on beliefs about *social* norms, I argue that reservation should be expected to impact *perceived legal norms of interactions* – that is, beliefs about the legal consequences of hostile or discriminatory behaviors against members of the Scheduled Castes. Concretely, this implies that reservation should increase beliefs that hostile or discriminatory behaviors will be legally sanctioned.

The arsenal of legal acts criminalizing untouchability-related practices has, over the years, become impressive (Shah et al. 2006). These acts, however, remain rarely implemented on the ground, either because local authorities do not cooperate or because wronged members of SC communities lack the capacity to take their claim through a cluttered and biased system of local courts (Chapter 2). As a result, flagrant untouchability-related behaviors are frequently left unpunished in spite of the existence of extremely repressive laws against them, which has often led to a sense of impunity among the perpetrators. With the arrival in office of an SC *sarpanch*, the possibility that local authorities will use these laws should be perceived as more likely. Because of the complex

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[23] Again, a specific quote from an older Bairwa (SC caste) respondent from one of the SC-led villages in Jaipur district best summarizes this picture: "Now that my nephew is the *sarpanch*, it's like we all started smelling of jasmine! Upper-caste villagers greet us warmly in the street, and even stop by to talk to us.… We get more respect." From a private interview with the author in village 3, September 15, 2009.

sociopolitical context in which they serve, and given their frequent weakness as officials (Chapter 3), it is actually unlikely that SC *sarpanches* would personally come forward as strong advocates of victims of these practices. Given the political connections and linkages SC *sarpanches* build through their functions, villagers may, however, perceive other actors among local authorities to be more willing to defend SCs against attacks and abuse. As a consequence, villagers may perceive that otherwise relatively common humiliations could now be considered "atrocities" under Indian law, and that local policemen and local officials might be more likely to pay serious attention to caste-related incidents.

This hypothesis came forward early during our field research, during our very first discussions with non-SC villagers. During those early interactions, when we simply sought to weigh caste relations in the villages visited, it quickly transpired that villagers feared seeing a complaint being filed against a member of their community on the basis of these "atrocities laws." The presence in office of an SC individual, who had the ability to use his cell phone to make calls and be received at higher levels of the administrative pyramid that governs rural India, multiplies these fears; in all the SC-led villages we visited, this connection was even directly established by the villagers with whom we interacted prior to our suggestion of its existence. Regardless of the actual ability of SC *sarpanches* to *intervene* in case of inter-caste conflict – which is de facto limited, a topic to which I return in Chapter 8 – the perception that it made a difference was present among many of the villagers with whom we interacted. This hypothesis resurfaced later on, as we engaged in pretesting of the "behavioral intention" items included in the quantitative surveys analyzed in the following chapters.[24] When confronted with a number of contradictions in their argument and prompted to explain why they chose the least hostile behavior, many non-SC respondents logically justified their choice with a fear of punishment. Interestingly, however, when I subsequently asked them to detail the channels through which this "punishment" might occur, only villagers in SC-led villages brought about the potential role of the *sarpanch*.

Even though these perceptions came from villagers from dominant castes, I see no clear reason why SC villagers would have developed different perceptions. Accordingly, it may be hypothesized that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* may impact both SC and non-SC villagers' beliefs about the consequences of hostile behaviors toward members of the SCs.

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[24] These items require respondents to report whether they would engage in a hostile or discriminatory behavior in a series of different contexts.

4.3.4   From Changes in Beliefs to Changes in Interpersonal Behaviors?

Reservation may thus be hypothesized to have an impact on a number of untouchability-related beliefs: stereotypes, perceptions of social norms, and perceptions of legal norms. But should we expect these purely psychological effects to affect the practice of untouchability? If so, why?

The answer to these questions may appear relatively obvious in the case of stereotypes held by members of dominant groups. In accordance with the most common models of intergroup bias since Allport (1954), change in the stereotypes held by villagers from dominant groups may decrease their levels of prejudice – defined, here, as their general inclination toward members of the Scheduled Castes – which may in turn prompt a number of deliberately hostile behaviors to disappear. According to the logic of this mechanism, more positive evaluations of members of the Scheduled Castes should thus eventually lead to improved behaviors. Though it may be less obvious, a similar logic applies to self-stereotypes held by members of the SCs. As noted in Chapter 2, self-stereotypes held by members of the SCs have often been hypothesized, in the literature on untouchability, to lead members of these castes to restrain themselves from engaging in certain behaviors that contradict "caste-appropriate behaviors". Because members of the Scheduled Castes may interiorize beliefs that they are inferior to members of other castes, the argument goes, they are less likely to develop assertive attitudes about the role the Scheduled Castes ought to have in society, and they are eventually likely to restrain the range of behaviors in which they themselves engage. Following this logic, self-stereotypes give rise to a form of self-prejudice, which itself constrains behaviors, leading members of these castes to limit themselves to untouchability-compliant behaviors.

Changes in perceived social or legal norms of interaction should equally matter for behavior. Insofar as changes in perceived social and legal norms of interactions do not derive from villagers' newfound appreciation of villagers from the SCs, the explanation regarding these perceptions should be different, however. The fact that villagers perceive that the behaviors of other villagers are changing or that authorities might be more responsive to hostile behaviors does not imply that they "like" members of the Scheduled Castes more, nor that they wish to see members of the Scheduled Castes receive better treatments. As such, they can be hypothesized to have *no* impact on overall levels of prejudice[25] toward

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[25] Again, I make a distinction between prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudice, defined as a negative attitude toward a group, is a variant of the broader attitude concept that refers to one's favorable or unfavorable feelings toward any object. A stereotype, defined as a

members of the Scheduled Castes. Why then should these changes in perceived norms matter at all for intergroup relations?

The connection between perceived *legal* norms and discriminatory behaviors may be the easiest to understand here. Prominent works have suggested that citizens obey the law primarily out of a belief in its legitimacy or in the legitimacy of its authors (Levi 1988, Levi and Sacks 2007, Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). Flipping this line of reasoning around, citizens would need another incentive to obey laws that they view as illegitimate, as likely remains the case for many non-SC villagers in regards to anti-untouchability acts (Thorat 2010). The fear of legal sanctions may constitute that motivation. Especially in contexts in which security forces are known to intervene selectively, as they do in rural India (Wilkinson 2004, Chandra 2004, Verma 2001), the only incentive to obey such laws should be expected to come from the probability of legal sanctions by the authorities. For this reason, it makes sense that beliefs about the legal consequences of hostile behaviors toward members of the Scheduled Castes should constitute a major predictor of the quality of inter-caste interactions.

Why, in turn, should changes in perceived *social* norms – that is, changes in beliefs about the behaviors of members of dominant groups – matter? Following a trail of recent works on the impact of social norms on intergroup behaviors (reviewed in Tankard and Paluck 2016), I argue that the perceived behaviors of other individuals from one's reference group constitute a central factor in intergroup behaviors, including untouchability-related practices. In doing so, I build not only on the intuitions developed in Chapter 2 but also on a seminal – though often underestimated – series of works on the impact of conformity of behavior. A rich tradition of scholarship on conformity and social consensus has suggested that individuals often rely more on knowledge of a social norm than on their own personal beliefs in engaging in social behaviors (Allport 1954, Asch 1958, Cialdini et al. 1991, Crandall and Stangor 2005, Kuran 1995, Stangor, Sechrist, and Jost 2001). Prior to Allport's (1954) seminal work on intergroup relations and prejudice, psychologists often theorized that social norms are critical determinants of intergroup behavior, insofar as group members' *perceptions* of the group consensus regarding the typical or appropriate treatment of another group is the salient factor. A continuing tradition of research in psychology conceptualizes prejudice as a perceived social norm, rather than as an individual's personal attitude or emotion (e.g., Crandall and Stangor 2005).

culturally shared association linking most or all members of a group with a particular characteristic, is a more specific belief concept.

Bringing social norms back into models of intergroup behaviors is justified insofar as conformity to the perceived group consensus is a normal, universal process (Crandall and Stangor 2005). Indeed, research has now regularly suggested that perceptions of social norms regarding the appropriate treatment of members of particularly disliked groups are more powerful predictors of intergroup behavior than individual attitudes toward that group (e.g., Blanchard et al. 1994, Paluck and Shepherd 2012). These results suggest that to change intergroup relations, the critical target is not what an individual personally thinks or feels about another group, but rather what they perceive other members of their group think or feel. Accordingly, examples of social norms interventions include media messages depicting a social consensus of nondiscrimination (Paluck 2009a), or target group leaders announcing support for stigmatized group members (Paluck and Shepherd 2012, Tankard and Paluck 2016).

Following these conclusions, I argue that villagers' perceptions that the norms of intergroup interactions are changing should also have a powerful impact on untouchability-related behaviors. This may happen either because of a *licensing* mechanism or because of a *motivating* mechanism (Tankard and Paluck 2016). In licensing, individuals align their behavior on their real preference, which they were previously hiding to avoid deviating from the norm (Miller and Prentice 2013, Prentice 2012). In the context of untouchability, this may mean, for instance, that tolerant upper-caste villagers behave in a less discriminatory or hostile manner under reservation because reservation helps them realize that the norms are more tolerant than they previously estimated. In other words, tolerant people stop hiding their true preferences. In *motivating*, discriminatory or hostile individuals change their behavior to align with the norm because they believe that deviating from the newly tolerant norm can be socially costly (Blanton and Christie 2003, Miller and Prentice 2016).

The effect of these changes in perceived norms on behaviors should, however, vary depending on the type of untouchability-related behavior considered. This optimistic expectation accordingly requires some nuance. The reason for this is simple: if the behavioral changes that derive from these changes in perceived norms are intrinsically *strategic* in nature – in the sense that individuals are motivated by a sanction rather than by their deeply felt preferences – it remains unclear whether we should expect all untouchability-related behaviors to be similarly affected by these changes. Strategic considerations matter more or less, depending on the type of behavior considered, when an individual decides whether to engage in a discriminatory or hostile behavior. We should accordingly expect that behaviors that take place in the *public* realm, and as such take

place in full view of other villagers and/or of local authorities, would be more likely affected by such changes in perceived norms. Conversely, it is likely that untouchability-related behaviors that take place in the *private* realm, and as such are less directly subject to social pressure or the influence of the law, would be less impacted by these changes in perceived social and legal norms. In sum, we should expect changes in perceived norms to have an impact on untouchability-related behaviors, but this impact should be more marked on behaviors that take place *in the public realm*. Following the logic of this "strategy" mechanism, reservation and descriptive representation should thus be expected to change the nature of *public* inter-caste interactions more than they change the nature of *private* inter-caste interactions.

4.4   Summary of the Argument and Testable Hypotheses

Drawing on the case of local-level reservations for the SCs in Rajasthan, the previous sections outlined an argument about the impact that policies of descriptive representation for a disadvantaged group might have on the quality of intergroup relations.

I have first argued that "backlash effects" are more conditional than what many theoreticians of ethnic conflict have so far argued. This in turn suggests that they should be expected to take place in some contexts, but not in others. Namely, we should observe backlash effects only when a disadvantaged group's access to political representation challenges the existing distribution of resources between groups, or at least when it is *perceived* to do so. When a group's access to representation, on the other hand, does *not* credibly threaten the status quo (that is, the existing distribution of material resources across groups), "backlash effects" are unlikely to occur and citizens from dominant groups are likely to go on with their lives. This peaceful acceptance of descriptive representation, I argue, opens the door to potentially beneficial cognitive effects: as conflicts and violence over the legitimacy of the new political representatives recede, citizens from all groups are provided with new information about members of a disadvantaged group, or about their position in society. This, in turn, enables several types of positive changes in patterns of intergroup relations, as summarized by Figure 1.1 (Chapter 1).

Building on this argument, I have made a number of claims specific to the material, non-material, and psychological impact of caste-based reservations in rural India. First I have argued that a reallocation of resources should be limited, if it takes place at all. When and where redistributive effects take place, I have, in addition, suggested that these effects should

"TASTE" MECHANISM

| Descriptive Representation | → | Changes Stereotypes | → | Reduces Prejudice | → | *Lower* Levels of Discrimination in Interpersonal Relations |
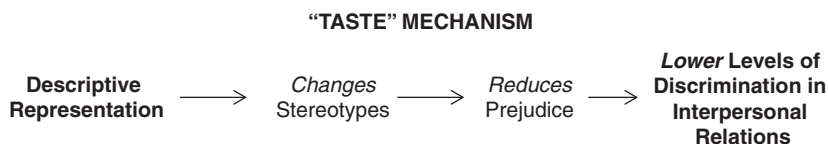
Figure 4.1. The Taste Mechanism.

be restrained to a specific group of potential beneficiaries among the Scheduled Castes (i.e., members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste).

Second, I have argued that reservations, because they are unlikely to result in backlash effects, have the potential to generate other important, tangible changes in village life. Namely, drawing on qualitative evidence from Rajasthan, I have argued that descriptive representation may be relevant to intergroup relations given its ability to: (1) create an elite among the newly represented group; (2) generate uncommon forms of inter-caste contact; (3) increase the frequency of inter-caste contact; and (4) increase the linkages between members of disadvantaged groups and the state.

In light of these tangible changes, I have finally argued that reservation should be able to improve the quality of intergroup relations through a number of different mechanisms. I have distinguished between *stereotypes* and *perceived norms of interaction*. Each of these two types of beliefs suggests a different avenue through which descriptive representation may improve the quality of intergroup relations. Relying on this distinction, I have argued that there are two types of mechanisms through which access to political representation by a member of a disadvantaged group may limit discriminatory or hostile treatments toward members of that group. A group's access to representation may, first, change what individuals believe about members of that group – that is, how they evaluate them, and the extent to which they eventually "like" them. If a group's access to representation – as has often been suggested – improved stereotypes or self-stereotypes about that group, then levels of prejudice or self-prejudice[26] against members of that group may decrease, and intergroup relations may in turn be greatly improved. I refer to this mechanism, which implies that descriptive representation improves some of the deeply held beliefs of individuals, as the "taste mechanism." Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of this mechanism.

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[26] I make a distinction between prejudice and stereotypes. I see stereotypes, which are culturally shared associations linking most or all members of a group with a particular characteristic, as a component of the broader concept of prejudice. Prejudice is in turn defined as a more general type of negative evaluation of a group.

"DISCRIMINATION MECHANISM"

Descriptive Representation ⟶ Changes Perceived *Social* or *Legal* Norms of Interaction ⟶ ***Lower* Levels of Discrimination in Interpersonal Relations**
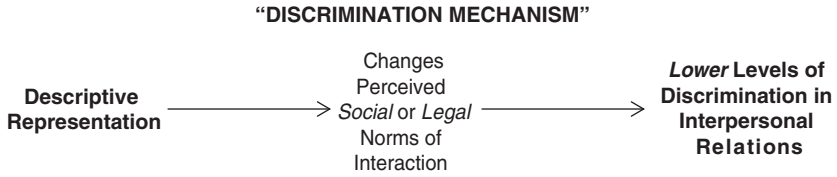
Figure 4.2. The Strategy Mechanism.

Second, I have suggested that both beliefs about social norms of inter-group interactions and beliefs about legal norms of intergroup interactions may be expected to evolve as a consequence of caste-based quotas, and that these changes in beliefs may in turn be expected to have repercussions on a number of discriminatory behaviors, *especially those taking place in the public realm*. This is what I refer to in the rest of this book, and represent visually in Figure 4.2, as the "strategy mechanism." By this mechanism, I have argued that we should expect the changes in beliefs about norms of intergroup interactions triggered by reservation to have meaningful repercussions on the practice of untouchability in rural India, even if descriptive representation does not improve stereotypes or reduce prejudice.

The following four chapters (Chapter 5–8) rely on a natural experiment and on innovative quantitative data in order to *test* these hypotheses. Chapter 6 explores the impact of reservation on material and tangible outcomes. I use two surveys to test whether reservation generates redistributive effects, and to test whether it increased contact between members of the SCs and others. In order to test whether any of the aforementioned psychological mechanisms is supported by the data, Chapter 7 explores the impact of reservation on a series of group-related beliefs. Finally, Chapter 8 explores the impact of reservation on untouchability-related behaviors and discusses which of these mechanisms is supported in the data. Before these results are presented, Chapter 5 describes the innovative methodology I relied on to test these hypotheses.

5   Quantitative Methodology

In order to test the hypotheses drawn in Chapter 4, I ran two surveys in parallel in a large sample of Rajasthani villages: one of members of the Scheduled Castes and one of members of dominant castes. Assessing the psychological effect of reservation presents at least two challenges: (1) reservations are based on the proportion of SCs in the population, and hence not random; (2) asking questions about social relations between SCs and non-SCs in village India is not a trivial challenge. I dealt with the first problem by exploiting the discontinuity around the thresholds for reservation. Namely, I draw a sample of matched pairs just above and just below the cutoff proportion of SCs in the population above which reservations are imposed. I dealt with the second problem by designing an original methodology that allows respondents to self-administer the survey instrument using MP3 players. The rest of this section details this research design.

5.1   Sampling Villages

How were the villages in which these surveys took place chosen? Reservations for *sarpanches* are governed by a complex rule[1] based on the share of SC population at the *panchayat samiti* level (a subdivision of Indian districts containing an average of thirty *gram panchayats*). Practically, as can be seen from the example provided in Table 5.1, after having ranked *gram panchayats* according to the importance of their SC population, electoral officers have been going down the list, reserving GPs with increasingly small SC populations at each successive electoral

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[1] In the state of Rajasthan, the total number of *gram panchayats* (GPs) reserved within each *panchayat samiti* is proportional to the share of the SC population in the *panchayat samiti* area (based on the 1991 version of the Census of India). Following this rule, the total number of reserved GPs does not vary across electoral periods. Reserved GPs differ, however, from one electoral period to the next. This rotation, in place since the first elections in 1995, also depends on the share of SC population at the *panchayat samiti* level.

Table 5.1. *The Reservation Process in Jalore* Panchayat Samiti *(Jalore District).*

GP	% SC* (Ranked from largest to smallest)	Reserved in 1995 (First GP elections)	Reserved in 2000	Reserved in 2005	Reserved in 2010	Reserved in 2015
GP 1	29.96	1				
GP 2	28.28	1				
GP 3	25.46	1				
GP 4	25.13	1				
GP 5	24.95	1				
GP 6	24.75		1			
GP 7	23.94		1			
GP 8	23.88		1			
GP 9	23.75		1			
GP 10	23.73		1			
GP 11	23.43			1		
GP 12	21.7			1		
GP 13	20.29			1		
GP 14	20.07			1		
GP 15	18.77				1	
GP 16	18.07			1		
GP 17	17.49				1	
GP 18	17.26				1	
GP 19	17.15				1	
GP 20	16.79				1	
GP 21	16.69				1	
GP 22	15.46					1
GP 23	15.24					1
GP 24	14.97					1
GP 25	14.86					1
GP 26	14.36					1
GP 27	13.41					1
GP 28	13.27					1

* Based on the 2001 Census of India Data

Note: Since there are a little less than 20% of members of the SCs in Jalore *panchayat samiti*, 5.5 (that is, either 5 or 6) GPs are supposed to be reserved at each electoral period, as is the case here. Assignment to reservation then unfolds in decreasing order, starting with GPs with the largest SC population share and ending with the GPs with the smallest SC population share.

period since 1995. Following this rule, the set of reserved GPs at each electoral period systematically differ from one another in terms of their SC populations.[2]

[2] I was able to check that this rule was implemented by collecting data on which GPs had been reserved in 1995, 2000, and 2005 in each of the districts in which the survey took place. This data is available from the author upon request.

Given the rules presiding over this rotation, if I randomly sampled *gram panchayats* within Rajasthan, I would not be able to detect whether the variation in my outcome variables is due to political reservation for members of the SCs or to a higher share of SC population within reserved GPs. However, because assignment to reservation depends on this unique demographic principle, this system provides me with a solution to generate a well-identified natural experiment on a subset of the data. Namely, I exploit the discontinuity in the implementation of reservation. I select GPs whose SC population was around – some slightly above, some slightly below – the share of SC population in the GP reserved in 2005 that had the smallest share of SC population. This implies that I focus on comparisons between two sets of GPs: GPs that were reserved in 2005 (and given the rules detailed earlier, had never been reserved before), and GPs that were not reserved in 2005 and had never been reserved before.

Practically, in order to sample villages, I proceeded in five successive steps:

1. As shown in Figure 5.1, I first selected four districts.[3] Given this relatively small number, these were purposefully chosen to ensure that different parts of the state would be represented in the sample.
2. I then randomly selected four *panchayat samitis* within each of these four districts.
3. Within each of the sixteen *panchayat samitis* targeted, I listed those GPs that were either reserved for SCs since 2005 or had never been reserved.
4. Within this already select group of GPs, I retained, within each *panchayat samiti*, the four reserved GPs with the smallest proportion of SCs and the four unreserved GPs with the highest proportion of SCs.[4]
5. Finally, selecting from this group of GPs, I formed eight matched pairs of GPs in each district, for a total of thirty-two pairs and sixty-four GPs across sixteen *panchayat samitis* and four districts.

Each of these pairs contained one reserved and one unreserved GPs that were geographically proximate.[5] Given limited resources and the

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[3] Rajasthan contains thirty-three districts. Selected districts were Tonk, Bikaner, Jhunjhunu, and Barmer.

[4] In each case the largest village under the authority of the GP was targeted. The largest village was also, in each case, the village in which the *sarpanch* resided. *Gram panchayats* often consist of more than one village. In some cases the *sarpanch* comes from a smaller village within the GP. This was not the case in our sample, as was checked prior to the survey.

[5] In twenty-nine out of thirty-two pairs generated through this process, the villages are matched within the very same *panchayat samiti*; in the three remaining pairs, the villages

Figure 5.1. The Four Selected Districts in Rajasthan.

selection described in point 4 (above), the pair-matching was designed to ensure that the GPs targeted were matched on a number of key

are matched with villages from directly adjacent *panchayat samiti* (the biggest distance between two villages in the same pair being less than 30 km).

observables potentially impacting my outcome variables.[6] In addition to being matched on SC population at the GP level, selected pairs were thus also matched on the *population* of their head villages – which the survey team targeted – on their relative *distance to a city*, on *caste makeup* (a dichotomous variable indicating whether the majority of the non-SC population of the GP belongs to a single subcaste group), and the identity of the *dominant SC subcaste* (indicating the most numerous SC subcaste in the GP).[7]

While this pair-matching – detailed in Appendix B – allowed me to ensure that selected reserved and unreserved GPs were comparable on a number of key variables, my sampling strategy also guarantees a more general form of balance. Namely, because these pairs are selected around the local thresholds for reservation, my sample is balanced on a large set of covariates drawn from the census of India (Dunning and Nilekani 2013). Table 5.2 and Appendix C (Table A3.1) show that reserved and unreserved GPs selected are statistically indistinguishable on a large number of village characteristics (including their population of SCs), a necessary condition for a valid natural experiment (Dunning 2008). Reserved and unreserved villages are balanced with respect to population and other pretreatment variables, such as the proportion of literates, the proportion of workers, the proportion of marginal workers, and the average distance to a city. Reserved and unreserved villages are also tightly balanced on the assignment covariate (SC proportion at the GP level), reflecting their proximity to the local threshold for reservation.

This key characteristic of my sample allows me to derive unbiased causal estimates of the effect of exposure to an SC *sarpanch*.

While this matching around a discontinuity allows me to select villages that were extremely similar prior to reservation for SCs in 2005, I am able to find such pair-matches only among a subset of GPs within each *panchayat samiti* (GPs whose SC populations were around the local threshold for reservation in 2005). This may suggest that the validity of my results only applies to a very small subset of GPs. Two important

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[6] With the caveat, highlighted by a reviewer, that this strategy might have lessened balance on the unobservables.

[7] Matching GPs on their distance to a city allows for some very crude form of matching on level of socioeconomic development. Matching GPs on their ethnic makeup matters insofar as the inter-caste power equation may differ when comparing units that consist of a large number of small groups from units that consist of one homogenous caste group. Finally, matching GPs on the identity of the numerically most important SC subcaste (Jati) appears important insofar as different SC subcastes are treated and discriminated against with different levels of intensity. While GPs were only matched on these few variables, note in addition that the extreme proximity of GPs within each pair implies that these units are "naturally" paired on a number of additional background characteristics.

Table 5.2. *Difference of Means between Reserved and Unreserved Villages*

	Reserved Villages (group 1)	Unreserved Villages (group 2)	Difference of Means (Group 1–2)	P-value (two-sided)
Mean Number of Illiterates	2,792.21	2,683.50	−108.71	.74
(st. error)	(217.85)	(235.23)	(320.61)	
Mean Number of Workers	2,158.65	2,104.56	−54.09	.81
(st. error)	(142.11)	(183.25)	(231.90)	
Mean Number of Marginal Workers	598.34	574.93	−23.40	.81
(st. error)	(64.49)	(73.60)	(97.86)	
Mean Number of Agricultural Workers	114.90	105.65	−9.25	.73
(st. error)	(19.70)	(1.47)	(26.34)	
Mean Cultivators	1,102.90	1,016.37	−86.53	.58
(st. error)	(106.81)	(112.58)	(155.19)	
Mean Female Non-Workers	1,416.84	1,411.81	−5.03	.97
(st. error)	(119.34)	(150.68)	(192.22)	
Mean SC Population	920.03	829.03	−91.00	.35
(st. error)	(70.04)	(65.85)	(96.14)	
N	32	32	64	

Note: The unit of analysis is the GP. All data are from the 2001 census of India. Standard errors are in parentheses. The **p**-values in the final column give the probability of observing a **t**-statistic as large in absolute value as the observed value, if Group (A) and Group (B) have equal means. Additional tests are presented in Appendix C.

characteristics of my sample limit this concern. First, because I am sampling across sixteen different *panchayat samitis* across Rajasthan, each with a different proportion of SC population (ranging from 11.2 percent to 27.1 percent), my sample includes village-pairs with different levels of SC population, which results in different "thresholds" for reservations in 2005. In addition, while those GPs that were reserved at earlier electoral periods (especially in 1995) contained unusually large SC populations, the threshold for reservation in 2005 was more or less around the modal value in terms of share of SCs at the GP level.

5.2   Sampling SC and Non-SC Villagers

How were the SC and non-SC villagers that took part in these two parallel surveys in turn selected?

In each of the 64 villages sampled, 11 respondents from the Scheduled Castes (for a total N of 704 respondents across 64 villages) and 12

respondents from other castes (for a total N of 768 respondents across 64 villages) were interviewed. In each visited village, two separate teams of interviewers (one for SCs, one for others) operated. While the survey instrument for SCs differed from the survey instrument used for members of other castes (non-SCs hereafter), the two surveys took place simultaneously in November–December of 2009.

The sampling of individuals within these villages followed a form of stratification process adapted to the constraints of the situation. Because selected caste groups were the target population of each survey team, sampling individuals randomly from electoral lists (the usual sampling frame used by leading election surveys in India) would have been complex and time-consuming. Respondent sampling thus followed an "as-random-as-possible" procedure within each of the caste-homogenous units in which Indian villages are divided. Based on information on patterns of settlement in each village,[8] each interviewer was usually assigned to survey members of a specific caste group. Upon being assigned to a specific group, interviewers were "placed" by supervisors in front of a house at one end of their sections, and began by attempting to survey that household. They were instructed to subsequently walk toward the other end of their zone and to interview a member of every nth house (the n number depended on village and caste settlement size) on their way.[9]

Within each house, interviewers surveyed the "first available male" (in the absence of female interviewers, no female was interviewed). If no male was available, interviewers were instructed to come back to each house twice before they were allowed to target another household. Proceeding in this fashion, the overall response rate was 67.8 percent.[10]

This sampling procedure ensured that different subcaste and age groups that were part of our sampling frame were surveyed in each

[8] Estimates of the caste makeup of each village had been previously collected through elite interviews. This ensured that supervisors arrived in each village knowing already which caste groups were to be interviewed and to which of these groups the four interviewers were going to be assigned.

[9] In order to maximize the representativeness of the survey in terms of subcaste (*Jati*) groups, each of the four interviewers was usually assigned to surveying members of a specific subcaste group; when more than 50% of the villagers appeared to belong to one subcaste group, the supervisor in charge assigned two or more interviewers to surveying members from that group, but assigning different "territories" for each interviewer within the village. If a given village consisted of more than four different caste groups belonging to either middle or upper castes, the survey team in charge of surveying "non-SCs" either ignored groups other than the four biggest groups or assigned one or two interviewers to surveying several numerically small groups.

[10] While supervisors did not monitor the number of households in which no one answered or no male was present, they did measure "refusals to participate." These percentages were thus calculated using the counts of refusal and the count of completed interviews.

village. Note in addition that I was able to check that respondents were on average statistically indistinguishable in terms of caste group, level of education, household size, profession, and socioeconomic status (measured as "number of rooms in the house") in the reserved and unreserved villages we targeted.

5.3   Measuring the Tangible Consequences of Descriptive Representation

The paper-and-pencil components of these two surveys (that is, the background surveys) measured what I have referred to in Chapter 4 as the material and tangible consequences of caste-based reservation.[11]

5.3.1   Measuring the Material Impact of Reservation

Villagers were first surveyed about the type of assistance (if any) that their household had received from the *gram panchayat* (GP hereafter) over the previous four years – that is, since their *sarpanch* had been in place. Specifically, respondents were asked about four types of household-specific benefits that they might have received from the *gram panchayat*, or through the intercession of an official from the *gram panchayat*.[12] If the respondent suggested that they did receive any of these benefits, they were subsequently asked to display official evidence backing their claims. These checks ensured that they had indeed received benefits from the village council. Without such evidence, the response was not validated.

Because villagers may also benefit from the public action of the *gram panchayat* through its allocation of an array of collective and community-targeted public goods, respondents were also asked whether, over the same period of time, any community-targeted collective public equipment had been installed in their hamlet (*mohallam*). Specifically, they were asked whether a water hand-pump (*or* a well), a road, streetlight, or a sewage canal had been either built or repaired since the last council elections four and a half years prior to the survey. In the absence of exhaustive official records, claims that either of these infrastructures had been built were cross-examined and validated by interviews with at least three different elected members of the relevant village councils in each case. Because of the overwhelming caste homogeneity of hamlets

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[11] Note that all survey materials, as well as a full dataset including survey responses, are now available at a public repository (as indicated on the author's website).

[12] The detailed list of these benefits is included in Chapter 6, where I test the impact of reservation on redistribution.

(*mohallam*) within villages, this question de facto measures whether certain *communities* (understood here as subcaste groups) were favored in the allocation of these basic collective infrastructures.

5.3.2   *Measuring the Impact of Reservation on Inter-Caste Contact*

In order to test whether reservation had an impact on inter-caste contact, the two surveys also measured villagers' self-report of contact with members of other castes in their village. These items, asked face-to-face, were included in the background questionnaire that followed the audio surveys described in the next section.[13]

5.4   Measuring the Psychological Impact of Descriptive Representation

Asking sensitive questions about untouchability-related beliefs in rural India is complex. In spite of the prevalence of these beliefs (Chapter 2), researchers interviewing Indian villagers are frequently confronted with denial about the persistence of negative attitudes and behaviors toward members of the Scheduled Castes. In contrast with the data presented in Chapter 2, outsiders to the village are sometimes told that any untouchability-related practices have disappeared in their village, and that they personally do not think any differently of members of the Scheduled Castes.

In order to address this issue, my approach differed from a number of other approaches now commonly used by survey researchers eager to limit "social desirability concerns." Specifically, in order to generate high-quality **and** *individual*-level measures of these beliefs, I deliberately chose *not* to rely on "survey-experiments" (Sniderman and Grob 1996, Gilens 2002) or implicit attitude tests (Nosek and Banaji 2009). In the spirit of a number of surveys measuring drug or sexuality-related behaviors (reviewed in Tourangeau and Smith 1996, as well as in Groves et al. 2004), I instead chose to openly ask sensitive questions while insisting on enhancing both the *privacy* and *confidentiality* of the survey process.

To generate self-reports of untouchability-related beliefs, this study relied on an original MP3 player–based "audio self-administered questionnaire." In this methodology, respondents reacted to statements made by "villagers like [them] in earlier conversations with the research team." To provide their reactions to statements they heard through earphones,

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[13] The detailed list of these questions is also included in Chapter 6.

Figure 5.2. The Answer Sheet.

they marked an answer sheet using simple shapes and symbols,[14] a portion of which is reproduced in Figure 5.2. The answer sheet numbered as many lines as there were questions in the audio survey, and each line presented respondents with various response choices (graphically represented by thumbs). Instructions contained in the instrument itself detailed what each thumb means, and a "voice" provided instructions on how and where to react to each statement. Respondents ticked one of the shapes on each line; if they did not know what to answer or refused to, they did not tick anything and moved on to the next line. In order for illiterate respondents to identify the line associated with each statement, a symbol (in Figure 5.2, a chair, a tea glass, a hanger, or a stool) was mentioned after each statement ("please react in front of the chair symbol"). Because this audio self-administered methodology relied on simple MP3 players, respondents were contacted and interviewed at their homes (that is, according to our survey rules, past the gate of their house but often outdoors). When contacted, they were asked to participate in a survey about "social changes in village life." If they were willing to participate, they were given an exam pad containing an answer sheet as well as a locked ballot box in which they were asked to place their completed answer sheet at the end of the audio interview. They were then trained by the interviewer on how to provide responses to the questions heard in the

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[14] The instrument is organized as a succession of recordings intertwined with silences that leave respondents time to answer. Each of these silences lasted five seconds, a length that was determined, after a series of pretests, to maximize the ability of respondents to respond while avoiding fatigue.

earphones. During this process, the enumerator explained to them the meaning of the different "thumbs up" and "thumbs down" symbols.[15] Upon making sure that the respondent understood the methodology[16] – which was done by asking each respondent to answer a few easy and noncontroversial questions on a mock answer sheet – interviewers asked the respondent to seat in a quiet area, apart from potential bystanders. They then played the recording. At this point, the interview started, and respondents were asked to enter their responses on the answer sheet provided by the interviewer at the outset of the interview. A remarkable feature of this methodology thus lies in the minimal role played by interviewers.

Once the audio survey was completed, respondents folded their answer sheet and placed it in a locked box, at which point the interviewer came back. If respondents requested that a question be repeated, interviewers used the "skip forward" function.[17] If not, a 15-minutes-long face-to-face background questionnaire – including some of the items aimed at measuring the "tangible" consequences of reservation – was directly administered. Finally, in the minutes or hours following the interview, a supervisor met *each* respondent to double-check that the response methodology had been correctly understood before he "validated" the questionnaire.

Crucially, in this process, neither respondents nor interviewers (during training) were told that they were responding to a survey about reservations or attitudes toward the Scheduled Castes. The survey, presented by the interviewer as a survey about "social changes in village life," contains sections about different topics such as gender relations, intergenerational relations, the development of the village, attitudes toward politicians, and technological changes in villagers' lives.

To prepare the audio instrument on which these results are based, I first used a series of semi-directed focus groups on "social relations in this village" led by Shankare Gowda and myself during the first phase of my research. I used these discussions to record and classify a number of statements that villagers frequently made about caste relations. These statements, made by villagers during long and repeated interviews during which Shankare Gowda and I had time to build trust with respondents,

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[15] The meaning of those symbols was not obvious to a majority of respondents, and other symbols (circles and squares) were tested. Once respondents were trained, they had no trouble identifying the meaning of each of the different thumbs.

[16] Note that the methodology was nonetheless explained in details for the second time by the "voice" in the recording.

[17] In less than 5% of the cases, respondents asked interviewers to replay a question for them.

are central to this methodology. A number of relevant statements heard during these preparatory interviews and focus groups were then selected and translated,[18] following which I selected a limited number of theoretically relevant items for inclusion on the final questionnaire. Based on this material, I wrote an English version of the audio questionnaire including the "statement-based" questions as well as a number of instructions. Different professional translators translated and back-translated this questionnaire from Hindi to English.

Speakers of the various Rajasthani dialects in which we subsequently recorded the survey used this final Hindi version as the basis for the various recordings in four different Rajasthani dialects corresponding to the four districts in which the survey took place. In order to enhance the realism of the recording and guarantee that all respondents would understand the statements, villagers from each of the four districts of rural Rajasthan that we surveyed recorded the instructions and "acted" the statements in a culturally relevant way, all of which was done under the supervision of a Rajasthani theatre director that was fluent in all of these dialects (Harikesh Bairwa) and was in charge to ensure that the meaning remained exactly the same from one dialect to another.[19]

This methodology was chosen over several alternatives. It was chosen over audio computer interviewing (ACASI), which would likely have attracted unwanted attention and hence would have limited our ability to convince older villagers to participate, as was checked in a small pretest. This methodology was also chosen over face-to-face interviewing, including over techniques known to reduce misreporting such as list, survey, and endorsement experiments. The use of recordings first ensured a perfectly uniform delivery of the survey. It also provided respondents with culturally grounded questions, presented in their local dialect through the reflections of "fellow villagers." Third, while only a limited number of survey or list-experiments can be included in an instrument, this methodology allowed me to generate individual-level responses to a large number of items, and hence to disentangle between the various psychological mechanisms described in Chapter 4. Last but not least, as with other self-administered survey methodologies (Tourangeau and Smith 1996, Harmon et al. 2009), the isolation and the privacy implied by this methodology significantly reduced misreporting.

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[18] Rahul Verma, Jitendra Kumar and Harikesh Bairwa translated.
[19] Remarkably, the recording of this audio instrument did not require the purchase of any sophisticated material. An Internet-phone microphone, a basic sound-editing software – Apple's GarageBand – and a simple laptop were used to produce, edit, and mix recordings.

In Chauchard (2013), I explore the effect of the MP3/ASAQ methodology on reporting of sensitive attitudes. To do this and isolate the causal mechanism behind this effect, the MP3/ASAQ mode was experimentally compared to other potential administration procedures. This study first compared the propensity with which respondents reported these "socially undesirable" attitudes using the MP3/ASAQ procedure with the propensity with which they reported them in a comparable face-to-face interview. Three additional interview procedures – each of which deliberately omitted one of the features of the MP3/ASAQ methodology – were compared with the MP3/ASAQ procedure in order to isolate the mechanisms through which that procedure might increase reporting of sensitive attitudes. First, to assess whether reporting was driven by concerns about interviewer disapproval, a group of respondents used the MP3/ASAQ, but handed their answer sheets to the interviewer instead of placing them in a ballot box. Second, to assess whether endorsement by fictitious fellow villagers encouraged the disclosure of undesirable attitudes, a variation of the MP3/ASAQ procedure was run in which respondents heard questions of the type, "Many people say that 'statement X.' How much do you agree with that?" instead of being presented with statements "made by villagers like [them]." Third, to assess whether reporting was driven by concerns about bystander disapproval, surveys were administered with earphones replaced by mini-speakers, so that potential bystanders could listen to the instrument. Altogether, five different data collection procedures were thus examined. These experimental comparisons suggest that the MP3/ASAQ mode strongly increased reporting of socially undesirable attitudes: both t-tests and multivariate models establish a highly statistically significant difference between the FTF and MP3 groups. Other things being equal, the number of "undesirable" responses given by villagers who were interviewed face-to-face was only 79/100 of the number given by respondents that self-administered the survey using the MP3/ASAQ methodology. Results from the three "partial" MP3/ASAQ conditions suggest that this reduction mostly stems from effective isolation from bystanders, as well as to more forgiving formulations, but *not* from increased isolation from the interviewer himself.

6   Tests: The Material and Tangible Effects
of Descriptive Representation

In Chapter 4, I have derived a series of hypotheses about the material
and tangible changes that we should expect to observe as a result of res-
ervation for a member of the Scheduled Castes. As a main hypothesis,
I have first argued that overall, the reallocation of resources should be
limited. That is, members of the SCs as a group should *not* be expected
to receive sizable benefits from reservation. In addition, when and where
SCs benefit, I have suggested that it should be limited to a particular
group of beneficiaries among the Scheduled Castes, namely members of
the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste.

Second, while redistributive effects should be limited, I have argued
that reservation should nonetheless have a major impact on the envi-
ronment in which villagers of all castes live. Discussing these "non-
redistributive" effects of descriptive representation, I have suggested
that reservation should both generate new forms of inter-caste contact
and *increase* the frequency with which contact between members of the
Scheduled Castes and members of other castes takes place.

This chapter uses items included in the two quantitative surveys
described in Chapter 5[1] in order to test these two arguments. In the
first part of this chapter, I find support for my argument regarding the
distributive effects of reservation. While the small size of my sample does
not allow me to reach a decisive conclusion regarding potential distribu-
tive effects – and hence conclusively demonstrate whether such effects
exist – it provides me with suggestive evidence that these effects should
remain limited. As a result, it is not clear that members of the Scheduled
Castes benefit materially from the accession of an SC villager to the
office of *sarpanch*. However, I find stronger support for my second intu-
ition: when restricting my sample to members of the *sarpanch*'s own sub-
caste, I detect positive and consistent effects, which suggests that effects

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[1] Most of the items used in this chapter were included in the background survey that fol-
lowed the audio survey described in some details in the preceding chapter. These surveys
took place in November–December 2009 in sixty-four villages of Rajasthan.

may exist, but that they are only directed toward a specific subgroup of SC villagers. I interpret this finding as consistent with the idea that SC *sarpanches* do not target SCs; they instead target members of their own coalitions. Insofar as the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste is likely to be part of this coalition, this explains these results.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the impact of reservation on inter-caste contact. Using self-reports from both SC and non-SC villagers, I show that reservation has a large and significant impact on contact between members of the Scheduled Castes and others, and that it encourages new forms of interactions between members of different castes. This confirms the qualitative intuitions presented in Chapter 4 and more generally suggests that reservation has an important impact on village life and on the geography of power within villages.

6.1   Uncertain and Conditional Redistributive Effects

6.1.1   *Data and Measures*

My survey instrument provides data on two types of publicly provided goods that villagers may have obtained from their *gram panchayat* during the four and a half years that had taken place (as of the fall of 2009, when these studies took place) since the last village council elections.

Villagers were first surveyed about the type of assistance (if any) that their household had received from the *gram panchayat* (hereafter GP). Specifically, respondents were asked about four types of benefits they might have received from the *gram panchayat*, or through the intercession of an official from the *gram panchayat*. Given the GP's role in selecting and employing villagers for local public works projects sanctioned under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), respondents were asked if at least one member of their household had been offered a job by the *gram panchayat*; second, in keeping with other important benefits granted by *gram panchayats*, villagers were asked whether a pension (either an old age or a disability pension[2]) had been allocated to a member of the household; third, they were asked whether the household had received a Below the Poverty Line (BPL) ration card[3]; fourth

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[2] The survey question did not differentiate between the two types of pensions.

[3] As noted in Besley et al. (2005, p 651), "The GP, in collaboration with state government officials, is supposed to identify (via a census) households with income below the poverty line, and to give these households a BPL card. Possession of this card makes the household eligible for an array of government schemes, ranging from subsidized food through the public distribution system to free hospitalization. The list of BPL households, and subsequent selection of beneficiary households under various schemes is supposed to be

and finally, they were asked whether the household had benefited from one of the several state-sponsored housing schemes.[4] If the respondent suggested that they did receive any of these benefits, they were subsequently asked to display official evidence backing their claims. Whenever relevant, they were also asked to display the newly constructed facilities. These checks ensured that they had indeed received benefits from the village council. Without such evidence, the response was not validated. Finally, the respondent was asked whether his household had received "any other support" from the GP that they self-assessed as being worth mentioning (less than 1 percent of respondents made any mention of such benefit; accordingly, responses to this item are not analyzed in the rest of the chapter).

Beyond these "low-spillover" publicly distributed goods, villagers may also benefit from the public action of the *gram panchayat* through its allocation of an array of collective and community-targeted public goods. Accordingly, villagers were also asked whether, over the same period of time, any community-targeted collective public equipment had been installed in their hamlet (*mohallam*). Specifically, they were asked whether a road, a water hand-pump (or another water-related facility, such as a well), and a sewage canal (or another drainage-related facility) had been either built or repaired directly around their house since the last council elections four and a half years prior to the survey. Because of the overwhelming caste homogeneity of blocks or hamlets (*mohallam*) within villages, this question de facto measures whether certain *communities* (understood here as *jati*s, or subcaste groups) were favored in the allocation of these basic collective infrastructures.

In addition to this data about the benefits and public goods received by villagers, the audio survey contained at least one item that allows me to make inferences on the potential redistributive effect of reservation for a member of the Scheduled Castes. In order to make inferences on SC villagers' perceptions of the work accomplished by the *gram panchayat*, I measured reactions to the following first-person statements:

- "If I wanted to obtain a pension or receive benefits from a government welfare scheme, I believe the *sarpanch* would be able to help me."
- "The *gram panchayat* has been good for the development of the village."

In this chapter, I am especially interested in reactions to the first statement, which measures beliefs about the ability of *sarpanches* to provide

ratified in Gram Sabha meetings." My own fieldwork in Rajasthan since 2009 does not suggest anything different.

[4] In Rajasthan, these include a variety of transfer programs such as schemes that provide beneficiary households with funds to acquire private latrines, private electricity, and water supply.

individual assistance to members of the SCs. The second is a much more general statement, measuring villagers' general appreciation of the actions of their *gram panchayat*. Insofar as these general evaluations of *gram panchayats* can be seen to derive from the benefits that respondents actually receive from their *gram panchayat*, responses to this statement should be of interest.

6.1.2   Methodology

How did reservation affect the distribution of public resources? Have SC villagers benefited from the accession of an SC villager to the office of *sarpanch*? Since the conditions for a natural experiment are met (Chapter 5), I simply compare the average responses provided by SC villagers in reserved and unreserved villages, taking into account the clustered (village-level) nature of the data.[5] Results from these analyses are presented in Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

In each case, the first column provides the mean response (that is, in the cases of Tables 6.1 and 6.2, given the binary nature of the data, the proportion of "yes" responses) in reserved villages, along with a clustered standard error; the second column indicates the mean responses to each item in unreserved villages; the third column indicates the difference in proportion between the two groups of villages and indicates the significance level of this difference. In order to account for the clustering of the data, all statistics are produced by t-tests of the average of these cluster means in reserved vs. unreserved groups.[6]

6.1.3   Results

What do these analyses indicate? As can first be seen from Table 6.1, I detect no *significant* differences across reserved and unreserved *gram panchayats* in terms of the "low-spillover" benefits received by members of the Scheduled Castes. Insofar as these difference in means remain below significance levels, this can be understood as evidence that reservation does not improve

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[5] To reflect the clustering in the analysis, I take the mean response in each village in both the reserved vs. unreserved groups and compute the average of these cluster means in each group. Assuming as-good-as-random assignment, running a t-test comparing the average of these cluster means across the reserved and unreserved groups gives unbiased estimates for the average causal effect in the study group of individuals, because here the sixty-four clusters (villages) are all the same size, i.e., eleven or twelve respondents per cluster (Kish 1965, Angrist and Pischke 2008). This method also naturally takes account of the degree of within-cluster homogeneity of potential outcomes.

[6] While I should technically be running a proportions test given the binary nature of my outcome variables in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, my results do not substantively change if I do. Note, in addition, that my results are far more conservative in this fashion.

Table 6.1. *SC* Sarpanch *and Private Benefits Received by SC Households* *(1 = YES, 0 = NO)*

	Proportion of YES in Reserved GPs (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Proportion of YES in Unreserved GPs (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved GPs
Did respondent's household receive…?			
…. *a job*	0.169	0.113	.056
	(.030)	(.043)	(.053)
…. *a pension*	0.033	0.042	−.008
	(.012)	(.013)	(.018)
…. *a BPL ration card*	0.125	0.099	.025
	(.025)	(.019)	(.032)
…. *funds from a housing scheme*	0.059	0.045	.014
	(.013)	(.009)	(.016)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

the lot of members of the Scheduled Castes in material terms.[7] The differences across reserved and unreserved GPs reported in the table remain far below usual significance levels. Second, the result on the last of the four items (*pensions*) suggests that reservation may also have an opposite (i.e., negative) effect, driving resources away from and not toward members of the Scheduled Castes. Given this conflicting picture, it appears that there are no straightforward redistributive effects of reservation (not all effects appear to run in the same directions). If there are effects, they are not consistent enough across GPs to be statistically detectable.[8]

Turning to community-targeted collective goods, Table 6.2 examines results of similar bivariate analyses of the effect of reservation on the distribution of these goods. These results similarly provide no clear

[7] Despite the relatively small size of this sample (thirty-two GPs in each of the two groups), I cannot entirely reject the possibility that significant effects would have emerged had my analyses been more powered. For three of the four types of benefits studied (jobs, BPL cards, and housing funds), the t-tests reported in the third column indicate that members of the SCs may in fact *benefit* from reservation: the sign of the difference between reserved and unreserved GPs suggest that SC villagers do benefit, and even that these effects might have been relatively large with a larger N. It thus remains possible that these differences might have turned to significance with a larger sample.

[8] By contrast, as I show in following chapters, other outcomes appear to be significantly impacted by reservation relying on a similar N.

Table 6.2. *SC* Sarpanch *and Community-Targeted Benefits (1 =YES, 0 = NO)*

	Proportion of YES in Reserved GPs (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Proportion of YES in Unreserved GPs (N =352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved GPs
Did Respondent's Hamlet Receive?			
Road construction / Road repair	0.436	.405	.031
	(.05)	(.03)	(.06)
Water Facilities (Water Tank or	**0.240**	0.296	−.056
hand-pump provision)	**(.03)**	(.05)	(.06)
Drainage Facilities	0.153	0.396	.114***
	(.02)	(.04)	(.04)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

indication that SC villagers living in reserved villages did benefit from the accession of one of their coethnics to the office of *sarpanch*. The effects on the first and third items suggest that they did, but only the difference on the third item (drainage facilities) is statistically significant – because it is surprisingly large. The effect on the second item – although it remains far below usual significance levels – puzzlingly runs in the opposite direction, suggesting that members of the SCs are in fact more likely to receive a hand-pump, a well, or a water tank *when their GP is unreserved*.

Moving to Table 6.3, the responses of SC villagers show that reservation for a member of the SCs did *not* improve perceptions of the work done by the *gram panchayat*. Worse, I find that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* actually *decreased* the trust that villagers have in their *sarpanch*'s ability to resolve their problems.[9] In line with the preceding analyses, these attitudinal measures support the intuition that the redistributive benefits of reservation should be limited, as it is unlikely that SC villagers would have reacted in that manner had their *sarpanch* been actually efficient at channeling public resources to them. Interestingly, this may also suggest that the relative inexperience of SC *sarpanches*, for all its transformative

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[9] This is coherent with findings in Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) and Beaman et al. (2009), which suggest that villagers evaluate the work of reserved GPs (in their case, GPs reserved on the basis of gender) more negatively, regardless of the actual achievements of these GPs.

Table 6.3. *The Effect of Reservation on Perceptions of the* Gram Panchayat
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. *"If I wanted to obtain a pension or receive benefits from a government welfare scheme, I believe the sarpanch would be able to help me"*	2.90 (.05)	3.11 (.05)	.21** (.10)
2. *"The Gram Panchayat has been good for the development of the village"*	3.11 (.05)	3.15 (.05)	.04 (.04)

Standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

potential, may come at a cost for the efficient functioning of institutions. The fact that I detect no effect on the second statement presented in this table (which focused not on the person of the *sarpanch*, but rather on the *gram panchayat*) suggests that the problem perceived by villagers may indeed be specific to the person of the *sarpanch*. As villagers living under reservation see their *sarpanch* as less efficient, they are just as likely to declare that the *gram panchayat* overall does good work for the village.

These analyses, because they are potentially underpowered, do not conclusively allow me to test the hypothesis developed in Chapter 4. However, they suggest that redistributive effects of reservation did not exist in the villages included in this study.

Additional analyses, however, allow me to reach a more decisive conclusion regarding my second hypothesis. In addition to arguing that overall redistributive effects should be limited, I have also hypothesized in Chapter 4 that the impact of quotas should *not* be homogenous within the SC category. Specifically, I have argued that members of the SC *sarpanch*'s own subcaste should be much more likely to receive benefits than members of other SC subcastes (which I refer to in the rest of this book as "small SC subcaste," the *sarpanch* being almost inevitably drawn from the SC subcaste that is numerically the most important[10]). In order to test whether the material impact of reservation differed across SC

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[10] This was the case in all thirty-two reserved *gram panchayats* of my sample.

subcastes, I reran the analyses presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, this time splitting my sample according to respondents' subcastes. The results of these analyses are presented in a condensed format in Table 6.4: in the left column, I simply display the difference in means across reserved and unreserved villages for members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste, while the right column presents the same statistic for members of "small SC subcastes."

These analyses shed a different light on the analyses presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. While no clear effects emerged from analyses based on the full sample in these tables, the analyses based on split samples in Table 6.4 provide a different story about the way in which reservation for a member of the SC category impacts the allocation of public benefits among members of the SCs. As can be seen from the first column, reservation has a relatively coherent across-items effect on redistribution toward members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste. Members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste either benefit (in five out of seven cases, two of which are statistically significant with a small sample) or are arguably unaffected (in the two remaining cases) by reservation. Interestingly, these results contrast with the results on members of other SC subcastes presented in the right column. While members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste tend to benefit from reservation, members of other SC subcastes tend to be *penalized* by it. In five out of seven cases (one of which is statistically significant), the difference in means is negative, meaning that members of these subcastes may be receiving *fewer goods* under reservation. In the two remaining cases, the difference-in-means by contrast remains close to null (on BPL cards) or slightly positive (as on drainage facilities). While a relatively small N calls for cautious conclusions, these differentiated results across subcastes are striking, and they help illuminate the logic driving the distributive choices of SC *sarpanches*.

6.1.4   Interpretation

Due to the relatively small size of my sample (N = 64), these findings should be taken with the necessary degree of caution.[11] The results exposed in these three tables, however, seem coherent with recent findings in the empirical literature on the effects of caste reservations in India.

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[11] In addition, as mentioned by Dunning and Nilekani (2013), "as in previous studies such as Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), our data do not allow us to estimate counterfactual outcomes in the absence of reservation *as a system*. As we will discuss further below, it is possible that equilibrium policy outcomes are shaped, system-wide, by the presence of reservation, and we will indeed suggest below that rotation of reservation may itself encourage the formation of multi-caste parties, which may help mitigate the distributive impact of quotas."

Table 6.4. *The Material Effect and Significance of Reservation across Different SC Subcastes (1=YES, 0=NO).*

	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages among Members of "Dominant SC subcastes"	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages among Members of "Small SC subcastes"
Did Respondent Receive		
.... a job	.077**	–.006
	(.03)	(.04)
.... a pension	–.007	–.016
	(.02)	(.02)
.... a BPL ration card	.027	.002
	(.03)	(.03)
.... funds from a housing scheme	.024	–.006
	(.02)	(.02)
Did Respondent's Hamlet Receive....		
.... a road	.060	–.056
	(.04)	(.07)
....Water Facilities	–.026	–.132**
	(.04)	(.06)
.... Drainage Faciities	.135***	.041
	(.03)	(.03)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level. Only the last significant result (on drainage) passes a FDR test (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995) for q = .05.

While early contributions to this literature suggested that political reservations did affect public goods provision in India and the redistribution of resources in favor of targeted groups (Pande 2003, Besley et al. 2004), mounting evidence (Chin and Prakash 2011, Jensenius 2015, Bardhan et al. 2010, Dunning and Nilekani 2013, Palaniswamy and Krishnan 2008) exists suggesting weak, conditional, or extremely limited effects. This, I have argued in Chapter 4, may explain the absence of strong negative reactions to the implementation of reservation among members of dominant groups.

Coherent with this idea, these results also show that the effect of reservation is conditional on *subcaste*, and hence that it is not homogenous within the category SC. Reservations for members of the SCs may lead to a reallocation of publicly distributed benefits, but this reallocation

should be restricted, within the SCs, to a specific group: members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste. Benefits for members of other SC subcastes, on the other hand, remain extremely limited, if they exist at all. While this data does not allow me to show this decisively, it is important to note that this finding does not necessarily suggest that members of the *sarpanch*'s subcaste would be the only ones to benefit from reservation. It instead likely suggests, as noted in Chapter 3, that *sarpanches* do not necessarily target goods and benefits based on broader caste categories. As such, these effects likely signal the existence of complex inter-caste coalitions usually formed on the basis of *subcastes* rather than on the basis of broader caste categories. While my data does not allow me to show whether this is the case, it is important to note that these results do not preclude the possibility that other groups and individuals, for instance members of non-SC subcastes, benefit from reservation. This would be the case, for instance, if these groups had allied with the winning SC candidate during the campaign.

As noted in Chapter 4, such coalitions are an almost natural consequence of the complex makeup of villages in terms of subcastes. Since a single subcaste rarely (in less than 10 percent of the villages in the districts in which this survey took place) constitutes an electoral majority, almost all caste leaders need to enter multi-caste alliances in order to ensure that their preferred candidate stands a chance to be elected. As suggested in Chapters 3 and 4, this need for allies is reinforced by the institutional set-up of *gram panchayats* and by the peculiar combination of a system of reservation (for four different identity categories) with a system of rotation. Because the key position of *sarpanch* ends up being "reserved" for a member of a disadvantaged group (Other Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or women) for about half of all electoral periods on the basis of rotation, even castes that constitute close to a majority of voters in a given *gram panchayat* need allies among members of other castes, since fellow caste members may not always be eligible to run. Within these inter-caste coalitions, members of small subcastes – especially if they belong to a disadvantaged category – tend to be marginalized both due to their numerical weakness and to the absence of obvious political leaders within these communities. As a result, members of these groups frequently complain that they do not benefit as much from public development-related funds as do dominant subcastes within the SC category (commonly referred to in the public debate on the benefits of reservation as the "creamy layer").[12]

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[12] A likely reason emerges from the analysis of the dynamics of elections in reserved constituencies, developed in Chapters 3 and 4. Since these elections usually pit *several* candidates from the SC category against one another, it is frequently the case that each

While certain SC subcastes end up being excluded from the winning coalition, including when reservation is implemented, the existence of these multi-subcastes coalitions likely presents one unexpected advantage from the point of view of intergroup relations: it guarantees that the category SC is rarely united during the campaign or after. This likely contributes to the fact that members of dominant castes rarely see reservation as a serious threat to their dominance, which in turn likely explains why strong negative reactions to these policies have been relatively rare.

6.2   The Major Impact of Reservation on Inter-Caste Contact

Beyond redistributive effects, I have argued in Chapter 4 that caste-based quotas may generate other tangible changes in village life. Specifically, I have argued that descriptive representation may have a direct effect on patterns of inter-caste contact, given its ability to (1) create an elite among the newly represented group, (2) generate uncommon forms of inter-caste contact, (3) increase the frequency of inter-caste contact, and (4) increase the linkages between members of disadvantaged groups and the state.

In this section, I use data from the two surveys described in Chapter 5 to test the second and the third of these claims. Does reservation generate new, uncommon forms of inter-caste contact? Does it, more generally, increase the frequency of contact between members of the Scheduled Castes and others?

6.2.1   Data and Measures

In order to test whether reservation had an impact on inter-caste contact, I rely on self-reports by SC and non-SC villagers. These self-reports, recorded *after* the audio interviews described in Chapter 5 – as part of the background questionnaire of each survey – were caste-specific.

Non-SC villagers were asked to answer six questions:

1. In general, how often would you say you enter the SC colony of the village? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)

SC subcaste presents its own candidate (see Vij 2010 for an illustration of this in rural Rajasthan). If and when that is the case, it can be safely assumed that members of these small subcastes will subsequently not be seen by the victorious *sarpanch* – who, in all thirty-two cases studied here, belonged to the dominant SC subcaste – as allies or as members of his "winning coalition." As such, it can be hypothesized that members of these small SC subcastes pay the price of their opposition to the victorious *sarpanch* during the electoral campaign throughout the latter official's term.

2. In general, how often would you say you go inside a house in that colony? (scale from 1 to 5)
3. How often do you stop by in the street to have a discussion with an SC villager? (scale from 1 to 5)
4. In general, would you say you have overall more, much more, same amount, less, or much less interactions/discussions with SC villagers compared to five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)
5. In general, would you say you have more, much more, same amount, less, or much less SC acquaintances than five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)
6. Over the last two years, did you invite an SC villager into your home? (0=Y/ 1=N)

Meanwhile, SC villagers answered five questions on a related topic:

1. In general, how often would you say upper-caste villagers come to your house? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)
2. In general, how often do you stop by in the street to have a discussion with an upper-caste villager? (scale from 1 to 5)
3. In general, would you say you have overall more, much more, same amount, less, or much less interactions with upper-caste villagers compared to five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)
4. In general, would you say you have more, much more, same amount, less, or much less upper-caste acquaintances than five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)
5. Over the last two years, has an upper-caste villager invited you into his home? (0=Y/1=N)

6.2.2 Methodology

As mentioned earlier, since the conditions for a well-identified natural experiment are met (Chapter 5), I simply compare average responses in reserved and unreserved villages, taking into account the clustered (village-level) nature of the data.[13] Results from these analyses are presented in Tables 6.5–6.7. In each case, the first column provides the mean response to each item in reserved villages, along with a standard error; the second column indicates the mean response to each item in unreserved villages, along with a standard error; the third column indicates the difference in means between the two groups of villages and indicates the significance level of this difference.

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[13] To reflect the clustering in the analysis, I take the mean response in each village in both the reserved vs. unreserved groups and compute the average of these cluster means in each group.

Table 6.5. *The Impact of Reservation on Inter-Caste Contact (as Self-Reported by non-SC Villagers)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. *In general, how often would you say you enter the SC colony of the village? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	2.39 (.09)	2.60 (.09)	.210* (.126)
2. *In general, how often would you say you go inside a house in that colony? (scale 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	2.93 (.09)	3.17 (.12)	.239 (.15)
3. *How often do you stop by in the street to have a discussion with an SC villager? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	2.82 (.10)	3.00 (.08)	.177 (.12)
4. *In general, would you say you have overall more, much more, same amount, less, much less interactions with SC villagers compared to five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	2.43 (.09)	2.50 (.07)	.072 (.13)
5. *In general would you say you have more, much more, same amount, less, or much less SC acquaintances than five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	2.49 (.08)	2.56 (.06)	.070 (.09)
6. *Over the last two years, did you invite an SC villager into your home? (0 = Y/1 = N)*	.273 (.03)	.359 (.03)	.085* (.05)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

6.2.3   Results

As shown in Table 6.5, non-SC villagers reported somewhat more inter-caste contact. While none of the responses suggest that contact decreased, only two out of the six differences in means across reserved and unreserved villages are statistically significant. Even if the sizes of the

Table 6.6. *The Impact of Reservation on Inter-Caste Contact (as Self-Reported by SC Villagers)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. *In general, how often would you say upper-caste villagers come to your house? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	2.49 (.07)	2.67 (.07)	.175* (.10)
2. *In general, how often do you stop by in the street to have a discussion with an upper-caste villager? (scale 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	1.97 (.07)	2.20 (.06)	.22** (.10)
3. *In general, would you say you have overall more, much more, same amount, less, or much less interactions with upper-caste villagers compared to five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	2.00 (.05)	2.27 (.10)	.27** (.11)
4. *In general would you say you have more, much more, same amount, less, or much less upper-caste acquaintances than five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	2.28 (.09)	2.51 (.09)	.23** (.13)
5. *Over the last two years, has an upper-caste villager invited you into his home? (0 =Y/1 = N)*	.37 (.04)	.49 (.04)	.12 (.08)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

effects I detect in this table remain small, these results may provide a first validation for the intuitions presented in Chapter 4.

A confirmation comes from the responses of SC respondents regarding their patterns of contact with non-SC or "upper-caste' villagers, as displayed in Table 6.6. These responses consistently indicate that both the frequency and the quality of inter-caste contact increased when the position of *sarpanch* was reserved for a member of the Scheduled Castes. Assuming that these self-reports accurately reflect the experience of

Table 6.7. *The Impact of Reservation on Inter-Caste Contact (as Self-Reported by SC Villagers), across SC Subcastes*

	Difference in Mean Response across Reserved and Unreserved Villages among Members of Dominant SC Subcastes.	Difference in Mean Response across Reserved and Unreserved Villages among Members of Small SC Subcastes.
1. *In general, how often would you say upper-caste villagers come to your house? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	.256** (.11)	−.091 (.19)
2. *In general, How often do you stop by in the street to have a discussion with an upper-caste villager? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being least often)*	.284*** (.10)	−.026 (.18)
3. *In general, would you say you have overall more, much more, same amount, less, or much less interactions with upper-caste villagers compared to five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	.305*** (.10)	.090 (.17)
4. *In general would you say you have more, much more, same amount, less, or much less upper-caste acquaintances than five years ago? (scale from 1 to 5, 5 being much less)*	.322*** (.10)	−.047 (.16)
5. *Over the last two years, has an upper-caste villager invited you into his home? (0 = Y/1 = N)*	.096 (.072)	.154 (.153)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

SC villagers (rather than wishful perceptions), these responses suggest that reservation lead to a strong and significant increase in their levels of contact with non-SC villagers, suggesting that they were more likely to receive members of other castes into their homes (item 1), as well as entering non-SC villagers' homes (item 5). In addition, analyses of responses to items 2, 3, and 4 in the table suggest that they had more frequent and richer interactions with villagers from other castes, which supports a number of theories presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

The results flagged as statistically significant in these two tables pass a variety of robustness tests. Given the ordinal nature of many of these items, nonparametric tests were first run. These tests show that the difference

in medians between the two groups of villagers is not different from 0, as calculated by a nonparametric, two-sample Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test-taking village clustering into account.[14] These results confirm the parametric analysis: inter-caste contact, by and large, appears to increase under reservation. Second, these effects also hold across a wide range of multivariate specifications.[15] Finally, the significant results presented in Tables 6.5 and 6.6 persist in an analysis of subgroups. The effects of reservation that I detect on inter-caste contact – both among SC and non-SC villagers – hold across subgroups based on age or education.[16]

In keeping with the effects detected in the first part of this chapter, however, the effect of reservation on inter-caste contact appears to be strongly conditional on the subcaste of respondents. As is apparent in Table 6.7, these changes in patterns of inter-caste contact self-reported by SC respondents only exist among members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste. While difference in means across reserved and unreserved GPs are strong and significant in the first column of Table 6.7, no such effects are detected in the second column.

6.2.4   Discussion

In order to make sense of these results, the validity and the sensitivity of these measures first need to be discussed. In spite of the relative lack of sophistication of these measures, there are no obvious reasons to think that villagers living in reserved villages would be more likely to deliberately misrepresent their perceptions to their interviewer. Patterns of inter-caste contact are frequent topics of discussion in both reserved and unreserved villages, and most of the questions asked – save for the last question, which directly measures an untouchability-related behavior – would not be considered *sensitive* questions by most villagers. Besides, villagers I met in reserved villages during the qualitative part of this study never appeared to feel strongly pressured compared to villagers living in unreserved villages. Non-SC villagers often made extremely prejudiced comments about SCs, about their own beliefs regarding inter-caste relations, or about the way they had behaved with SCs – including, in some cases, in the presence of their SC *sarpanch*. Among those villagers

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[14] These were calculated using the "somersd" function in Stata v.11, which allows for village clustering to be taken into account when running a *ranksum* test.

[15] Due to the ordinal nature (four points-scales) of my measures of these beliefs, I ran a series of ordered probits. These models were nested, using dummy variables for the blocks (here: either district or *panchayat samitis*, in different models) within which this study took place, as well as controlling for village and individual characteristics. As in the preceding analyses, robust cluster option accounted for the fact that errors are dependent within each village.

[16] These additional analyses are available from the author.

who refrained from such negative comments, nothing suggested that reservation was the cause of their more moderate outlook. Hence I do not believe that these patterns in the data can be seen as the result of increased sensitivity in reserved villages.

Even if these results do not stem from the misreporting of sensitive behaviors, they may seem problematic for another reason. When answering these questions, are villagers drawing from their experience – that is, from actual instances of inter-caste contact – or from their perceptions of what these patterns of contact are? As shown by Tourangeau et al (2000), recalls of past behaviors can be closer to attitudinal measures than to the actual behaviors they seek to measure. The fact that the effects detected among SC villagers are much larger than the effects detected among non-SC villagers can likely be explained in this manner.

While my data do not allow me to properly measure the extent to which these self-reports are grounded in actual changes in behaviors, it remains unlikely that these self-reports would be *entirely* disconnected from actual changes in patterns of intergroup contact. Accordingly, these results point to an important finding regarding the value of policies ensuring descriptive representation for members of disadvantaged groups. The election of a single villager from a disadvantaged group to a political office that requires him to be in contact with members of other groups breaks the isolation of the group in village life. In the case of rural India, reservation thus encourages members of dominant groups to interact with at least one member of a generally disliked group. Given the omnipresence and unavoidability of the *sarpanch* in village life (Chapter 3), one may be tempted to think that most of this effect may be due to direct contact with the official himself. As suggested in Chapter 4, however, increased contact appears to concern more than the *sarpanch* himself. In order to lobby or otherwise get in touch with their *sarpanch*, villagers from all castes visit him in his courtyard, or in some cases inside his home. Interestingly, reaching the *sarpanch*'s courtyard requires that villagers take roads that they would never usually take, and for them to pass by homes they would usually not pass by (in Rajasthan, SC hamlets are usually at the outskirts of the village, without being properly outside of it). In that sense, the relatively frequent visits that elders and household leaders from all castes pay to the *sarpanch* may subtly redefine the geography of the village: areas that were previously considered unworthy of a visit (because they were reportedly "backward") are now routinely visited.

The fact that no such changes in patterns of contact are detected between members of dominant subcastes and members of "small SC subcastes," who generally do not live in the same hamlet as members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste, lends support to this hypothesis.

7   Tests: The Cognitive Impact of Descriptive Representation

In Chapter 4, I have outlined two distinct psychological mechanisms through which reservation may limit hostile or discriminatory behaviors toward members of the Scheduled Castes. I have argued that reservation may improve stereotypes an self-stereotypes ("taste mechanism"), as well as have an impact on *beliefs about norms of intergroup interaction* – that is, the beliefs citizens hold about how individuals and institutions behave, or ought to behave, with regards to intergroup interactions ("strategy mechanism").

This chapter tests the impact of reservation on these psychological outcomes. To do this, I first present the items from the audio surveys described in Chapter 5, before presenting the results of these analyses. When presenting these results, I make a distinction between the responses of SC villagers and the responses of non-SC villagers. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss these findings.

7.1   Data

To estimate the impact of reservation on beliefs, I used items from the audio surveys whose general principles are described in Chapter 5. Each of these items featured a "villager" making a statement pertaining to members of the Scheduled Castes. After they heard these statements, respondents were asked, "How much do you agree or disagree with what this villager said?" and were given four possible response choices graphically represented by a total of four different "thumbs ups" or "thumbs down": clearly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and clearly agree.

7.1.1   *Measuring Stereotypes and Self-Stereotypes*

In order to test for the effect of reservation on *stereotypes*, I used reactions to two series of statements. I was first interested in measuring whether beliefs about the ability of SCs to play a role in politics had changed. The first series of statements I used tap into these beliefs directly:

- "SCs are usually unable to do a good job as sarpanch. They do not have the skills for that."
- "SCs are able to serve as politicians such as MLAs or MPs."
- "SCs do not have ideas on how the village should be run."

While all three statements derive from statements heard during the qualitative part of my fieldwork, there are important nuances between them. The first statement measures villagers' specific belief about the ability of SCs to serve *as sarpanch* and can be hypothesized to be most "proximate" to the key independent variable of this study (i.e., the experience of reservation for an SC villager at the village level). The second statement measures villagers' beliefs about the ability of SCs to serve as parliamentarians at higher levels of government, namely as state legislator (MLA) or as Member of Parliament (MP). This second statement allows me to measure whether the potential belief change in the ability of SCs to play a role in politics may extend to higher levels of governments. By contrast, reactions to the third statement measure, more generally, beliefs about the value of the input of SC villagers. In other words, reactions to this statement measure whether the experience of an SC *sarpanch* might have changed villagers' general perceptions of the ability of *other* SC individuals to play a constructive and active role in decisions about the future of the village (for instance, in public meetings). In each case, as was true throughout these audio questionnaires, these statement-based items used the term "SCs" to refer to members of the Scheduled Castes.[1]

Second, in order to determine whether reservation had affected a number of more general stereotypes (and self-stereotypes) about members of the SCs, I gauged reactions to four additional statements:

- "SCs cannot think for themselves; they usually prefer being dominated by members of higher castes."
- "SCs usually have low confidence."
- "Members of the Scheduled Castes are just as intelligent as other villagers."
- "Members of the Scheduled Castes are just as hardworking as other villagers."

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[1] Note, however, that the "second voice" in the audio questionnaire also further defined what the category SC included in each village. In practical terms, this meant that when the first question mentioning the term "SC" was posed, the voice said "SCs, that is Bairwas, Meghwals, Nayaks" etc., mentioning in each case the four main SC subcastes that were present in the respondent's village. While it is extremely unlikely that villagers would not have been aware of the term "SC," this reminder was used to prompt respondents to formulate their responses based on the category SC rather than a specific subcaste from the SCs they might have happened to focus on at the time of the interview.

These statements correspond to general stereotypes about members of the SCs that Shankare Gowda and I had frequently heard SC and non-SC villagers articulate during the first part of this project, specifically the harsh accusations that SCs are not independent-minded, lack confidence, are not intelligent, and are lazy. While our interlocutors typically refrained from stereotyping individuals from the SCs in ritual terms (i.e., in regards to the potential "pollution" they represent), non-SC villagers seemed during our conversations fairly at ease with using the adjectives included in these statements.[2]

This section, as the rest of the questionnaire, uses both positively and negatively formulated statements. As explained in Chapter 5, because we were worried that respondents would be more likely to agree than to disagree with any given statement, presenting respondents with both negative and positive views on members of the Scheduled Castes was important. In order to ensure that our questionnaire alternated both types of statements, we thus added and subtracted a few negations to the raw material that emerged from our field notes.

7.1.2   Measuring Perceived Social Norms of Inter-Caste Interaction

In order to test whether reservation had impacted beliefs about the usual behaviors of non-SC villagers, I used a second series of statements, which differed for SC and non-SC villagers. The reasons for this choice are both practical and theoretical. While both sets of statements (the one used for SC respondents and the one used for non-SC respondents) tap into important and theoretically relevant beliefs related to the Scheduled Castes, it was simply not practical or tenable to include both. Since my audio questionnaire had to remain relatively short in order for respondents to remain focused, some tough choices were necessary. In making these choices, in each case, I made sure to select the set of statements that appeared to be the most interesting theoretically for each population.

Because I was interested, first, in non-SCs' perceptions of their in-groups' reactions to a norm-breaking behavior (in this case, a nondiscriminatory behavior wherever the untouchability-related norm is a form of discrimination), I used reactions to the following two first-person statements:

- "In this village, if a member of the upper castes says positive things about SCs, then other men from the upper castes would speak about him badly."
- "In this village, if a member of the upper castes invites SCs to his marriage, then other members of the upper caste would be mad at him."

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[2] This may simply be because these adjectives were "legal," in the sense that they could not be the object of a complaint filed under one of the anti-untouchability acts.

I focused on these two examples of minor day-to-day contra-norma-tive behaviors and their social repercussions rather than on situations that implied much more dramatic contra-normative behaviors, because I expected there would be greater variation in responses to the former type of items than to the latter. Had I asked villagers what upper castes' reactions would have been if a member of the upper castes had married an SC, or even simply invited an SC to dine with a group of upper castes, the potential for variation in responses would have been greatly reduced, as several pretests confirmed. This focus on norms that appeared to be fluctuant and changing at the time of this research is true throughout the two audio questionnaires.

To measure whether SCs perceived that discrimination by members of dominant castes had evolved as a result of reservation, I in turn used reactions to the following three first-person statements:

- "People in this village speak to people from my community with the same respect than any other group."
- "The way people in this village speak to people from my community has improved over the past few years."
- "The way people in this village treat people from my community has improved over the past few years."

While reactions to the first of these statements measured SC villagers' perceptions of discriminatory treatment in verbal interactions *by com-parison with the treatment of other groups*, the two latter statements mea-sured perceptions of diachronic variations in verbal, as well as behavioral, discrimination.

7.1.3   Measuring Perceived Legal Norms of Inter-caste Interaction

Finally, in order to test whether beliefs about the consequences of hostile behaviors toward the SCs had evolved, I used reactions to the following two statements:

- "If an upper-caste villager gets into a dispute with an SC villager, then he will be in trouble with the police."
- "If an upper-caste villager opposes SCs during the village meeting, then he will be in trouble with the police."

Reactions to the first of these two statements measure beliefs about the consequence that a *verbal* dispute with a member of the SCs (a dispute implicitly involving abusive language toward that member of the SCs). Responses to the second statement measure beliefs about the conse-quences of a similar type of verbal opposition, this time in public (in

a public village meeting). Accordingly, the "hostile situations" used in these two statements, while significant and shocking, do not explicitly imply any sort of physical hostility, and instead remain at the level of verbal hostility. This focus on "verbal hostility" appeared interesting, since the various anti-untouchability acts (described in Chapter 2) that *explicitly* prohibit verbal threats often remain unimplemented (or inefficient, in the sense that the complaints are not registered, or dismissed on technicalities, as explained in Chapter 2).

Accordingly, reactions to these statements measure villagers' beliefs in the fact that these sadly common verbal abuses could have real consequences and not be dismissed too easily, or on technical grounds.

7.2   **Analyses and Results**

How did reservation affect these beliefs? Again, since the conditions for a well-identified natural experiment are met (Chapter 5), I simply compare average responses in reserved and unreserved villages, taking into account the clustered (village-level) nature of the data.[3] Results from these analyses are presented in the first three columns of Tables 7.1–7.6. In each case, the first column provides the mean response to each item in reserved villages, along with a standard error; the second column indicates the mean response to each item in unreserved villages, along with a standard error; the third column indicates the difference in means between the two groups of villages and indicates the significance level of this difference.[4] I first present results on non-SC villagers, before exploring the responses of SC villagers.

7.2.1   *The Beliefs of Non-SC Villagers*

These analyses suggest that reservation had a large and significant impact on both types of perceived norms, but that it did not affect stereotypes among non-SC villagers.

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[3] To reflect the clustering in the analysis, I take the mean response in each village in the reserved vs. unreserved groups and compute the average of these cluster means in each group. Assuming as-good-as-random assignment, running a t-test comparing the average of these cluster means across the reserved and unreserved groups gives unbiased estimates for the average causal effect in the study group of individuals, because here the sixty-four clusters (villages) are all the same size, i.e., either eleven or twelve respondents per cluster (Kish 1965; Angrist and Pischke 2008). This method also naturally takes account of the degree of within-cluster homogeneity of potential outcomes.

[4] All significant results presented in this chapter and in Chapter 8 are also robust to "bootstrapped" standard errors. I present these results in an appendix titled "TABLES FOR CHAPTERS 7 & 8 with Bootstrapped Standard Errors," which is available on this book's website (see copyright page or the author's personal website for the URL).

Table 7.1. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Stereotypes (1 = Strongly Disagree, ..., 4 = Strongly Agree)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 384 Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
"SCs are usually unable to do a good job as sarpanch. They do not have the skills for that"	2.27 (.05)	2.37 (.06)	.09 (.08)	.24
"SCs are able to serve as politicians such as MLAs or MPs"	2.62 (.06)	2.59 (.05)	−.03 (.07)	.72
"SCs do not have ideas on how the village should be run"	2.35 (.05)	2.34 (.05)	−.00 (.07)	.99
"SCs cannot think for themselves; they usually prefer being dominated by members of higher castes"	2.36 (.07)	2.36 (.06)	.00 (.09)	.78
"SCs usually have low confidence"	2.54 (.06)	2.51 (.06)	−.04 (.08)	.70
"Members of the Scheduled Castes are just as intelligent as other villagers"	2.32 (.08)	2.23 (.07)	−.09 (.11)	.50
"Members of the scheduled are just as hard-working as other villagers"	2.94 (.06)	3.00 (.05)	.06 (.07)	.28

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

Table 7.2. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Discriminatory Behaviors of Non-SC Villagers (1 = Strongly Disagree, ..., 4 = Strongly Agree)*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. *"In this village, if a member of the upper castes says positive things about SCs, then other upper castes men speak about him badly."*	2.29 (.08)	2.60 (.08)	.30*** (.11)	.00***
2. *"In this village, if a member of the upper castes invites SCs to his marriage, then other members of the upper castes are mad at him."*	2.32 (.08)	2.51 (.05)	.19* (.10)	.05*

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

Reviewing these results in more detail, Table 7.1 indicates that the experience of reservation does not appear to improve villagers' stereotypes about members of the SCs. Across the seven items included in the table, none of the differences of means are close to usual significance levels, which implies that villagers' views remain as stereotypical in reserved villages as in unreserved villages. Interestingly, exposure to an SC *sarpanch* does not even appear to change stereotypical views about the role SCs should or can play in politics, at least at a higher level of government.[5]

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[5] In that sense, these results do not necessarily contrast with what Bhavnani (2009) and Beaman et al. (2009) suggest about the positive role quotas (in their case, gender-based reservation) can play in decreasing "statistical discrimination" in politics.

Table 7.3. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Consequences of Hostile Behaviors toward the Scheduled Castes (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. "If a member of the upper castes gets into a dispute with an SC villager, then he will be into a lot of trouble with the police."	3.34 (.05)	2.85 (.05)	−.49*** (.07)	.00***
2. "If a member of the upper castes opposes SC castes during the village meeting, then he will be in trouble."	3.34 (.06)	2.90 (.06)	−.45*** (.09)	.00***

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

By contrast, both Tables 7.2 and 7.3 indicate that reservation does affect what villagers perceive to be the attitudes of other non-SC villagers. As can be seen from these two tables, the perceptions of villagers living in reserved villages significantly differ from the perceptions of villagers living in unreserved villages on all the items used to measure these two dimensions. Table 7.2 first suggests that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* during the 2005–2009 period significantly shifted perceived norms of social interaction with members of the SCs. Respondents living in reserved villages are significantly more likely to believe that their fellow caste members will not blame them for inviting a member of the SCs to their house or for talking about a member of the SCs in a positive way. The results presented in Table 7.3 in turn imply that this experience increased the perception that boundless discrimination and hostility toward members of the SCs could be punished. In other words, non-SC respondents living in reserved villages are significantly more likely to
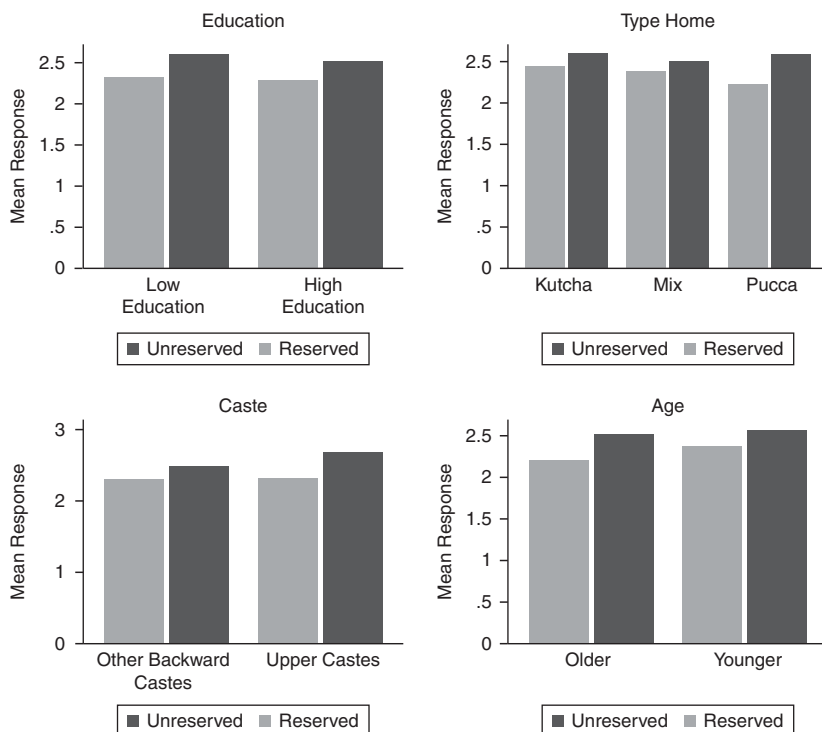
Figure 7.1. Mean Responses to Items Measuring "Beliefs about the Discriminatory Behaviors of Non-SCs" among Non-SC Respondents, by Subgroups.

perceive that a physical or a verbal altercation with a member of the SCs could have problematic legal repercussions.

These results pass a variety of robustness tests. The fourth column of Tables 7.1 to 7.3 reports the probability that the difference in medians between the two groups of villagers is not different from 0, as calculated by a nonparametric, two-sample Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test taking village clustering into account.[6] These results confirm the parametric analysis: while personal beliefs about members of the SCs do not change under reservation, beliefs about the attitudes of other villagers and beliefs regarding the attitudes of local authorities do evolve. Second,

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[6] These were calculated using the "somersd" function in Stata v.11, which allows for village clustering to be taken into account when running a *ranksum* test.
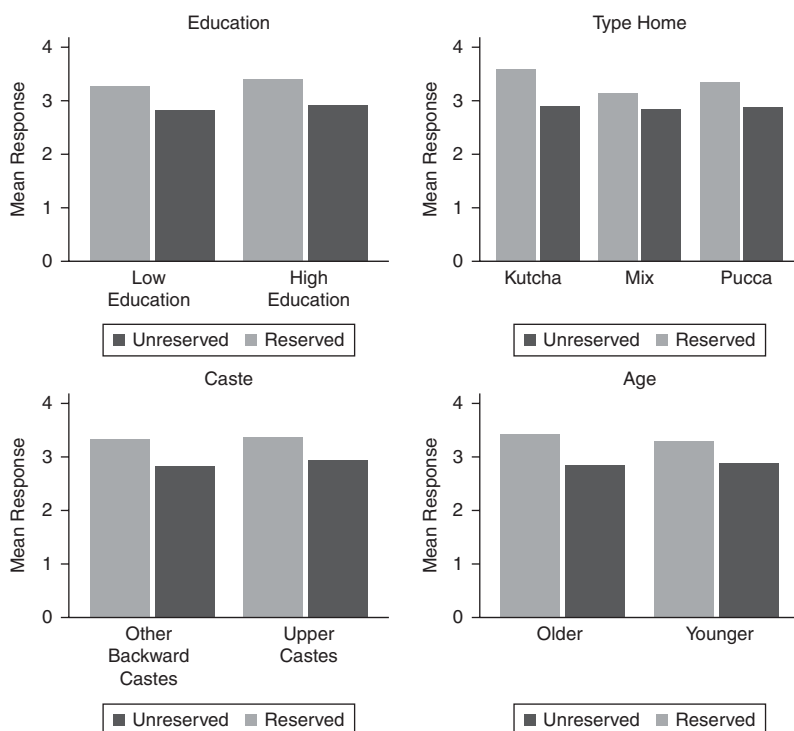
Figure 7.2. Mean Responses to Items Measuring "Beliefs about the Consequences of Hostile Behaviors toward SCs" among Non-SC Respondents, by Subgroups.

these effects also hold across a wide range of multivariate specifications.[7] Third, the coefficients in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 pass *False Discovery Rate* tests (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995). Finally, the significant results presented in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 persist in an analysis of subgroups. As can be seen from Figures 7.1 and 7.2, the effects of reservation that I detect on the beliefs included in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 hold across subgroups based on either age, education, socioeconomic status, or subcaste. In reverse, there exists no subgroup within which stereotypes appear to improve as an effect of reservation.

[7] Due to the ordinal nature (four points-scales) of my measures of these beliefs, I ran a series of ordered probits. These models were nested, using dummy variables for the blocks (here: either district or *panchayat samitis*, in different models) within which this study took place, as well as controlling for village and individual characteristics. As in the preceding analyses, robust cluster option accounted for the fact that errors are dependent within each village.

Table 7.4. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Stereotypes (1 = Strongly Disagree, ..., 4 = Strongly Agree) (among SC Villagers)*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 352 Village N = 32)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. "SCs are usually unable to do a good job as sarpanch. They do not have the skills for that."	2.33 (.05)	2.64 (.06)	.09 (.08)	.00***
2. "SCs are able to serve as politicians such as MLAs or MPs."	2.99 (.06)	2.97 (.05)	−.03 (.07)	.83
3. "SCs do not have ideas on how the village should be run."	2.36 (.05)	2.41 (.05)	−.00 (.07)	.58
4. "SCs cannot think for themselves; they usually prefer being dominated by members of higher castes."	2.21 (.07)	2.25 (.06)	.00 (.09)	.54
5. "SCs usually have low confidence."	2.56 (.06)	2.68 (.06)	−.04 (.08)	.27
6. "Members of the Scheduled Castes are just as intelligent as other villagers."	3.10 (.08)	3.16 (.07)	−.09 (.11)	.39
7. "Members of the scheduled are just as hardworking as other villagers."	3.46 (.06)	3.52 (.05)	.06 (.07)	.37

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

Table 7.5. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Behaviors of Non-SC Villagers (1 = Strongly Disagree, …., 4 = Strongly Agree) (among SC Villagers)*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 352 Village N = 32)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. *"People in this village address (speak to) people from my community with the same respect than any other group."*	2.83 (.073)	2.47 (.097)	.36*** (.122)	.00**
2. *"The way people in this village address (speak to) people from my community has improved recently."*	3.28 (.075)	2.91 (.056)	.37*** (.094)	.00**
3. *"The way people in this village treat people from my community has improved over the past few years."*	3.19 (.063)	2.86 (.077)	.33*** (.100)	.00**

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

7.2.2   The Beliefs of SC Villagers

Analyses based on the responses of members of the SCs, presented in Tables 7.4–7.8, mirror these conclusions. The experience of a "counterstereotypical" SC *sarpanch* in office did not challenge SC villagers' self-perceptions of members of the SC category (i.e., self-stereotypes). As can be seen from Table 7.4, these beliefs are stable across reserved and unreserved villages, and in certain cases remain surprisingly negative. In fact, the *only* perception that was affected by this experience deals with the role of SCs in village politics. Specifically, SC villagers who had

Table 7.6. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Legal Consequences of Hostile Behaviors (1 = Strongly Disagree, ..., 4 = Strongly Agree) (among SC Villagers)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 352 Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. *"If a member of the upper castes gets into a dispute with an SC villager, then he will be into a lot of trouble with the police."*	3.37 (.072)	3.16 (.097)	.21★ (.120)	.02★★
2. *"If a member of the upper castes opposes SC castes during the village meeting, then he will be in trouble."*	3.25 (.060)	3.05 (.095)	.20★ (.112)	.05★★

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. ★★★ = significant at the .01 level, ★★ = significant at the .05 level, ★ = significant at the .1 level.

a firsthand experience with an SC *sarpanch* are more likely to make the relatively obvious observation that a fellow SC may be able to occupy this position. The effect, however, stops there. SC villagers clearly and significantly updated their beliefs about the ability of a fellow SC to serve as the village council head, but this change does do not appear – on average – to have impacted other beliefs about the ability and the characteristics of *other* members of the SC caste group. Importantly, this conclusion contradicts the arguments of scholars emphasizing the "role model" function of public officials (Fenno 2003, Mansbridge 1999, Beaman 2009); in this case, descriptive representation does not appear to have led to improvements in terms of stereotypes or self-image. While this does not necessarily imply that descriptive representation does not generate "pride" or other positive emotions, it suggests that it has no effect on what members of the SCs believe about themselves and their ability. This is a striking finding, and maybe a disappointing one in light of the

"psychic benefits" that access to power has sometimes been hypothesized to generate (Horowitz 1985, Chandra 2004).[8]

Second, as seen in Table 7.5, I find that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* significantly improved SC villagers' perceptions of the way upper castes treat them (i.e., perceived social norms of interaction). Namely, villagers who had lived under an SC *sarpanch* for the few years preceding the survey were more likely to feel that other villagers treat them with the same respect as they treat villagers that are not from former "untouchable" groups. They were also more likely to feel that the treatment they have experienced has *improved* over the past years. As suggested by the data on inter-caste contact presented in Chapter 6, this change in perceptions is likely grounded in actual changes in behaviors among members of the upper castes.

Third, as seen in Table 7.6, I detect positive effects on items measuring *perceived legal norms of interaction*. In other words, the experience of an SC *sarpanch* appears to have led SC villagers in SC-led villages to believe that they were more likely to see the police and local authorities side with them if a conflict with another villager or another caste group was to occur. This finding suggests that the "fear of punishment" that upper-caste villagers readily expressed (both in in-depth interviews and in self-administered survey questionnaires) has an answering echo among members of the Scheduled Castes: they themselves appear to believe that reprehensible acts are more likely to be punished under an SC *sarpanch*. As suggested earlier, the extent to which these fears are grounded in actual facts remains to be fully explored. This data alone does not allow me to answer this question. A few comments can, however, already be made. First, observers aware of the dismal record of the Indian police will find the idea that police constables would be more likely to intervene to prevent acts of violence against members of the SCs simply because these communities are now better connected (through political inclusion and reservation) dubious at best. The idea that they would intervene because they would be more likely to be punished by higher authorities (at the district or at the state level) if "atrocities" had happened in SC-led villages is slightly more credible, but it would imply that local authorities are especially concerned with curbing untouchability-related behaviors in reserved villages. While not impossible, there is no clear evidence backing this hypothesis. Accordingly, in the absence of any strong evidence that the bias of the police and of local authorities actually disappears when an SC *sarpanch* is in office, it is likely that this new feeling of security and trust in the judicial system derives, at least in part, from purely psychological processes.

[8] I return to this crucial point at the end of Section 7.3.

These effects resist to a variety of robustness tests. The fourth column of Tables 7.4–7.6 reports the probability that the difference in medians between the two groups of villagers is not different from 0, as calculated by a nonparametric, two-sample Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test taking village clustering into account. These results confirm the parametric analysis: while self-stereotypes do not change under reservation, beliefs about the attitudes of upper-caste villagers and beliefs regarding the attitudes of local authorities do evolve. Second, these effects also hold across a wide range of multivariate specifications.[9] Finally, the significant results presented in Tables 7.4 and 7.5 persist in an analysis of subgroups. As can be seen from Figures 7.3 and 7.4, the effects of reservation that I detect on the beliefs included in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 hold across subgroups based on age, education, or socioeconomic status. In reverse, there exists no subgroup – including a subcaste – within which self-stereotypes appear to improve as an effect of reservation. These results also pass False Discovery Rate tests.

As can be expected in light of the results presented in Chapter 6, these effects are largely heterogeneous across SC subcastes: both the size and the significance of the effects I detect depend on villagers' subcaste (*jati*). Specifically, there are sizable differences among members of "dominant SC subcastes" (which is also the subcaste of the SC *sarpanch*) and other subcastes.

The psychological impact of reservation appears to be much stronger for villagers from these "dominant SC subcastes." This holds across all items measuring perceived norms of interaction on which I detect statistically significant differences between reserved and unreserved villages. Responses to items about perceived norms of discrimination particularly illustrate this pattern. Using the same methodology as the one employed in Chapter 6, I calculated the effect of the experience of an SC *sarpanch* among members of "dominant SC subcastes." These perceptions appear to have been greatly improved, as displayed in Table 7.7. Compare now the evolution of these perceptions with the evolutions of the same perceptions among members of smaller SC subcastes, who do not get access to political representation even when a seat is reserved (Table 7.8). As can be seen from Table 7.8, the difference in perceptions among villagers who experienced an SC *sarpanch* and villagers who did

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[9] Due to the ordinal nature (four points-scales) of my measures of these beliefs, I ran a series of ordered probits. These models were nested, using dummy variables for the blocks (here: either district or *panchayat samitis*, in different models) within which this study took place, as well as controlling for village and individual characteristics. As in the preceding analyses, robust cluster option accounted for the fact that errors are dependent within each village.
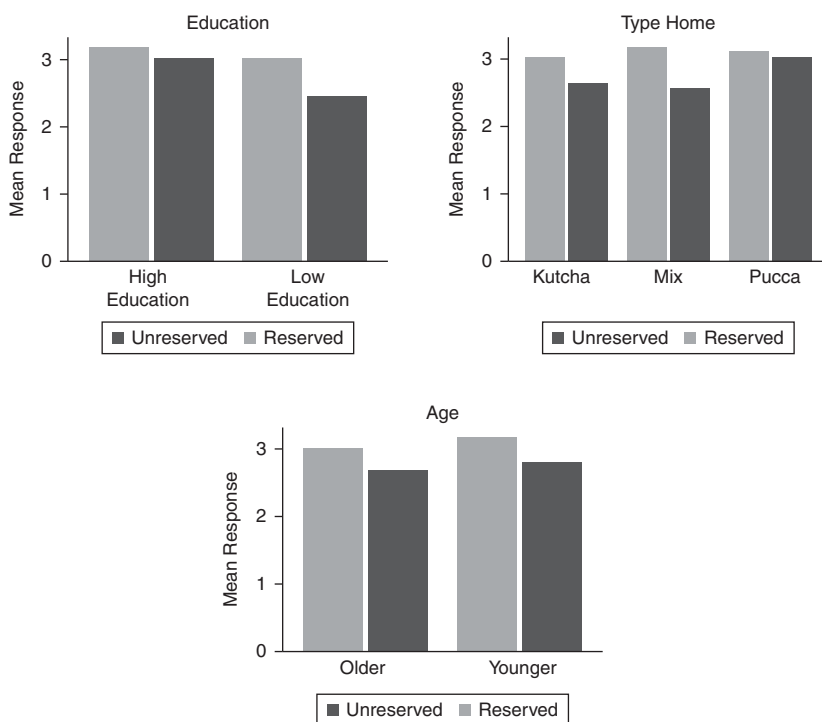
Figure 7.3. Mean Responses to Items Measuring "Beliefs about the Discriminatory Behaviors of Non-SCs" among SC Respondents, by Subgroups.

not is *not* significant among members of those smaller SC castes. This cannot be attributed simply to the smaller N in this subgroup: absolute differences in means are also much smaller and in at least one case (the first item) run in the opposite direction.[10] This suggests that the experience of an SC *sarpanch* may have an effect *only* among villagers who belong to his own subcaste. This in turn can be hypothesized to be due

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[10] In addition, it might be interesting to note that perceptions of discriminations are much higher among "small SC subcastes" in *both* types of villages, hence suggesting that there are gradations in the practices of discrimination and untouchability depending on subcaste. This remark is coherent with a number of well-known observations about the practice of untouchability (Shah et al 2006) and maybe about the practice of untouchability within the Scheduled Castes, with better-off castes often being the worse discriminators against the lowest castes (Shah et al 2006, Macwan et al 2010). This is also coherent with the fact that subcastes (*Jatis*) appear to be more salient ethnic categories to villagers once elections are over.
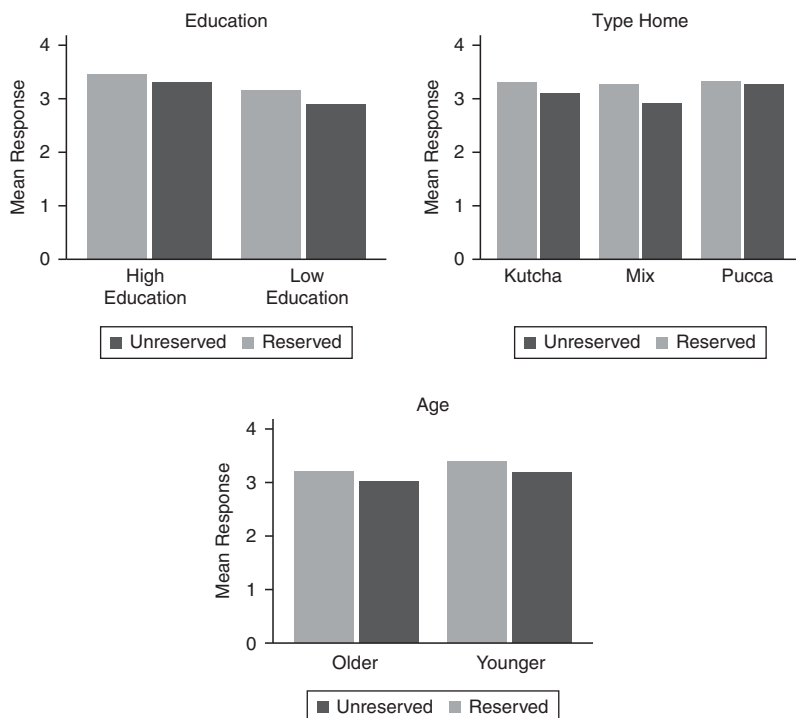
Figure 7.4. Mean Responses to Items Measuring "Beliefs about the Consequences of Hostile Behaviors towards SCs" among SC Respondents, by Subgroups.

to a combination of two factors. First, villagers from the "upper castes" may alter their behaviors toward members of the SCs *only* if those belong to the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste. Second, purely psychological reactions to access to political power may be stronger among members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste, since they are more likely to benefit from it, either psychologically or materially.

Similar analyses on other survey items suggest that this subcaste-specific impact of the experience of an SC *sarpanch* goes beyond the results just revealed. In fact, *none* of the effects I detect when analyzing the pooled data appear to be strongly established among the members of these "smaller SC subcastes." While beliefs about the legal consequences of hostile behaviors appear to have improved among the members of "dominant SC subcastes," the average change is much smaller among members of small SC subcastes, and quickly falls to insignificance when using multivariate models clustered at the village level.

Table 7.7. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Discriminatory Behaviors of Non-SC Villagers among Members of "Dominant SC Subcastes"*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 265)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 244)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. *"People in this village address (speak to) people from my community with the same respect than any other group."*	2.97 (.067)	2.52 (.081)	.449***
2. *"The way people in this village address (speak to) people from my community has improved recently."*	3.47 (.049)	2.96 (.070)	.510***
3. *"The way people in this village treat people from my community has improved over the past few years"*	3.35 (.052)	2.89 (.069)	.465***

*Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level. These differences are significant at the .001 level and pass the FDR test (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995).*

Table 7.8. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on Beliefs about the Discriminatory Behaviors of Non-SC Villagers among Members of "Small SC Subcastes"*

	Average Response in *Reserved* Villages (N = 108)	Average Response in *Unreserved* Villages (N = 87)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. *"People in this village address (speak to) people from my community with the same respect than any other group."*	2.41 (.136)	2.34 (.108)	.063
2. *"The way people in this village address (speak to) people from my community has improved recently."*	2.68 (.123)	2.79 (.106)	.108
3. *"The way people in this village treat people from my community has improved over the past few years."*	2.67 (.125)	2.78 (.106)	.110

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

This strongly suggests that the degree of *proximity* or *similarity* between simple SC villagers and their *sarpanch* conditions the psychological impact of reservation. More generally speaking, this finding may imply that this psychological impact depends on the degree with which members of disadvantaged groups view the representative as *one of them*, or the degree to which members of dominant group view members of the SC as belonging to the *sarpanch*'s group. In addition, this finding may be placed in perspective with a frequent critique of reservation policies in India, according to which these policies only benefit a "creamy layer" – that is, a small but more advanced group within the targeted minority (see Chapter 2 on this point). As was the case for material benefits (explored in Chapter 6), psychological benefits appear to be limited to a certain subgroup within the targeted community.

7.3   Discussion

In spite of these last nuances, the fact that the responses of SC and non-SC villagers are broadly consistent – and that they are broadly consistent *across outcomes* – is remarkable. The experience of an SC *sarpanch* had no impact on stereotypes or self-stereotypes about members of the SCs. Instead, effects in both cases were concentrated on perceptions of the treatment of members of the Scheduled Castes by members of dominant castes: villagers from dominant castes that had experienced an SC *sarpanch* perceived that members of their castes now treated members of the SCs better, while SC villagers who had had the same experience perceived that members of dominant castes treated them more respectfully.[11] The coherence of these results across caste groups lends credibility to these findings and to the argument enunciated in Chapter 4.

Could these results, however, be due to the fact that villagers' attitudes did not change in reserved GPs, but that they felt more pressured than villagers in unreserved GPs to profess "positive" attitudes? While survey data cannot easily disprove this alternative explanation, a number of elements suggest that it may not constitute the most credible explanation for these results. First, given the context described in Chapters 3 and 4, it remains unclear why villagers should have felt more pressured to agree to these beliefs in reserved villages. Discriminations continue to happen on a regular basis in both reserved and unreserved villages, and SC *sarpanches* generally have no power, desire, or incentives to act on mundane

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[11] Even in the absence of a thorough body of behavioral data about the evolution of interpersonal relations in these villages, this match in the changing perceptions of members of both groups should probably give credit to the idea that some behaviors have changed.

verbal hostility. Because upper-caste villagers frequently engage in far more hostile behaviors toward SCs, they are obviously aware of this. The villagers we met in reserved villages during the qualitative part of this study never appeared to feel strongly pressured compared to villagers living in unreserved villages. They often made extremely prejudiced comments about SCs, about their own beliefs about inter-caste relations, or about the way they had behaved with SCs. Among those villagers who refrained from such negative comments, nothing suggested that reservation was the cause of their more moderate outlook.

Second, assuming that respondents in reserved villages felt pressured, the survey methodology used in this study would have limited this pressure. Because it increased the confidentiality and the privacy of responses, the MP3 self-administered methodology ensured that interviews were taking place in a relatively similar social context across reserved and unreserved villages. As shown in Chauchard (2013), the use of earphones, which entirely isolated respondents from their social environment, limited the chance that respondents would feel strongly pressured by their interviewer or by a third party, or that this pressure would have been consistently different across reserved and unreserved villages.

Finally, for my results to be caused by increased sensitivity in reserved villages, respondents in reserved villages would have had to consider that some items were more sensitive than others. In other words, given my results, they would have had to think that beliefs about social norms were more sensitive than stereotypes. Yet this explanation can be opposed on at least two counts. First, the fact that overall levels of stereotypes remain high – including in reserved villages – seems to disprove the idea that villagers could feel strongly pressured when responding to *any* kind of question. Second, it is unclear why we should theoretically expect stereotypes to be *less* rather than *more* sensitive than beliefs about social norms under reservation. This may especially be the case of stereotypical statements directly related to the presence of an SC as *sarpanch*, which we may instead expect to be more sensitive than those items about norms. In that light, the fact that the same proportion of villagers in reserved and unreserved villages agreed, among other negative statements, to the idea that SCs "usually prefer being dominated by members of higher castes" casts doubt on the idea that reservation would add any social desirability *at all*.

A more intricate alternative explanation may also be dismissed. I have until now assumed that the attitudes of villagers from unreserved GPs corresponded to a "baseline" level in these attitudes. This remains an assumption, however, and in the absence of an actual known "baseline" level of prejudice prior to polling villagers, these results may be turned

around and interpreted to mean that the attitudes of villagers who did not experience an SC *sarpanch* worsened, and not that the attitudes of villagers who experienced it tended to improve. This could be the case especially if villagers who anticipated that their village would be reserved for an SC became defiant toward members of the SCs as this transition was approaching (as "realistic conflict theory" would, for instance, suggest). This, however, seems equally unlikely; even if the rotation principle that accompanies the reservation process means that all thirty-two surveyed villages that were *not* reserved at the time of the survey would become reserved a few months after its completion (for the 2010 elections), villagers were almost universally unaware of that information. The villagers we met during the first part of our fieldwork had little idea of the complicated rules that govern the reservation process – and likely had no access to the demographic data used to choose which GPs are reserved at each electoral round. Hence they could not have confidently assumed that their village was about to be reserved.

If stereotypical beliefs about members of the SCs do not change when a village is reserved, to what extent can we say that reservation has a *positive* impact on intergroup relations? Stereotypes impact the psychological, social, and economic well-being of those they target and likely imply that prejudice against members of the Scheduled Castes remains high. Yet, to the extent that behavioral change is the metric according to which we evaluate positive evolutions in the nature of intergroup relations, the persistence of these beliefs alone cannot lead us to conclude that SC villagers did not benefit from the experience of reservation. Since behavioral change may also stem from changes in other types of beliefs – including the perceived norms studied here – whether or not reservation improves intergroup relations remains an empirical question. In spite of the fact that stereotypes and prejudice did not change, did changes in perceived norms of interaction translate into behavioral changes? This is the question I address in Chapter 8.

8   The Effects of Descriptive Representation on Interpersonal Relations

In Chapter 4, I have outlined two distinct psychological mechanisms through which reservation for a member of the Scheduled Castes may change the nature of untouchability-related behaviors, both among members of dominant castes and among members of the Scheduled Castes. I have first suggested that changes in *stereotypes* could provide a pathway toward important changes in behaviors ("taste mechanism"). Second, I have suggested that *perceived social and legal norms of intergroup interactions* may be expected to evolve as a consequence of caste-based quotas, and that these changes in beliefs may in turn be expected to have repercussions on a number of discriminatory behaviors, especially those taking place in the public realm ("strategy mechanism"). As such, I have argued that we should expect changes in *perceived norms of intergroup interactions* triggered by reservation to have meaningful repercussions on the practice of untouchability, even if reservation does not reduce negative stereotypes or prejudice against members of the Scheduled Castes.

The results presented in Chapter 7, while they imply that no change in "taste" took place (I detect no effect on "stereotypes"), provide support for the first half of the "strategy mechanism": reservation for a member of the SCs has a strong and significant impact on *perceived norms of interactions* (both *social* and *legal* norms of interactions). In this chapter, I provide evidence for the second part – the "strategy mechanism." To do this, this chapter uses both surveys (that is, both the SC and the non-SC survey) and explores the effect of *reservation* on two additional types of survey items. Since the "strategy mechanism" implies that substantial behavioral changes may take place even if levels of prejudice remain high, I first show that reservation did not improve levels of *prejudice*[1] among members of dominant castes. These analyses provide additional

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[1] As emphasized in Chapter 4, I make a distinction between prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudice, defined as a negative attitude toward a group, is a variant of the broader attitude concept that refers to one's favorable or unfavorable feelings toward any object. A stereotype, defined as a culturally shared association linking most or all members of a group with a particular characteristic, is a more specific belief concept.

support to the idea that no changes in taste took place under reservation: that is, neither stereotypes nor prejudice improved. Second, and most importantly, I show that reservation impacts the untouchability-related *behavioral intentions* of both SC and non-SC villagers, and hence that it likely influences patterns of everyday relations between members of the different caste groups, *even though stereotypes, self-stereotypes, and prejudice remain prevalent*. Insofar as this cumulated evidence suggests that reservation can affect behaviors, but that it does not change most individuals' "taste" for members of the SCs, this strongly suggests that another mechanism is at play. In this chapter, I argue that a "strategy mechanism" most likely explains these results.

8.1   The Impact of Reservation on Prejudice

In order to measure non-SC villagers' levels of *prejudice* against members of the Scheduled Castes – that is, villagers' general inclination toward them – I included in the non-SC MP3/audio surveys four items measuring villagers' stances on the kinds of freedoms that SCs *should* be allowed to enjoy within their village. These statement-based items were the following ones:

- "I think SCs should feel free to parade in the village when there is a marriage in their community"
- "SCs should be allowed to drink from the same glasses/eat from the same plates as other folks in hotels"
- "SCs should not be allowed to enter non-Dalit houses"
- "SCs should be free to enter village temples"

As for the items used in the preceding chapter, villagers were asked whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement, and self-entered their responses confidentially on the answer sheet described in Chapter 5. As in Chapter 7, I present my analysis of these four items separately from one another rather than as one unique scale (the Cronbach's alphas of these four different items among non-SCs was high at .71).

   In selecting only four untouchability-related situations among the many untouchability-related restrictions faced by SCs (described at length in Chapter 2), I focused on freedoms that appeared to remain locally contested, and potentially evolving, at the time this study took place in Rajasthani villages. SCs' entry inside village temples was, for instance, an extremely heated topic that frequently popped up in our conversations with both SC and non-SC villagers. While less controversial, the questions of SCs' entry into non-SC houses and of the utensils

they should be given in "hotels" (a term mostly referring, in Hindi, to restaurants) was also a frequent topic of our discussions. In addition, while SCs could not enter the main village temple in an overwhelming majority of villages (by choice or constraint, they visited a separate temple that was reserved for them), there appeared to be an acute variation across locations in villagers' practices related to house entry and to the use of utensils. While in some villages, SCs drank tea with other fellow villagers from the same cups, this was sometimes not the case in a village a few miles along the same road (which may suggest that these practices were, at the time this study took place, evolving). Finally, the topic of SC marriage processions while slightly less frequently mentioned, also appeared to be an extremely contentious one when it popped up in our conversations. Perhaps owing to the pomp and the ostentatious display of affluence that characterize this type of event, processions appeared to generate extremely resentful reactions among significant sections of the non-SC population.

Did the accession of an SC villager to the office of *sarpanch* change villagers' overall levels of prejudice? Making use of the items described earlier, and relying on the same type of analysis than in Chapter 7,[2] Table 8.1 provides an unambiguous answer to this question.

As can be seen from Table 8.1, I detect no effect of reservation on any of the items indicative of prejudice against members of the Scheduled Castes among non-SC respondents. While the average response may appear surprisingly "inclusive" (that is, suggesting that a majority of non-SC villagers believe that SCs should be treated like other villagers, even in relation to the issue of temple entry), there are no significant differences in the responses formulated by respondents living in reserved and unreserved villages.[3] Assuming, based on the discontinuity on which this study relies, that respondents in both sets of villages had comparable

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[2] I simply compare average responses in reserved and unreserved villages, taking into account the clustered (village-level) nature of the data. To reflect the clustering in the analysis, I take the mean response in each village in both the reserved vs. unreserved groups and compute the average of these cluster means in each group. Assuming as-good-as-random assignment, running a t-test comparing the average of these cluster means across the reserved and unreserved groups gives unbiased estimates for the average causal effect in the study group of individuals, because here the sixty-four clusters (villages) are all the same size, i.e., twelve respondents per cluster (Kish 1965; Angrist and Pischke 2008). This method also naturally takes account of the degree of within-cluster homogeneity of potential outcomes.

[3] Note in addition that the average response to the third item suggests a strong internal consistency among all these items. Because this item was formulated as a "negative statement," it is logical that responses to this item are on average lower than the mean (2.5) if the other three responses are higher than that mean. This also suggests that most respondents did not answer mechanically, but rather paid attention to each separate item.

Table 8.1. *The Effect of Exposure to an SC* Sarpanch *on "Prescriptive Beliefs" about the Scheduled Castes, among Non-SCs (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 384)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 384)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages	P-value for the Difference of Sample Medians (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test)
1. "I think SCs should feel free to parade in the village when there is a marriage in their community."	3.13 (.081)	3.16 (.070)	.031 (.107)	.68
2. "SCs should be allowed to drink from the same glasses/eat from the same plates as other folks in hotels."	2.57 (.087)	2.55 (.088)	−.015 (.124)	.86
3. "SCs should not be allowed to enter non-Dalit houses."	2.13 (.074)	2.09 (.092)	−.043 (.118)	.63
4. "SCs should feel free to enter village temples."	2.72 (.110)	2.83 (.095)	.104 (.146)	.25

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

beliefs *prior* to reservation, this strongly suggests that the experience of reservation had no effect whatsoever on prejudice: in other words, non-SC villagers living in reserved villages did not become more tolerant or more appreciative of members of the Scheduled Castes.

Even though villagers remained just as prejudiced under reservation, could it be that their interpersonal behaviors nonetheless evolved? If so, might it be as a result of the cognitive changes outlined in Chapter 7? These are the questions I explore in the next sections.

8.2   The Impact of Reservation on Behavioral Intentions

In order to make inferences on the impact of reservation on everyday interpersonal behaviors, this section explores the effect of reservation on

the willingness of non-SC and SC villagers to engage in a series of common behaviors. Given the ethical and practical challenges that collecting individual-level data on such behaviors would present (as described in Chapter 1), I focus in this section on behavioral *intentions* – the class of attitudes viewed as the most direct causal antecedent of behaviors (Ajzen and Fishbein 2005).

8.2.1   *Measuring Behavioral Intentions among Non-SCs*

To measure *behavioral intentions*, I relied on the audio methodology described in Chapter 5, using it to gauge non-SC respondents' reactions to six statements. The six behavioral intentions that I measured using this methodology were selected to reflect the multifaceted nature of untouchability described in Chapter 2. Beyond spatial segregation, various humiliations and acts of socioeconomic exploitation constitute an integral part of the special treatment reserved for members of the SCs (as opposed to members of other stigmatized lower castes). Because upper-caste villagers may verbally and, in some cases, physically abuse members of the SCs, the first two statements measure respondents' inclination to engage in verbally aggressive behaviors toward SCs. Since the economic exploitation of SCs persists, in part, because they are excluded from village-level solidarity networks, statements 3 and 4 measure the propensity of respondents to cooperate with a fellow SC villager in need of help. Finally, statements 5 and 6 measure the propensity of villagers to enforce the physical segregation between SCs and non-SCs that derives from the "ritual pollution" concern characteristic of untouchability. While these three dimensions do not exhaustively cover all untouchability-related situations in daily village life (see Chapter 2), they encompass a multiplicity of common, day-to-day choices with which the villagers are confronted:

1. "I saw SC villagers sitting in the middle of other villagers on chairs at village meetings. It made me really angry and I told them they should leave the chairs for others to sit."
2. "Some SC were protesting that they weren't allowed to enter the temple; I threatened them that if they continued to protest, villagers would organize and give them a lesson."
3. "One day I was at the police station, and I saw that officers were refusing to file an FIR [a complaint] for a village SC that I knew for a fact had been badly cheated by some merchant from the city; I came forward to plead the man's case and help him get his FIR recorded."
4. "Some village SC needed to borrow money in order to buy new machines for his farm; I happened to have some savings at that time so I lent him what I could."

5. "An SC villager invited me in his house to thank me. I went there and drank tea with him."
6. "Children from my family were playing in the street with SC children; when they came back home, I told them that they should rather play with children from their own caste."

Interestingly, some of the behaviors described in these vignettes are clearly *public* behaviors (the behaviors described in vignettes 1, 2, and 5), while others can be described as *private* behaviors (vignettes 3, 4, and 6).[4] This theoretical distinction is important in light of the expectation formulated in Chapter 4 regarding the type of behavioral repercussions that should derive from the "strategy mechanism." As I have argued in Chapter 4, if the behavioral changes that derive from these changes in perceived norms are intrinsically *strategic* in nature – in the sense that individuals are motivated by a sanction rather than by their deeply felt preferences – then we should not expect all untouchability-related behaviors to be similarly affected by these changes. Strategic considerations play a more or less important role decisions that engage a potentially discriminatory or hostile behavior. We should accordingly expect that behaviors that take place in the public realm – and as such take place in full view of other villagers and/or of local authorities – would be more likely affected by such changes in perceived norms. Conversely, it is likely that untouchability-related behaviors that take place in the private realm, and are as such less directly subject to social pressure or the influence of the law, would be less directly impacted by these changes in perceived social and legal norms. In sum, we should expect changes in perceived norms to have an impact on untouchability-related behaviors, but that the impact on behaviors that take place in the public realm should be stronger. Following the logic of this "strategy" mechanism, reservation and descriptive representation should be expected to change the nature of *public* intercaste interactions more than they change the nature of *private* intercaste interactions.

8.2.2   *Measuring Behavioral Intentions: Items Used for SC Respondents*

In both traditional and modern forms of untouchability, members of the SCs are expected to behave silently and obediently and to *accept* the role of subordinate subject (Chapter 2). This passive acceptance of daily humiliations has often been theorized as constituting an integral part of

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[4] One may discuss the extent to which the behavior in vignette 3 is indeed not a public behavior. But the fact that the vignette takes place at the police station – hence outside the village – implies that the scenario takes place away from other villagers' eyes.

untouchability (Guru 2009). Based on this reasoning, and drawing from some of the intuitions that emerged from my own interviews with SC villagers, I hypothesize that one of the central ways in which the experience of an SC villager operating in a counterstereotypical position of power may have impacted other SC villagers' day-to-day behaviors is through an increase in "assertiveness." Accordingly, I measure SC villagers' reactions to the following four statements:

- "A politician promised to bring development to the village before the elections but actually did not do anything. So when he came again to the village, I protested and asked him directly when he was going to do something for us."
- "The development works in my village were delayed and as a result we are facing problems. So I went to the *gram panchayat* to inquire about what was going on."
- "An upper caste villager [verbally] abused me without any reason; so I talked back to him and I told him he should not do that."
- "An upper caste villager tried to scam me. I decided to resist and I took the matter up to the authorities so that they intervene and solve the matter."

As for the items used in Chapter 7, these items are derived from declarations made by actual villagers (in this case, SC villagers) during the qualitative part of my fieldwork. With the first two statements, I measure SC villagers' "behavioral intentions" in interacting with local-level political authorities. With responses to the first item, I measure the proclivity of SC villagers to dare to publicly blame a politician who has not delivered on his campaign promises. In the second case, responses measure the SC villager's propensity to inquire at their local *gram panchayat* about delayed public works. In both cases, because most villagers, particularly SC villagers, remain deferential toward men in positions of power, a "yes" response may be interpreted as a deviation from the stereotypical behavior expected from members of these groups. With the last two statements I measure SC villagers' "behavioral intentions" in interpersonal situations with "upper-caste" villagers. The two situations I picked remain relatively common in many Rajasthani villages, as judged by the frequency with which these examples came back in our unstructured discussions with SC villagers. The first of these statements builds on several accounts of inter-caste conflicts that had reportedly originated in the casual use of a derogatory term to address a member of the SCs. Drawing on an account of an unpleasant incident of this nature, I measure the respondent's self-professed reaction to verbal abuse. Would the SC respondent choose to confront the abuser, or would he let the

comment slide past him silently? With the second statement I measure the respondent's reaction to a non-SC villager's attempt at duping him in a financial transaction. Since SC villagers are often frightened of the repercussions of their lodging a complaint, they sometimes shy away from contacting local authorities. Therefore, doing so can be considered a relatively confident, bold, or assertive move and a clear signal to the "upper-caste" abuser that they will not silently tolerate any more injustice. A "yes" response can correspondingly be considered an assertive, and somewhat counterstereotypical, behavior.

8.3   Analyses and Results

After they heard each *behavioral intention* statement, respondents were asked: "If you were in a similar situation today, would you behave like that villager?" – a question to which they could answer either "yes" (by marking a thumb-up symbol) or "no" (by marking a thumb-down symbol).[5]

Making use of responses to the items just described, I compare the proportion of "yes" responses in reserved and unreserved villages, taking into account the clustered (village-level) nature of the data. Results from these analyses are presented in the first three columns of Table 8.2. In each case, the first column provides the mean response (that is, given the binary nature of the data, the proportion of yes responses) in reserved villages, along with a clustered standard error; the second column indicates the mean responses to each item in unreserved villages; the third column indicates the difference in proportion between the two groups of villages and indicates the significance level of this difference.[6] As above, in order to account for the clustering of the data, all statistics are produced by t-tests of the average of these cluster means in reserved vs. unreserved groups.[7] I include the results of False Discovery Rate tests (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995) at the bottom of each table.

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[5] The response choice was thus binary and not categorical, as on the items described until this point.

[6] All significant results presented in this Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are also robust to "bootstrapped" standard errors. I present these results in an appendix titled "TABLES FOR CHAPTER 7 & 8 with Bootstrapped Standard Errors," which is available on this book's website (see copyright page and the author's personal website for the URL).

[7] While I should technically be running a proportions test given the binary nature of my outcome variable, I am unable to run such a test once I focus on clustered means. Note however that my results are far more conservative in that fashion due to the clustered standard error this technique allows me to retrieve.

8.3.1   *Less Hostile Intentions Among Non-SC Villagers*

Does reservation impact the behavioral intentions of non-SC villagers? My analyses suggest that this is indeed the case. Respondents in reserved villages are significantly less likely to report that they would engage in verbal violence or verbal threats against members of the SCs who transgress traditional norms of interaction; responses to the "village meeting" item and to the "temple entry" item suggest that respondents are significantly less likely (respectively at the .01 and at the .1 level) to ask that SC villagers *not* sit among other villagers at village meetings, and to say that they would abuse an SC villager who transgressed traditional norms of interaction and entered the village temple. They are also more likely to report that they would accept tea from a member of the SCs and, to a lesser extent, that they would approve of the lending of money in order to help an SC villager buy agricultural machinery.

Since binary measures have maximum variance, the fact that I detect significant differences is in and of itself noteworthy. In addition, the effects I detect are robust to a large number of multivariate probit specifications including a diversity of village and individual-level characteristics, and to various clustering options.

Finally, relying on a scale composed of the six items, Figure 8.1 shows that these effects exist across most theoretically important demographics within the non-SC population. Responses to these six items are, on average, less hostile in reserved villages than in unreserved villages among both educated and uneducated respondents, and among respondents with a high as well as low socioeconomic status (as measured here by type of house). Finally, these effects exist both among members of "middle castes"[8] and members of the "upper castes."

Given the small size of my sample and the weakly significant nature of some of the differences (across reserved and unreserved villages), these results require caution. Even though they do not imply that reservation is likely to overturn the nature of interpersonal relations between SC and non-SC villagers (the likelihood that respondents gave a "more positive" answer increased by 5 to 8 percentage points across the three items on which a significant effect is detected), they nonetheless suggest less unbounded discrimination and less open hostility in a number of common day-to-day village situations.

Importantly, these positive effects are restricted to behaviors that take place in the public realm, which suggests even clearer support for the "strategy mechanism." They suggest that members of these groups only

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[8] This category is most commonly referred to as the Other Backward Castes, or OBCs.

Table 8.2. *The Effect of Exposure of an SC* Sarpanch *on the Untouchability-Related "Behavioral Intentions" of Non-SC Villagers (1 =Yes, 0 = No)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
INTIMIDATION			
1. "I saw [SC] villagers sitting in the middle of other villagers on plastic chairs at village meetings. It made me really angry and I told them they should leave the chairs for others to sit."	.18 (.02)	.28 (.02)	.10*** (.03)
2. "Some [SCs] were protesting that they weren't allowed to enter the temple; I threatened them that if they continued to protest, villagers would organize and give them a lesson."	.40 (.04)	.48 (.02)	.09* (.05)
NON-COOPERATION			
3. "One day I was at the police station, and I saw that officers were refusing to file a complaint for a village SC who I knew for a fact had been badly cheated by some merchant from the city; I came forward to plead the man's case and help him get his complaint recorded."	.83 (.02)	.84 (.02)	.01 (.03)
4. "Some village SC needed to borrow money in order to buy new machines for his farm; I happened to have some savings at that time so I lent him what I could."	.90 (.01)	.87 (.02)	-.03 (.03)
SEGREGATION			
5. "An SC villager invited me in his house to thank me for my help. I went there and drank tea with him."	.61 (.03)	.53 (.03)	.08** (.04)
6. "Children from my family were playing in the street with SC children; when they came back home, I told them that they should rather play with children from their own caste."	.25 (.02)	.28 (.02)	.03 (.03)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.
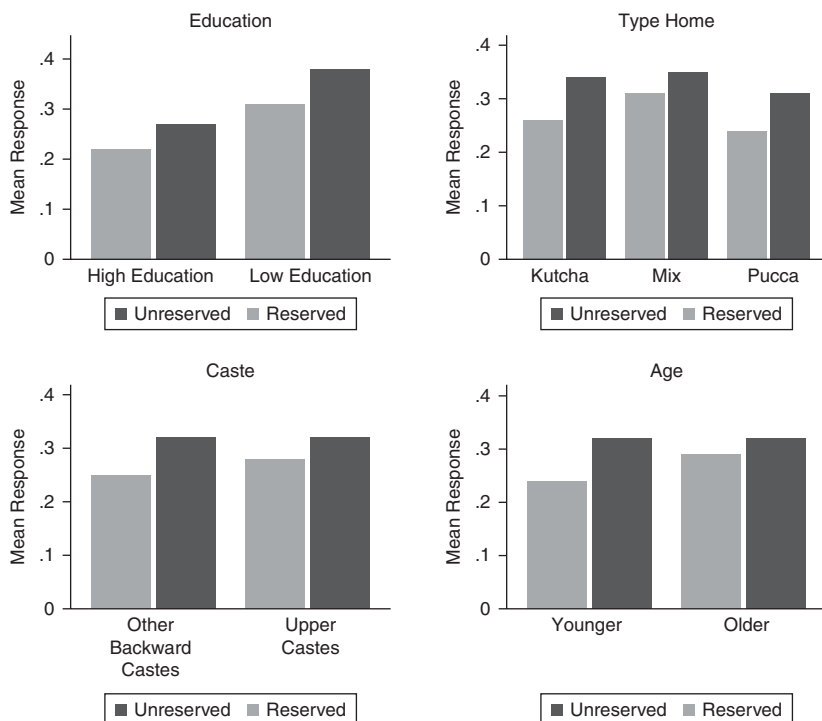
Figure 8.1. Mean Proportion of Respondents That Provided a Hostile, Discriminatory, or Uncooperative Response across the Six "Behavioral Intention" Items in Table 8.3, by Subgroups.

appear to improve their behaviors when they are under the public eye or when they have to. This should bring an important nuance to these otherwise optimistic findings; real-world changes in the behaviors included in Table 8.2 would, after all, go a long way to improve the lives of members of the SCs in rural Rajasthan. While the behaviors of members of dominant castes appear to change, they only appear to do so in situations in which the social or legal risks that would derive from discrimination or hostility are the most obvious. Wherever the risks are more limited, members of these castes appear to be less likely to have evolved as a result of reservation.

8.3.2   More Assertive Behaviors among SC Villagers

Did the experience of reservation by a member of the SCs also change the behaviors of his fellow SC villagers? Specifically, did it lead SC villagers to

Table 8.3. *The Effect of Exposure of an SC* Sarpanch *on the Untouchability-Related "Behavioral Intentions" of SC Villagers (1 = Yes, 0 = No)*

	Average Response in Reserved Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Average Response in Unreserved Villages (N = 352; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across Reserved and Unreserved Villages
1. "A politician promised to bring development to the village before the elections but actually did not do anything. So when he came again to the village, I protested and asked him directly when he was going to do something for us."	.77 (.029)	.69 (.025)	.081** (.039)
2. "The development works in my village were delayed and as a result we are facing problems. So I went to the gram panchayat to inquire about what was going on."	.75 (.030)	.71 (.027)	.039 (.040)
3. "An upper-caste villager abused me without any reason, so I talked back to him and I told him he should not do that."	.74 (.020)	.67 (.024)	.071** (.032)
4. "An upper-caste villager tried to scam me. I decided to resist and I took the matter up to the authorities so that they intervene and solve the matter."	.76 (.025)	.74 (.020)	.013 (.032)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level.

become more assertive in their day-to-day contact with others? Table 8.3 provides an answer to this question by studying the responses of SC villagers to a series of "behavioral intention" items measuring their degree of assertiveness in relations with local authorities (first two statements) and with local "upper-caste" villagers (last two statements).

As can be seen from Table 8.3, reservation does appear to increase the propensity of members of the SCs to voice their concerns and take steps to oppose unfair treatment. In all four cases, the proportion of

"yes" responses is higher in reserved villages (first column) than in unreserved villages (second column). Besides, the difference in mean is significant for two of these four items once village-level clustering is taken into account.

As in the case of non-SC villagers, these results owe as much to changes among educated than to changes among uneducated respondents, as much to changes among younger respondents than to changes among older respondents, and as much to changes among high-socioeconomic-status individuals than to changes among low-socioeconomic-status individuals. Strong *subcaste* differences existed, however, among SC villagers, although that did not seem to be the case among non-SC villagers. As was the case for the changes in perceived norms reported in Chapter 7, my data suggests that members of the category I have referred to as "dominant SC subcastes" were affected at a higher rate by the experience of reservation. As can be seen from Table 8.4, the effect detected on items 1 and 3 is smaller and remains below usual significance levels among members of smaller SC subcastes. Members of these castes, in other words, do not appear to update their behavioral intentions as much as members of the *sarpanch*'s own subcaste do when the office of *sarpanch* is reserved. By contrast, as can be seen from Table 8.4, the responses of members of "dominant SC subcastes" living in reserved villages testify to an increased degree of assertiveness in interpersonal relations.

8.4   Alternative Explanations?

To what extent are these results really caused by reservation? Before I suggest an interpretation, a number of alternative explanations for these results can be dismissed.

As for the effects on beliefs detected in Chapter 7, it is, first, unlikely that these results are due to the fact that villagers' attitudes did not change in reserved GPs, but that they felt more pressured to profess "positive" attitudes than villagers in unreserved GPs. While my data cannot entirely disprove this alternative explanation, a number of elements suggest that it may not constitute the most credible explanation for these results. First, given the social context of rural Rajasthan, it remains unclear why villagers should have felt more pressured in reserved villages. Second, assuming that respondents in reserved villages felt pressured, the survey methodology used in this study would have limited this pressure. Finally, even if social desirability were the cause of the effects detected on behavioral intentions, this would not explain the effects on perceived norms that I reported in Chapter 7 (as items measuring perceived norms are presumably less sensitive than items measuring discriminatory or frankly hostile behavioral intentions).

Table 8.4. *The Effect of Exposure of an SC* Sarpanch *on "Behavioral Intentions" of SC Villagers, across SC Subcastes (1 = Yes, 0 = No)*

	Difference in Mean Response across Reserved and Unreserved Villages *among Members of "Dominant SC subcastes"*	Difference in Mean Response across Reserved and Unreserved Villages *among Members of "Small SC subcastes"*
1. "A politician promised to bring development to the village before the elections but actually did not do anything. So when he came again to the village, I protested and asked him directly when he was going to do something for us."	.089** (.038)	.056 (.065)
2. "The development works in my village were delayed and as a result we are facing problems. So I went to the gram panchayat to inquire about what was going on."	.038 (.039)	.038 (.065)
3. "An upper-caste villager abused me without any reason, so I talked back to him and I told him he should not do that."	.073* (.038)	.035 (.070)
4. "An upper-caste villager tried to scam me. I decided to resist and I took the matter up to the authorities so that they intervene and solve the matter."	.017 (.038)	.006 (.062)

Accompanying standard errors are in parentheses, while stars indicate significance levels. *** = significant at the .01 level, ** = significant at the .05 level, * = significant at the .1 level. *Given large standard errors, however, the findings on items 1 and 3 do not pass the FDR test (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995) at q=.05.*

A second explanation may also be dismissed. Until now, I have assumed that the attitudes of villagers from unreserved GPs corresponded to a "baseline" level in these attitudes. This, however, remains an assumption, and in the absence of a known "baseline" level of prejudice prior to polling villagers, these results may be turned around and interpreted to mean that the attitudes of villagers who did not experience an SC *sarpanch* worsened, and not that the attitudes of villagers who, with the same experience, improved. This could especially be the case if villagers who anticipated that their village would be reserved for an SC became more hostile toward SCs in the run-up to this transition. This, however,

seems equally unlikely; even if the rotation principle that accompanies the reservation process means that all surveyed villages that were not reserved at the time of the survey would become reserved a few months after its completion (for the 2010 elections), villagers were almost universally unaware of that information. As mentioned in the previous chapter, villagers have little idea of the complicated rules that govern the reservation process – and they usually have no access to the demographic data that is used to determine which GPs are reserved at each electoral round. Hence they could not have confidently assumed that their village was about to be reserved.

Finally, and most importantly, these results cannot be explained by the fact that members of the SCs might have self-selected into reserved villages. If SC villagers routinely moved to villages in which non-SC villagers were more tolerant, then they could have increased the percentage of SC in those villages and made them more likely to be reserved in 2005. In this case, the results presented in this chapter may simply derive from the fact that reserved villages have experienced some inward migrations from members of the SCs rather than from the fact that they are reserved. As shown in Appendix D, however, this hypothesis is implausible for several reasons. First, migratory patterns make this scenario relatively unlikely: migration rates to the rural areas of Rajasthan are extremely low, especially so among members of the Scheduled Castes. In addition, only a small share of these migrations is likely driven by differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs. As a result, self-selection into less hostile villages is generally unlikely to be more than a marginal phenomenon. Besides, data allows me to show that this scenario is implausible *in my sample*. Using village-level data from the 1961 census of India, Table D.1 shows that the proportion of members of the SCs in reserved villages was already slightly higher than the proportion of members of the SCs in unreserved villages in 1961, and hence that no major migrations to reserved GPs took place in my sample since then. Moreover, Table D.2 shows that the correlation mechanism implied by this alternative explanation – that the proportion of members of the SCs would be correlated with more positive attitudes – is not reflected in my sample.

8.5   Putting It All Together: The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Intergroup Relations

How, then, do these effects relate to other results presented in this book? And what do these results jointly tell us about the impact of descriptive representation on intergroup relations? A joint focus on beliefs and behavioral intentions allows me to explore the psychological

mechanisms triggered by access to representation, and to speculate as to why untouchability-related behaviors should be expected to change as a result of exposure to descriptive representation. Since the actions of all groups contribute to regimes of discrimination and exclusion in intergroup relations, I first explore the impact of descriptive representation on members of disadvantaged groups, before discussing its impact on members of dominant groups.

8.5.1   The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Members of Disadvantaged Groups

Altogether, the results of Chapters 7 and 8 suggest that exposure to descriptive representation can trigger more assertive and more defiant behaviors among members of a disadvantaged group. Insofar as untouchability owes, in part, to caste-compliant behaviors or to the silent acceptance of domination and humiliation, the fact that members of the SCs professed that they would engage in such behaviors matters. The fact that many respondents (about one-quarter) responded that they would *not* engage in what may appear to be uncontroversial behaviors in other contexts – and likely uncontroversial behaviors to most upper-caste respondents in their village – shows how much ground remains to be covered in order to trigger change in inter-caste relations. The fact that responses were different in both sets of villages in turn suggested that reservation might help shift these caste lines. While additional studies relying on larger samples will need to confirm that it is indeed the case, this should be considered an encouraging feature of policies of descriptive representation, if this were to hold beyond my sample.

These results echo arguments in the comparative literature that suggest, drawing on the work of Tajfel (1981), that individuals can derive important "psychic benefits" from the arrival in office of one of their coethnic (Horowitz 1985, Chandra 2004). They also echo arguments about the "symbolic impact" of African-American representatives (Fenno 2003). These arguments typically insist on the "esteem gains" associated with political power: as individuals observe a member of their own group in a political office, feelings of pride and esteem take over their psyche and potentially prompt more assertive behaviors.

Together, the results in Chapters 7 and 8 suggest that the mechanism at play among members of the SCs however differs from what these arguments about "psychic benefits" have so far implied. The distinction I have placed at the center of my argument – between "strategy" and "taste" – makes more intuitive sense when describing the rationale for effects within dominant groups. But the same theoretical framework

applies among members of disadvantaged groups (such as the Scheduled Castes). According to this distinction, descriptive representation can prompt more defiant behaviors either because it helps members of the SCs develop a new self-image ("taste mechanism") or because it makes them feel that members of established groups, or the authorities, are now more likely to be on their side or to tolerate their newfound assertiveness.

The evidence I have presented in this book so far provides much clearer support for the "strategy mechanism." Under reservation, members of the SCs – especially if they are close to the *sarpanch* – appear to have more contact with members of dominant groups; they are more likely to perceive that the discriminatory behaviors of members of dominant castes are few, or receding; finally, they are more likely to perceive that authorities will be on their side if an incident occurs. Each of these findings is coherent with the "strategy mechanism." Even if one cannot straightforwardly draw causal arrows between these variables, this evidence *suggests* that members of the SCs engage in new behaviors because they feel that these behaviors are less likely to provoke unwanted reactions, or simply because they are more likely to feel that others will view these new behaviors as acceptable. In that sense, their reaction to reservation is arguably *strategic*.

By contrast, based on the evidence presented in this book, it is difficult to reach the conclusion that they do engage in more defiant behaviors because they feel more positive about themselves. Insofar as reservation does not affect self-stereotypes – with *some* of these self-stereotypes remaining remarkably negative in both sets of villages among SC villagers – there is little support to be found for the "taste mechanism."

Do these findings then imply, contrary to the aforementioned literature, that descriptive representation may *not* after all generate "psychic benefits"? While it is a challenging question to answer, two points can be made in this regard. It is, first, important to acknowledge that the surveys on which I rely here do *not* measure esteem, pride, or other feelings traditionally associated with the idea of "psychic benefits." Insofar as they focus on capturing *beliefs* rather than *feelings*, these surveys are arguably inadequate to test the idea of "psychic benefits." Testing whether reservation generates psychic benefits might have required me to capture villagers' emotions, or maybe even to rely on physiological measures, which seems even more challenging than what this project has already ventured to achieve. Since I took another route, it is thus difficult to form a conclusive opinion about this question.

Some of my qualitative intuitions and quantitative results nonetheless provide a few hints. Self-stereotypes are admittedly not equivalent to feelings of self-worth or self-esteem: when an SC villager is exposed

to an SC *sarpanch*, she may not believe that it makes her more intelligent, but she may walk taller in the shadow of power, feel proud, or feel more assertive. While this is true, beliefs and emotions are in practice also related, and it seems difficult to understand how villagers who feel proud or walk taller in the shadow of power would not have been more likely to reject these stereotypes about themselves.

Besides, on a more general note, one may wonder whether policies of descriptive representation, which by definition require institutional engineering so that candidates from disadvantaged groups can access offices they could not access otherwise, generate "psychic benefits" similar to those described in the literature on ethnic parties (Horowitz 1985, Chandra 2004). Maybe because my field research took place a few years into the mandate of the SC *sarpanches* I observed – and because emotional change may be more fleeting than cognitive change is – my collaborators and I detected few strong or visible feelings of this type among the SC population. As I have argued in Chapter 4, reservations were "politics as usual" for most villagers. Neither members of dominant groups nor members of the SCs appeared especially worked up or excited about this question. This, in my opinion, suggests that members of the SCs are either unlikely to receive "psychic benefits" from reservation or that these benefits do not last much longer after the election of one of their fellow caste member. While such "psychic benefits" likely exist in other contexts, the case of SC *sarpanches* thus suggests that descriptive representation can influence intergroup relations *through other mechanisms* more easily than it can influence it by helping members of these groups develop new levels of pride or self-esteem.

8.5.2   *The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Dominant Groups*

What is, in turn, the impact of reservation on the beliefs and behaviors of members of dominant groups? Taken together, the results in Chapters 7 and 8 suggest that exposure to an SC *sarpanch* reduces discriminatory and hostile behaviors among these groups *even if stereotypes and prejudice remain overwhelmingly negative*. These changes are especially likely to concern inter-caste behaviors that take place in the public sphere. Altogether, these different elements thus provide support for the "strategy mechanism" outlined in Chapters 1 and 4.

While mechanisms that this study could not test may also be at work, the most plausible explanation for the results presented in this article is that upper-caste villagers update their behavioral intentions under reservation not because they increasingly appreciate SC villagers, but rather because they strategically sense that social and legal norms of interaction

with SC villagers are evolving.[9] One of the ways this appears to be the case is through an evolution of perceived social norms of interaction with members of the Scheduled Castes. As mentioned in Chapter 4, and empirically supported in Chapter 6, reservation necessitates de facto changes in patterns of interaction and contact with at least one member of the SCs. One possible explanation for these results is that a shattering of the "glass ceiling" occurs: now that non-SC villagers engage in new forms of interactions with one member of the SCs, they may also be less likely to indulge in discriminatory behavior with other members of the SCs, especially if those belong to the family or the subcaste of the *sarpanch*. Thus reservation may decrease the social "cost" of engaging in contra-normative behavior with members of the Scheduled Castes. This should especially be the case given that those members of dominant castes that develop new forms of contact with an SC villager under reservation typically are influential local leaders within their own communities, and as such are natural "social referents."

The other norm-based mechanism through which these professed behavioral changes may happen has to do with what the legally tolerated discriminatory behaviors are perceived to be. Reservation appears to spread the perception that villagers cannot discriminate, insult, or abuse members of the SCs as overtly as they did in the past. Whether these perceptions are grounded in real facts – that is, in an increased ability of SC *sarpanches* to actually defend members of their community or reach out to higher authorities in case of conflict – is difficult to ascertain from this survey data alone. Regardless of the answer to this question, these results outline a potentially important consequence of policies of political inclusion such as reservation: they appear to send a signal that stigmatized populations such as the SCs may receive protection and support from the state, and in some cases, that there is a chance of favoritism toward members of these populations.

If the changes described here are purely strategic – only *public* behaviors change, and both stereotypical beliefs and prejudice do not change when a village is reserved – to what extent can we claim that reservation has a *positive* impact on intergroup relations? Quite clearly, perceived stereotypes and perceived levels of prejudice depress the psychological, social, and economic well-being of those they target. Yet, the "strategic" changes described in this book cannot be written off as unimportant or superficial. Even if political reservations of the type described in this study "only" managed to eradicate the grossest forms of public

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[9] In that sense, the main explanatory mechanisms detected in this study resemble the mechanisms underlined by several recent studies (Paluck2009a, Sheperd and Paluck 2015).

humiliations against members of the Scheduled Castes, this would no doubt be celebrated as a major achievement of these policies. In spite of extremely repressive acts punishing such behavior, a number of extreme untouchability-related behaviors remain sadly common throughout rural India (Chapter 2). Given the persistence of these rather extreme forms of hostility and discrimination, many of which continue to happen in the public sphere, the fact that reservation may not affect deep-seated feelings and the likability of members of the Scheduled Castes can hardly lead us to devalue the importance of these effects.

Members of the SCs derive clear and direct benefits from the cessation of such extreme (and often public) behaviors, regardless of what motivates these changes. While less negative stereotypes and a more empathetic outlook on members of the Scheduled Castes will be required if the inheritance of untouchability is to be dispensed with one day, "strategic" changes of the type described in this study may constitute an important first step. As suggested in the following chapter (Chapter 9), we may indeed expect changes in perceived norms of interaction to affect individuals' tastes in the long run.

While further research will need to confirm these theories, the results presented in this book already constitute an important addition to the empirical literature on the impact of descriptive representation. This literature – which has so far largely focused on India and the United States – has primarily focused on the redistributive (Duflo and Chattophadhyay 2004, Dunning and Nilekani 2013) and political (Bhavnani 2009, Gay 2001, Hajnal 2001) consequences of descriptive representation. By contrast, this study shows that more unexpected consequences of a disadvantaged ethnic group's access to political office also exist: namely that its access to political representation can have important psychological and behavioral repercussions, both among members of dominant groups and among members of the newly represented group. Building on the theories of India scholars, that the lower castes' access to political power has triggered "symbolic social change" in intercaste relations (Pai 2002, Weiner 2001, Jaffrelot 2003, Krishna 2003, Jeffrey et al. 2008), and in line with recent contributions about the transformative impact of gender quotas in the country (Bhavnani 2009, Beaman et al. 2009, Iyer et al. 2011), these findings provide innovative quantitative evidence suggesting that ethnic quotas matter for intergroup relations.

More generally, these results inform the theoretical debate on the rationale for descriptive representation in politics (Mansbridge 1999, Phillipps 1995, Williams 1998). Insofar as changes in discriminatory patterns affect both the short-term and long-term well-being of members of disadvantaged groups, these results open the door to a new

justification for institutional efforts to enhance descriptive representation. If a stigmatized group's access to political representation can trigger such changes in interpersonal relations, descriptive representation may be beneficial to members of that group *regardless* of its redistributive or political impact.

Beyond the literature on descriptive representation, these results contribute to several debates across the social sciences. Insofar as they imply that ethnic quotas can prompt individuals to comply with preexisting laws, these results provide an interesting counterpoint to the literature on citizen compliance. Scholars in this tradition have emphasized the need for legitimacy-based voluntary compliance (Levi 1988, Levi and Sacks 2007, Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). Focusing on a context in which both the legitimacy of government and the legitimacy of antidiscrimination laws are low, this study, by contrast, implies that compliance may derive from changes in perceived social and legal norms rather than from changes in the perceived legitimacy of government. The role played by the perceived behavior of the authorities suggests that deterrence – rather than perceived legitimacy – remains an important motivation of compliance. The role played by changes in perceived *social* norms in turn points to the conformist motivations of compliance. Taken together, these findings suggest that increasing the legitimacy of government may not be the only way to increase compliance.

Finally, these results inform the debate on strategies to reduce stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. In line with one of Allport's theories (Allport 1954) and with a host of more recent studies (meta-analyzed in Talaska, Fiske, and Chaiken 2008), these results confirm that evaluative stereotypes of stigmatized groups do not often correlate with indices of discriminatory behaviors toward members of these groups. In line with a number of other works (Blanchard et al 1994; Paluck 2009b; Paluck and Sheperd 2012), these results additionally suggest that changes in perceived *social norms* constitute a major avenue through which attitudes and behaviors may change. In this light, public policies that incentivize new norms of intergroup contact and interaction – in political institutions and elsewhere – should be seen as particularly valuable.

9   Descriptive Representation and Intergroup Relations in Comparative Perspective

In previous chapters, I have provided evidence suggesting that local-level reservations for members of the SCs affect beliefs about norms of inter-group interactions, even if they leave stereotypes unchanged (Chapter 7). Subsequent findings (Chapter 8) suggest that these psychological effects do not remain inconsequential. Changes in behavioral intentions ensue among members of all groups: members of dominant castes are – self-reportedly – less likely to behave in a hostile or discriminatory man-ner toward members of the Scheduled Castes when the village council head is himself a member of the Scheduled Castes (Chapter 8); like-wise, members of the Scheduled Castes profess to be more assertive and less accepting of local norms of dominance when one of their own is in office (Chapter 8). My analyses suggest that these effects exist across age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and education levels, and that they are robust across a large number of modeling specifications (Chapter 8).

While these are encouraging findings, a certain degree of caution remains necessary before anyone can claim that policies of descriptive representation overall have a beneficial effect on the psychology of inter-group relations. In light of the sample from which these conclusions are drawn (Chapters 1 and 5), only additional evidence will be able to tell us whether the optimism these results suggest is generalizable. As we wait for this additional evidence to trickle in, one may, however, speculate about the external validity of these results. Two questions especially beg to be discussed. First, should we expect such effects to persist over time? Second, to what extent are these effects likely to exist in other institu-tional, social, and demographic contexts?

To answer these questions, the chapter proceeds in several steps. In the first section of this chapter, I return to the sampling strategy and to the methodology of my Rajasthan study, and I acknowledge several ways in which the Rajasthan study differed from other potential studies on the same question. The second section of the chapter then hypoth-esizes about the timing of reactions to descriptive representation: How did the timing of the study potentially affect my results? To what extent

would results have been similar had villagers been surveyed with a different timeline? In the third section of the chapter, I discuss the extent to which the exclusions of populations that were *not* part of the sample of this study (namely women and youth) might have affected my results. The fourth section of this chapter in turn discusses how, and how much, the social, demographic, and institutional context of the study might have conditioned these results. Building on the argument spelled out in previous sections, the fifth section of the chapter describes *where* and *when* policies of descriptive representation are most likely to lead to an improvement in everyday intergroup relations such as the one described in preceding chapters. While this exercise leads me to argue that the improvement detected in my Rajasthan study should *not* be seen as an automatic consequence of policies of descriptive representation, I also argue that these results should be seen as extremely encouraging for other contexts.

9.1   Specificity of the Rajasthan Study

To what extent, and in what sense, did the context of the study from which the argument of this book emerges differ from other potential studies on the same question?

9.1.1   Context of the Rajasthan Study

The *gram panchayats* (GPs) on which my inferences are based in this book encompassed a variety of situations in terms of caste makeup and inter-caste dynamics. As such, they resembled many other potential sets of villages – within Rajasthan and within India – in the way reservation has been implemented, in their hierarchical caste-based social structure, and in their level of development. As is the case with any micro-level study, however, characteristics of this context distinguish it from other potential contexts in which a comparable study could have been run, both within and outside of India. Theoretically relevant *social, demographic*, and *institutional* features of this context may be acknowledged here.

As detailed in Chapter 2, the *social* context of this study was characterized by the paradoxical coexistence of three trends: (1) high levels of discrimination and hostility against a stigmatized group; (2) the absence of a strong social or political movement fighting against these discriminations; and (3) stringent – but rarely implemented – laws punishing such discriminatory or hostile behaviors. Untouchability scholars (Thorat 2010, Shah et al. 2006) often portray Rajasthan as one of the most retrograde states in the country owing to the prevalence and intensity of

untouchability. Yet, in spite of this particularly "feudal" context (Narain and Mathur 1989, Purohit et al. 2002), and in spite of the existence of extremely punitive national-level anti-untouchability laws, the state has not seen the emergence of a major Dalit movement pushing for the implementation of laws or promoting changes likely to impact the practice of untouchability. Rural untouchability remains an important problem in many Indian states, and not all Indian states have seen the emergence of strong Dalit movements. But one can think of few other states in which rural untouchability is as strong as it is in Rajasthan and in which anti-untouchability political movements have remained as weak as they are in the state. Among major Indian states, the only other example may be Madhya Pradesh. The conjunction of these various circumstances differentiates this context from other potential contexts, both within and outside India, in which legislators may be tempted to implement policies of descriptive representation.

Second, the empirical inferences made in this book were made in a specific *demographic* context. Several theoretically relevant elements of this demographic context may be emphasized here. For one, a number of general characteristics of the Indian caste system set apart the context of intergroup relations in rural Rajasthan from other multiethnic contexts. For one, the Rajasthani villages in which this study took place tend to be extremely fragmented in terms of *subcastes*. As such, they typically include a large number of "politically relevant groups" (Posner 2004), few of which are electorally viable by themselves.

Several important consequences derive from these demographic characteristics. First, members of the Scheduled Castes tend to share a village (and its institutions) with members of "dominant" castes, rather than be completely segregated. As described in Chapter 2, the nature of untouchability is such that it prohibits contact with members of the SCs at the same time as it paradoxically relies on them for a number of social functions. Both historically and in the present, there has been a great deal of contact between members of the Scheduled Castes and others, in spite of persistent discrimination and frequent humiliation when this contact takes place. Second, because subcaste matters as much as broader caste categories (such as the category "SC"), there is a great deal of diversity among both members of the Scheduled Castes and members of dominant groups. This in turn implies that the interethnic coalitions that are the bases of local politics throughout rural India (Chapter 3) include a *multitude* of groups and that they may not follow the lines of these broader caste categories. The effects described in previous chapters may thus in part owe to the fragmented nature of the caste system, and the fact that members of stigmatized categories

such as the SCs share institutions and territorial bounds with members of dominant groups.

Beyond these factors, the size of the SC population in the villages surveyed in the Rajasthan study differentiates it from other potential studies on the same question. The villages sampled in the quantitative study presented in previous chapters were comprised, on average, of around 18 percent of members of the Scheduled Castes. While this was both very close to the median percentages of SCs in the villages of Rajasthan and very close to the overall proportion of SCs in the state and at the national level – arguably making this sample representative – this nonetheless differs from the proportion of SCs in other parts of India.

It is, finally, important to note that my inferences in this book are made in a particular *institutional* context. Several characteristics of the political institutions examined in this book should matter when evaluating the external validity of my findings. In this book, I focus on access to *executive* political positions *at the local level*. As explained in Chapter 3, *sarpanches* play a central role in village life and are widely seen as important, visible, and potentially powerful characters. Since their cooperation is pivotal in a number of transactions and because they are in direct and personal contact with various authorities, they play a role that no other actor plays in village life, even though their policy-making powers are limited (Chapter 3). This central executive position probably sets apart the impact that these politicians can have on the psychology of intergroup relations from that of politicians elected in a more anonymous legislative body or council. Simply put, *sarpanches* may be more visible and approachable than many elected politicians. This may condition their impact, insofar as I have hypothesized (Chapters 7 and 8) that the new perceptions of norms of interactions that villagers from both caste groups develop under reservation may be related to added contact with at least one member of the SCs. Second, these politicians, as explained in Chapter 3, are relatively common men and not those "extraordinary" individuals that overcome the multiple hurdles inherent to state- or national-level politics in order to reach office (Chapter 3). The officials on whom this study focused were relatively inexperienced and ordinary individuals. Besides, given their institutional attributions and incentives (Chapter 3 and 4), they are largely unable to have a *major* impact on social redistribution. As their funds and domains of activity are limited, they are usually not able to significantly change the balance of power between groups. Regardless of their fairness in allocating resources, this relatively modest ability to impact their social environment may condition the effects detected in this book, as I have argued in Chapter 4.

Third and finally, the officials on whom this study focuses arrived in office thanks to a *specific* type of policy of descriptive representation – namely *reservations* or seat quotas. This differentiates the context of this study from contexts in which members of disadvantaged groups reach office thanks to other policies of descriptive representation, such as majority-minority redistricting. Policies of descriptive representation by definition require a form of institutional engineering (Jensenius in press). Reservations restrict the identity of eligible candidates, but not the identity of voters (insofar as it does not create separate electorates). Insofar as this institutional choice conditions the incentives and the actions of the officials studied in this book, one may question whether the psychological reaction to their arrival in office would have been the same had they reached office thanks to other types of policies of descriptive representation.

9.1.2   A Limited Sample

While the effects detected in earlier chapters may in part be attributed to features of the specific context in which this study took place, it is also important to acknowledge potential limitations in terms of sampling. Practical reasons led to restrict the sampling frame to male respondents,[1] and no women were interviewed in this study. Therefore, it remains to be proven whether reservation would have a comparable effect on female respondents and on discriminatory behaviors associated with female villagers.

Besides, in keeping with most surveys, only adults were interviewed in this study. Yet it is easy to conceive that the psychological effects of descriptive representation would be especially important on youth, especially over the long run. One may, for instance, hypothesize that growing up with an authority figure from the Scheduled Castes would go a long way in undermining stereotypical frames. Although focusing on adult males made sense insofar as they are the main perpetrators of acts of discrimination and hostility, it may be the case that different effects might emerge from a differently constructed sample.

9.1.3   Timing: A One-Shot Study

Though this may be obvious, it should finally be noted that the psychological effects described in this book are effects captured *at one specific*

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[1] As noted in Chapter 1, absent female interviewers, and given limited resources, interviewing female respondents can be challenging in rural Rajasthan.

point in time, namely after exposure to an official from a disadvantaged group for four and a half years (a little less than a single political mandate). To the extent that descriptive representation may generate different reactions over time, the results presented in this book thus admittedly constitute an incomplete part of the story. As suggested by my own argument presented in Chapter 4, other kinds of psychological reactions may take place in the short term, immediately following the election of that individual. Besides, it is possible that descriptive representation has an impact on each of the different types of group-related beliefs examined in this study, although with a different time frame. As a result, it may be necessary to think beyond the time frame examined in preceding chapters and to speculate about the short- and longer-term effects of descriptive representation on each of the beliefs and behaviors considered in this book. To what extent did the singularities of this study – regarding case selection, sampling, and timing – condition my results? This is the question I discuss in the following three sections of this chapter.

9.2   How Did the Timing of the Study Affect Results?

What should we expect the effect of descriptive representation to be over time? Only additional tests and replication might tell us whether the effects detected in previous chapters should be expected to persist over time, and/or whether different types of reactions might take place in the short or long run.[2]

   Drawing on the rich literature of intergroup attitudes nonetheless allows us to derive a few hypotheses as to the psychological effects that descriptive representation should generate over time. In making these hypotheses, I rely on two important conceptual distinctions. The first is a distinction between short-term effects (the psychological effects one should expect to observe *immediately after the election*), medium-term effects (the effects studied so far in this study, *a few years into the politician's mandate*), and long-term effects (effects one should expect to see *after the politician's mandate has ended*, and beyond). Since this study has so far focused on medium-term effects, I discuss in this section what effect we should expect reservation to have on group-related beliefs in both the short and long term.

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[2] Unfortunately, it will be challenging to conduct such tests in Rajasthan given the rotation involved in the reservation system. Because GPs that were unreserved in the 2005–2010 electoral period (and hence in 2009, when this study was run) automatically became reserved in 2010, as per the rules detailed in Chapter 5, identifying the effect of reservation *across the same set of GPs* has now unfortunately become empirically problematic.

The second conceptual distinction introduced in this section relates to these potential long-term psychological effects of reservation. In the short and medium term, the effect of reservation can be thought of as the direct effect of exposure to a single politician from a disadvantaged group – in the context of this study, the effect of exposure to a specific SC *sarpanch*. In the long run, however, the effects of reservation may not simply refer to exposure to this specific politician but also to general exposure to a political system in which reservation is the rule and in which members of the SCs (or of other stigmatized groups) are routinely elected. I refer to these two types of effects as the *specific* and *general* effects of reservation in the subsections that follow.

9.2.1 Backlash Effects in the Short Run?

How should we expect a member of the Scheduled Castes' access to office to impact the psychology of intergroup relations *immediately after the election*?

I have largely focused in this book on several types of *cognitive* changes. As noted in Chapter 4, however, another type of psychological reaction may occur in the days and weeks immediately following the election. As predicted by diverse theoreticians of intergroup relations (Blumer 1958, Bobo 1983, Coser 1956, LeVine and Campbell 1972, Beck and Tolnay 1990, Jacobs and Woods 1999, Olzak 1990, Horowitz 1985, Petersen 2002), more emotional or affect-driven reactions may also occur if individuals are uncertain of the consequences that the access of a member of another group to office will have on their lives. These reactions are typically described as stemming from strong negative emotions such as fear, resentment, hate, or anger (see Petersen 2002 for a possible typology of these emotions). Would I have observed such backlash-type reactions had I visited these Rajasthani villages in 2005, a few months after the landmark election of an SC *sarpanch*, rather than in 2009?

While extremely violent reactions took place in *some* Indian states when the first village council leaders from the SC were elected in the 1990s (Viswanathan 2005), it is unlikely that I would have detected reactions of this type in the context of this study, at the onset of these *sarpanches*' tenure in 2005. There are several reasons for this. The first has to do with the power exercised by these *sarpanches*. In order for a "backlash" to take place, a threat that is perceived as "important" has to exist (Chapter 4). Given the political context described in Chapter 3 of this book – the existence of inter-caste coalitions and the frequent tutelage of SC *sarpanches* by other local actors – it is unlikely that villagers would have perceived reservation to be an important threat to their livelihood,

and it is even more unlikely that they would have translated these feelings into action. The second reason is rotation. Rotation by design lowers the stakes and diminishes the perceptions of danger that policies of descriptive representation may otherwise trigger. In addition, because villagers were already used to the rotation system that had been in place for reservations at the GP level since 1995, they would have been in the late 2000s already well aware of the temporary nature of a leadership position held by a member of the Scheduled Castes, and hence aware that this position was no more than a minor threat to the long-term supremacy of elites from dominant groups. If these intuitions and if my findings in Chapter 7 and 8 are correct, they suggest that quotas for relatively unimportant or rotating positions are unlikely to generate a strong "backlash" because they are unlikely to generate strong emotional reactions such as resentment, hate, or fear (Petersen 2002) in the first place.

Regardless of whether such emotion-driven negative reactions would have emerged in 2005 (at the onset of these officials' tenure in office), a second important question to consider is whether one would have observed the same *cognitive* reactions immediately after the election.

Answering this question requires us to think about the timing of the impact of my effects on *stereotypes* and *perceived norms of interaction*. Changes in stereotypical beliefs as well as reductions in levels of prejudice are arguably *less* likely to emerge in the short term than they are in the medium or the long term. Insofar as these beliefs tend to be sticky and to require new and consistent information to accumulate over time, they are unlikely to take place in the short term. Since I do not detect them a few years into the term of *sarpanches*, it is thus even more unlikely that I would have detected them early on. As emphasized in Chapter 4, stereotypes have often been seen as extremely difficult to change. Recent works that have insisted on the malleability of stereotypes have invariably presented changes in stereotypes as *conditional* on a variety of factors (Chapter 4). Recent studies about exposure to counterstereotypical information have, for instance, argued that stereotypic biases can be overridden, yet only under very specific circumstances. Namely, these studies have argued that exposure to counterstereotypical individuals may have an impact when stereotype-inconsistent information is dispersed by a large number of counterstereotypical individuals (Moreno and Bodenhausen 1999, Johnston and Hewstone 1992, Weber and Crocker 1983) or in circumstances in which exposure to counterstereotypical exemplars is extremely frequent (Dasgupta and Asgari 2004) or of an intimate nature (Pettigrew 1998). These conditions are even less likely to be met in the short term. Similarly, theories emphasizing the importance of intergroup contact for prejudice reduction (Pettigrew

1998, Miller et al. 2004, Tropp and Pettigrew 2004) suggest that changes are more likely in the long term than in the short term. The conditions originally determined by Allport (1954) as ones in which intergroup contact should reduce prejudice – "equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and support of an authority" – are very unlikely to be met in the short term.

Similarly, the effects on perceived norms of interaction outlined earlier in this book may be expected to require time in order to emerge. In order for villagers to perceive that their peers are more tolerant and welcoming toward members of the Scheduled Castes, they might need to experience descriptive representation for a sustained period. Hence, it is unlikely that the changes in *perceived norms of interactions* that are outlined in Chapter 7 would have emerged in the short term.

As a result, the most likely prediction is that reservations would *not* have had any of the different types of effects considered in Chapter 4, had the survey team visited the same sixty-four villages a few months into the term of *sarpanches*.

9.2.2 What to Expect in the Long Run, After Reservation?

Would these effects persist *in the long run*? Specifically, should we expect the positive effects on perceived norms of interaction and on behavioral intentions to persist after reservation ends? Moreover, should we expect the effect on stereotypes to remain null in the long run?

Since I have described the effects on *perceived norms* presented in Chapter 7 and 8 as being grounded in strategic motivations rather than in changes in image or self-image, there are good reasons to think that these effects may *not* last beyond reservation. As such, there may be ground for pessimism. As reserved GPs became unreserved in 2010 (by virtue of rotation), villagers from dominant groups may have felt less pressured to strategically adapt to what they previously perceived to be changing norms of interactions with members of the Scheduled Castes. As a member of another group regains control of the office of *sarpanch*, members of dominant groups may have fewer interactions with members of the Scheduled Castes than they did during the reserved period, and hence may be less likely to perceive that social norms of interaction are changing. Similarly, as a member of another group regains control of the office of *sarpanch*, members of dominant groups may be less likely to perceive that discriminatory or hostile behaviors will be punished. If the presumed changes in behaviors that derive from these cognitive changes (Chapter 8) were strategic in the first place, they may be expected not to persist once the reserved GPs revert back to their unreserved status.

Only further tests can confirm these intuitions. There are, however, reasons not to paint as dark a picture. There are also reasons for these effects to *persist* beyond the period in which each GP is reserved. The first one is that reservation does create linkages between SC communities and local authorities that likely persist after reservation has ended. These durable effects are part of what I have previously referred to as the "specific" impact of reservation – that is, the impact deriving, for a given individual, from the access of a member of the SCs to the office of *sarpanch* in their own GP. While SC communities used to be almost completely isolated from all manner of institutions, they now at the very least count a number of former village council heads within their ranks. In most cases, this represents a landmark improvement, as counting a member who has gained the ability and willingness to connect with local-level authorities can lead to life-changing decisions for the community. In line with this argument, it is important to note that reservation generally contributes to the emergence of SC leaders in each GP, and that these new leaders will subsequently be vocal (or at least *more vocal* than they used to be) during village meetings, regardless of their GP's subsequent reservation status. What is more, reservation turns SC communities into more structured groups that are now to be reckoned with when local political entrepreneurs craft their winning electoral coalition. In other words, the "specific" impact of reservation should be in part *indelible*.

These significant changes are heightened by the fact that reservation also has a more "general" impact. When exposed to reservation, villagers are not only exposed to one specific instance of reservation – in this case, one specific SC *sarpanch*. This experience also contributes to building the more general perception that they live in a society in which reservation is the rule and in which members of the SCs (and of other stigmatized groups) will now routinely be elected. While villagers may remain relatively unaffected by the fact that reservation is a common and recurrent feature of their political system, their first concrete experience with an SC *sarpanch* can arguably be expected to accelerate the perception that it is indeed the case. The fact that their GP will be reserved for SCs again during their lifetime (once every four to five electoral periods) should logically spread the perception that reservation is not an isolated one-time event, but that has now become "politics as usual" when regulating access to political positions in the country. If that is the case, one may expect the strategy-driven changes described earlier to be *long-lasting* strategic adaptations: as villagers realize that society – and not only their own individual village – is changing, they should adapt and start toning down some of their most hostile behaviors. Since the perception that one lives in a system in which reservation is common shall survive the more

specific experience of reservation at the local level, it may be argued that the effects of reservation should be relatively stable over time.

Should we, in turn, expect the impact on stereotypes and prejudice to remain null in the long run? Analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 imply that reservation changed neither beliefs about members of the Scheduled Castes nor general attitudes toward them. While only additional data can prove this, the impact of reservation on these outcomes may, however, be conditional on time: reservation may not have any impact in the medium term (as in this study), yet it may generate improvements in these dimensions *in the long run*.

Several mechanisms explain why this may indeed be the case. If stereotypes require repeated exposure to counterstereotypical information in order to evolve, as many psychologists of intergroup relations would suggest, then a single mandate may not suffice for stereotypical beliefs about the Scheduled Castes to be updated. Additional exposure to a member of the Scheduled Castes in a counterstereotypical position, or additional contact with that individual or his entourage, may be necessary in order for these beliefs to evolve. Had the villagers interviewed in this study been exposed to reservation for ten or fifteen years instead of five, my findings might have been different.

Another pathway through which reservation may update these beliefs in the long run has to do with cohort effects. If stereotypes and prejudices tend to be formed at an early age, and if they are subsequently resilient to change among adults, generations that grow up exposed to a member of a disadvantaged group in a visible position of power should be expected to exhibit fewer stereotypes and lower levels of prejudice later in life. Even if I did not detect any effect on stereotypes in 2009, it is possible that reservation will have a long-lasting impact on some villagers. Since the villagers most likely to be influenced by reservation were not adults – and hence were not part of my sampling frame – when this study was run (in 2009), I could not have detected these effects then.

Third, and finally, the changes in perceived norms and behaviors that I detected in 2009 (see Chapter 7 and 8) might possibly have an indirect impact on stereotypes and prejudice in the long run. One may hypothesize, in other words, that the "strategic" adaptations to reservation that I have emphasized in Chapters 7 and 8 will, in the long run, be converted into changes in preferences. As members of dominant groups strategically interact with members of the Scheduled Castes under reservation, they may inadvertently develop new friendships or be unwillingly exposed to new attributes of these individuals, which they might not have been exposed to otherwise. If exposure and contact do, in the long

run, change preferences, regardless of what motivates this exposure and these new forms of contact, then we might expect the "strategic" effects detected in Chapters 7 and 8 to have repercussions on these preferences in the future.

In light of these possible avenues for stereotype change, it is thus possible to think that reservation might improve stereotypes and reduce prejudice *in the long run*. While only additional data will allow me or other researchers to test this idea, it is an important nuance to add to what might otherwise start looking like a relatively pessimistic picture.

9.3   How Did the Focus on Adult Males Affect Results?

What should we expect the impact of reservation to be among women and youth? While additional studies will hopefully answer this question, a few hypotheses may be suggested here.

The effect on women should, first, be conditional on the extent to which social relations are gendered. I have argued that the effects described in Chapter 7 likely derive from changes in patterns of contact with the SC *sarpanch* himself. I have also argued that changes in behaviors described in Chapter 8, because they are driven by strategic concerns, mainly concern behaviors that take place in the public sphere. If these hypotheses were validated in additional analyses, it is unclear that we should expect the effect of reservation to be as strong among women as it is among men. Insofar as women are traditionally more distanced from political processes in Rajasthan, they should be less likely to experience personal contact with the new official, and hence less likely to be affected by these effects. We may thus expect reservation to have a more limited, or at least a more indirect, impact on them.

Beyond gender, one may also argue that the effects reported in this book are conditional on the age of my respondents. The effects detected in this study appeared to exist among both younger and older respondents (in a split sample). However, both younger and older respondents in this split-sample analysis were adults (over eighteen years old), and no youths were interviewed as part of this study. How should we expect reservation to impact the psychology of younger villagers? In line with some of the expectations regarding the effect of reservation among women, one may first argue that reservation would likely have a marginal effect among the youth. Since young villagers do not take part in political processes, they would likely be less "exposed" to reservation than their adult relatives would be. Moreover, because youth are generally more likely to have been directly exposed to

members of the Scheduled Castes in unusual social positions, or to have themselves developed connections with SC youth through the education system, the *additional* impact of reservation on their beliefs may be small. Since they live in an environment in which information related to members of the SCs is more easily accessible, and since various factors (education presumably being one of them) push them toward more tolerance in the first place, the net effect of reservation on their beliefs may remain marginal.

On the other hand, in line with arguments about the long-term effects of reservation, even minor, passing, or marginal exposure to a member of the Scheduled Castes in a position of power could have far-reaching consequences among younger villagers. Assuming that stereotypes are more likely to be malleable when they are still partially formed than when they are deep-seated and already anchored in one's belief system, we may hypothesize that reservation would have a greater effect on youth, insofar as it might contribute to the *formation* of more positive stereotypes. If that were the case, the findings presented in Chapters 7 and 8 might need to be nuanced. While my evidence suggests that reservation can change *perceived norms* but that it does not change *stereotypes*, this may not reflect long-term effects on youth.

9.4   How Did the Social and Institutional Context of the Study Affect Results?

9.4.1   *The Impact of Descriptive Representation across* Social *Contexts*

While policies of descriptive representation exist around the world, the social contexts in which they are implemented differ. The study on which I rely in this book was run in a context in which social norms of interaction with members of the SCs are evolving under the combined effect of various social forces, *but* in which the gap between these social and legal norms remains large, in part because legal norms are not strictly enforced on the ground.

The rapidly changing nature of social and legal norms of intergroup interactions that is characteristic of this context arguably *enables* my results. This is because the strategic adaptations described in this book may only happen in a context in which norms are still being negotiated. If social norms of interactions with members of the Scheduled Castes had been fixed and clear – as norms of interracial interaction more or less are in the contemporary United States – it is unlikely that a minor life event such as reservation would have so dramatically changed villagers'

perceptions of how their peers are behaving. Similarly, if legal challenges to untouchability-related behaviors had been more systematically and homogeneously enforced, it is unlikely that reservation would have so dramatically changed villagers' perceptions of how legal authorities may react to a transgression. By this logic, it is unlikely that I would have detected changes in behavioral intentions in a context in which these social and legal norms are more stable.

This reflection should lead us to state an important hypothesis: policies that allow members of stigmatized groups to access public offices should be especially valuable in settings in which norms that regulate intergroup interactions are still evolving. This is because the access of a member of a stigmatized group to a political office in such a context can have an impact on perceived norms as well as on other types of beliefs. When social and legal norms of interactions are still being negotiated, the presence of members of a stigmatized group in visible and influential positions of power can help change perceptions of these norms. And these changes in perceived norms may in turn prevent a number of hostile or discriminatory behaviors, as suggested by my results in Chapter 8.

An example may better illustrate this idea. It is no longer socially acceptable to use racial slurs in public in the United States, and individuals privately horboring racist beliefs are overwhelmingly aware of what is – or is not – socially or legally tolerable when it comes to voicing opinions related to racial relations in public. Accordingly, the election of a minority representative to a public office in our day and age should likely have a minor impact on the *perceived norms* on which this study has focused, insofar as these *perceived norms* are already firmly established and unlikely to be swayed. This obviously should not be taken to mean that absolutely no psychological consequences are to be expected from the election of minority representatives: stereotypes and other beliefs may still evolve in the long run, as suggested earlier. Effects on pride, esteem, and self-esteem can also exist. But the rapid changes in intergroup relations that may derive from a form of *strategic* adaption to the behaviors of other actors – such as the changes described in this study – are probably more unlikely in such contexts. This in turn suggests that policies of descriptive representation should be particularly useful in social contexts in which norms of intergroup relations are currently being renegotiated, insofar as they might display – in a most visible manner – the fact that these norms are changing, or that they ought to change. Accordingly, this means that we should be more likely to observe effects such as the ones described in this book in a subset of social contexts in which policies of descriptive representation are implemented.

9.4.2   *The Impact of Descriptive Representation across* Institutional Contexts

The effects detected in this book also emerge from a specific *institutional* context. The reserved positions on which this study focused were local-level positions; they were also *executive*, rather than *legislative*, positions. To what extent are the effects described in preceding chapters conditional on these features?

The local-level nature of these positions is theoretically important for at least two reasons. The fact that they were local-level positions first meant that the officials who occupied these positions were often visible and easily accessible. In other words, exposure to these officials, to their actions, and to others' reactions to their access to office was maximal. This high level of exposure certainly conditions the effects detected in this study. Had villagers not lived close to their SC *sarpanch*, they might not have visited him, and there might not have been, more generally speaking, any increase in contact between members of the SCs and others. Had villagers not seen their SC *sarpanch* in action, effects on stereotypes would be even more unlikely to emerge, even in the long run. Finally, the effects on perceived legal norms detected in Chapter 7 would have likely not existed if villagers had not felt that their SC *sarpanch* was accessible enough to be able to pressure authorities to reprimand them.

This suggests an important conclusion as to the type of institutions in which a more descriptive form of representation should be expected to have the largest effect. Namely, reservations and other policies of descriptive representation should be the most valuable to intergroup relations when implemented at the most local level (see also Hajnal 2005 on this point). While representation at the other end of the political spectrum – at very high levels of government – may also be expected to matter, insofar as the depiction of very powerful individuals in the news media may contribute to changing a number of beliefs, it would likely not provide the same benefits that direct contact would.

As explained in Chapter 3, the local-level nature of these positions also meant that the individuals who gained access to these offices were relatively common individuals, rather than the rare breed of individuals who usually reach higher-level offices in India – ambitious, intensely networked people given to constant strategizing. The ordinary background of these officials likely increased my ability to detect effects on contact and on perceived social norms. More extraordinary officials, including those from the SCs, would have been more difficult to approach, and the contact they had with villagers would have been less frequent. On the other hand, the unexceptional nature of *sarpanches* should have

decreased my ability to detect effects on perceived legal norms of interactions. Had these *sarpanches* been more connected and more experienced individuals, one might expect these effects to have been even higher. It is thus particularly significant that even common officials managed to perpetuate the idea that local authorities could change their reactions to untouchability-related transgressions.

Finally, the rather common background of SC *sarpanches* may have played a role both for and against my ability to detect effects on stereotypes in this study. The fact that these individuals did not necessarily qualify as charismatic leaders may, on the one hand, have limited their ability to change stereotypes. Besides, it is very possible that their frequent lack of independence and experience in office may have simply limited their ability to prove caste-based stereotypes wrong (as reported in Chapter 6, there was frequent frustration with these officials and their ability to solve concrete problems), or to generate emotions such as pride or self-esteem. On the other hand, the fact that they were common men implies that it would have been much easier for villagers to identify with them (in the case of SC villagers) or to view them as typical SC individuals, without "subtyping" them (in the case of non-SC individuals), had they proven stereotypes wrong. In that sense, it is difficult to tell whether this feature of SC *sarpanches* buried effects that otherwise would have been likely, or if it provided the most likely setting in which to detect them. Further analyses will be needed in order to clear up this ambiguity.

Second, the positions that this study focused on were *executive* positions. Since the officials in question were local-level politicians, exposure to these officials tended to be far greater than it would have been if these officials had been parliamentarians or members of a deliberative assembly. At the village level in India, other village council members also interact with their constituents, and are asked to solve their problems. The same is true of parliamentarians in general. But these officials arguably receive fewer requests, attend fewer meetings, and solve fewer issues, precisely because they have fewer discretionary powers to do so. Insofar as the exposure to an SC official was maximized in this study by focusing on *executive* positions, this empirical focus might have increased the likelihood that I detected an effect on any of the outcomes that this book is interested in. Combining this insight with the earlier insight regarding the local-level nature of these positions, it can be argued that the psychological benefits deriving from the access of a member of a disadvantaged group to office should be maximized when that official occupies *an executive position at the local level*. Powerful individuals in executive positions in the top echelons of government may have an impact on stereotypes, and they may strengthen beliefs that antidiscrimination laws

will be enforced. But it is rather unlikely that they would change patterns of intergroup contact, or that perceived norms of intergroup interaction would evolve under their tenure. In that sense, the effects detected in this study highlight the singular value of policies that enable descriptive representation *at the local level*.

Finally, the officials on whom this study focuses arrived in office thanks to a *specific* institutional mechanism, namely reservations. As I have argued in Chapter 4, the specific rules governing these reservations shaped the incentives and the actions of the officials studied in this book, in a way that likely conditions their psychological impact. As suggested by my description of these institutions, it is precisely because of a persistent incentive to create multi-caste alliances that negative psychological reactions – namely backlash-type effects – were unlikely to occur among members of dominant groups. When the politicians who benefit from affirmative action do not have an institutional incentive to favor their coethnics, members of dominant groups have little to fear, and are, as a result, unlikely to develop perceptions that the status quo is shifting. By contrast, this suggests that a group's access to political offices under a different set of institutions might have triggered such negative reactions (Horowitz 1985).

Beyond the fact that it influences the incentives of these new officials, the institutional context in which descriptive representation happens is important for another reason. Descriptive representation happens either by fixing guidelines as to who can or should run or by playing with electoral boundaries (or the electorate). The findings presented in this book imply that the former method may be more promising if one of the assigned goals of descriptive representation is to improve intergroup relations. As I have tried to show in this book, reservations – for all their limitations – appear to have created new forms of contact and new channels of communication between groups. It is this key feature that in turn can be seen as the root of the psychological and behavioral changes I have documented in this book. Other policies of descriptive representation, which by contrast consist in separating electorates – including geographically, as in majority-minority redistricting – likely do not offer the same promise.

9.5   Putting It All Together: Where and When Should Policies of Descriptive Representation Improve Intergroup Relations?

Overall, this detailed exploration of the context and design of the Rajasthan study should lead us to conclude that policies of descriptive

representation are more likely to have a beneficial impact on intergroup relations in some contexts than in others. Drawing on previous sections of this chapter, the characteristics of these "most likely" contexts can quickly be summarized here.

Descriptive representation is, first, more likely to have beneficial effects in the long term than in the short term. As mentioned earlier, there is in my view no real reason to expect significant effects of descriptive representation – other than fleeting feelings of pride or esteem – in the short term. In the long term, assuming the accession to office of a member of a disadvantaged group has not stirred intergroup tensions, a variety of positive effects are possible. More importantly, beneficial effects largely depend on the social and institutional contexts in which policies of descriptive representation are implemented. As mentioned earlier, policies of descriptive representation should be particularly useful in social contexts in which norms of intergroup relations are still being negotiated, insofar as they might provide a strong signal to the population that these norms are changing, or that they ought to change. If policies of descriptive representation mainly matter for the signal they send – rather than for the role models they provide – they should be most valuable in such contexts.

Second, reservations and other policies of descriptive representation should have the largest effect on intergroup relations when they are implemented at the most local level – that is, at the level at which citizens experience firsthand contact with their official.

Third, these policies are more likely to generate positive effects when they concern executive positions or positions that provide these officials with agency and visibility.

Last but not least, the effects of these policies depends on the way they are concretely designed. Two points are worth keeping in mind here. First, they are unlikely to generate dreaded negative effects ("backlash effects") when they *by design* encourage intergroup cooperation and/or limit the potential for a radical redistribution of resources across groups.[3] Second, they are especially likely to have positive effects – such as the ones detected in this study – when they incentivize new forms of contact or open new channels of communication between groups rather than let each group elect their representative in isolation.

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[3] I am not arguing here that policies of descriptive representation should be designed to lack bite when it comes to their redistributive potential. Redistribution may be a valuable objective. If one looks at policies of descriptive representation as a tool to improve intergroup relations, providing officials elected through quotas with the potential to radically change the balance of power and resources across groups should *not* be a desirable feature, however. If the sole objective is to improve these relations, policies that place members of disadvantaged groups in the public sphere and in visible positions but do not provide them with the opportunity for radical redistribution of resources should be preferable.

Admittedly, many policies of descriptive representation implemented around the world do not correspond to these "most likely" conditions for beneficial effects encountered in the case of the Rajasthan study. We should, in my opinion, expect little in the way of positive psychological effects from the reservation of a few seats in a distant legislative assembly, and even less from a system in which members of disadvantaged groups would be abruptly provided with real opportunities to seek redress through radical forms of redistribution.

This, however, does not imply that the effects I have detected and described in this book should be seen as idiosyncratic to Rajasthan or to the context of this study. This is because the context in which the Rajasthan study was run, although it was in some ways favorable to the detection of such effects (because the reserved positions on which it focused were local and executive positions that did not threaten the status quo), was also *in even more important ways* a "least likely" case for the detection of such effects. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 5, Rajasthan is one of the most "casteist" states in India, one in which social relations are routinely described as "feudal," and one in which observers of caste least expect to observe some of the changes I have described in this book. The fact that I detect effects in this context should also make us hopeful about the transformative potential of policies of descriptive representation. More generally speaking, this should make us hopeful that purely symbolic or vote-minded policies, such as the decision to allocate seats to members of the Scheduled Castes in local councils, can help trigger significant and unexpected social change.

9.6   Epilogue

In this book, I have explored the psychological mechanisms triggered by a group's access to representation. A joint focus on beliefs and behavioral intentions has allowed me to suggest a specific explanation for why common interpersonal behaviors should be expected to change as a result of this development. In broad terms, my results have suggested that exposure to an SC *sarpanch* improves interpersonal relations even if stereotypes and prejudice remain overwhelmingly negative. Even though these results are based on a limited sample, these changes are significant. Altogether, these various elements support the "strategy mechanism" outlined in Chapters 1 and 4: individuals strategically update their behaviors upon perceiving that norms of interactions are changing, and *not* because they become less prejudiced or intolerant.

As would be the case for any other micro-level study, the external validity of these effects is by definition limited. Similar effects may

not necessarily emerge across contexts and populations. These effects may not have a flat or linear trajectory over time. Some effects may be expected to emerge in the long run, whereas others may emerge more rapidly. This chapter has provided a large number of hypotheses regarding the way in which descriptive representation may affect the psychology of intergroup relations across contexts, populations, and time spans. Much more work admittedly needs to be done in order to test these hypotheses and confirm these intuitions: we still know very little about the ability of more descriptive forms of political representation to concretely improve the living conditions of members of routinely stigmatized groups such as the Scheduled Castes.

Yet, in closing, it seems important to reiterate that the findings presented here should already constitute welcome news for members of these groups, and beyond, for proponents of reservation policies and other types of quotas. As shown in this study, it is not straightforward that material benefits will derive from a group's access to representation. This study does, however, suggest that members of disadvantaged groups can benefit in other ways when one of their own accesses a political office.

It is easy to understand what improvements in patterns of interpersonal interactions, especially among individuals who continue to be the target of routine discrimination and vicious humiliation, can do for an individual's immediate and future well-being. But it may be necessary to emphasize here that the other effects detected in this book – effects on patterns of inter-caste contact and on perceived norms of interactions – matter just as much, even beyond their presumed effect on interpersonal behaviors. This is because they likely impact a wide range of additional variables related to the well-being of members of these groups. Additional contact may mean additional access to knowledge and education. A belief that norms have changed may not only change interpersonal behaviors; it may also, in the long run, help members of disadvantaged groups seize new opportunities and escape unenviable situations.

Accordingly, I hope that this study will help reframe discussions about descriptive representation. It has often been suggested that descriptive representation may have far-reaching consequences for the nature of intergroup relations (Mansbridge 1999). However, no credible and systematic evidence for these virtuous repercussions has until now emerged. This study, though focused on a single case, thus fills an important gap, as it empirically shows that a disadvantaged group's access to representation *can* matter for reasons other than the potential redistributive effects it has often been hypothesized to generate (Duflo and Chattophadyay

2004). In doing so, it implies that currently uncharted mechanisms may explain these virtuous consequences of descriptive representation. Descriptive representation may improve the lot of members of disadvantaged groups not by allowing them to develop a new image, but rather because it signals that members of these groups now receive, and ought to receive, better treatment.

Appendix A   Methodological Note on Field Research

The field research on which this book draws took place in two stages. The first stage took place in eight villages of Rajasthan in 2009, prior to the quantitative surveys whose results are presented in Chapters 5 to 8. Shankare Gowda accompanied me during this research, over a period of nine months. A second round of field research was then carried out in 2011–2012 in three additional villages in order to confirm some of the theories gained through my first round of field research and to make inferences on outstanding questions. I was lucky to be assisted and guided by Gopal Singh Rathore during this second phase. In this book, I draw equally from these two stages.

The objective of this brief methodological appendix is to provide additional details on the choices and procedures that guided this field research.

Objective(s)

The objective of my first stage of field research – which ran prior to the quantitative research detailed in Chapters 5 to 8 – was threefold. Given that no detailed and documented account of the role of *sarpanch* existed at the time this study took place (and, to the best of my knowledge, still did not exist as of 2013), the first objective of this research was simply to observe and document the daily functioning of *gram panchayats*, with a focus on the specific role that *sarpanches* play in this institution. Quantitative works on *gram panchayats* have somehow conveyed the idea that village council heads (i.e., *sarpanches* in Rajasthan) are omnipotent, central actors of local governance. The situation on the ground, however, is not as clear as that. A multitude of other actors – *gram panchayat* secretaries, council members, and a variety of block-level officials, among others – play a role in village governance in India. While *sarpanches* play an undeniably crucial role in that complex pyramid, they are not the only ones with influence. It was thus important to delineate the specific

powers and functions of *sarpanches* and to contrast it with the powers and functions of those other actors.

The second objective was to closely observe and get a sense of relations between members of the Scheduled Castes and others in a sample of Rajasthani villages. What does untouchability concretely mean on the ground in contemporary Rajasthan, and how do villagers speak about caste relations? Deriving theories about the reality and the language of untouchability was doubly important to this project. Theoretically, the discussions in which I participated on this topic helped me determine a number of hypotheses as to the psychological mechanisms that underpin the practice of untouchability at the individual level in rural India. Empirically speaking, the phrasing and language used by villagers when speaking about untouchability was directly put to use in the construction of my quantitative instruments (as Chapter 5 details).

Finally, the third objective of this first phase of my field research was to make inferences on the changes that take place when the office of *sarpanch* is for the first time reserved for a member of the Scheduled Castes. What are the tangible (distributive, political, social, etc.) changes that take place when the *sarpanch* is an SC villager? What might the psychological effects of these changes be? What are the potential effects on the practice of untouchability?

The second phase of my field research, which took place in 2011–2012, after the surveys had been run and analyzed, mostly – though not exclusively – focused on the first of these objectives. During that research, I closely followed three *sarpanches* in order to make inferences on *gram panchayat* finances, their role in the decision-making process, and their connections with actors at higher levels of government (especially at the block level).

How Were Villages Chosen?

Because I was residing in Jaipur and frequently traveled to Bikaner throughout 2009, I opted for villages located near these two cities so that I would be able to visit as easily and often as possible.

I first selected four villages in the Jaipur district. Since I was concerned that the Jaipur district may not be entirely representative of the state, I widened my selection to include the two *panchayat samitis* (block-level *panchayats*) that were the farthest away from the state capital, and appeared to lag behind other parts of the district in terms of development (as per basic census estimates). I finally decided to focus on Phagi once I realized that a number of untouchability-related disputes happening

in the Phagi *tehsil* had hit the headlines of national news websites all through the 2000s (including the well-known Chakwada incident,[1] in which caste-related clashes took place after SC villagers protested their de facto barring from the local pond). Insofar as untouchability-related behaviors persisted in the area and development indicators were comparable to the indicators for many other parts of Rajasthan, Phagi provided me with a welcome compromise both in terms of practicality (2 to 3 hours by road from Jaipur) and "representativeness." Within this tehsil, I selected two *gram panchayats* headed by a member of the SCs and two headed by villagers from other castes (one by an OBC *sarpanch*, the other one by a Rajput *sarpanch*).

The process that guided my choice of four villages of the Bikaner *tehsil* in the Bikaner district, in western Rajasthan, was more straightforward. I simply selected a cluster of four villages that were at a respectable distance from the city (a 90-minute drive) but nonetheless remained accessible from Bikaner over the course of a single day.[2] One of these villages was headed by an SC *sarpanch*, two were headed by Jat *sarpanches*, and the last one was headed by a brahmin *sarpanch*. As was the case in the Jaipur district, I had no formal contacts in any of these villages before the research started.

For the second phase of my field research, I selected three villages of Bassi *tehsil* in the Jaipur district. I opted for this *tehsil* after a locally prominent politician who had occupied political positions at all three tiers of *panchayati raj* institutions proposed to help me gain access to the most important political actors of the *tehsil*. Given the difficulties I had encountered in accessing officials willing to discuss the finances of local institutions, this was not an offer I could refuse. The bet paid off, and that informant delivered on his promise. I was able to meet with all important actors at the block level, and therefore able to make important inferences about the connections between village-level and block-level authorities. As I already had access to these block-level authorities, it made sense at this point to pick *gram panchayats* in the same *tehsil* in order to confirm some of the intuitions developed in 2009 concerning the powers and functions of *sarpanches*. I thus picked three *gram panchayats* in Bassi *tehsil* – one of which was headed by an SC *sarpanch* – in order to confirm some of the theories gained through my first round of field research and make inferences on outstanding questions.

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[1] On the Chakwara incident, see, for instance, www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1921/stories/20021025005811500.htm

[2] Due to the size of the Bikaner district, one of the largest in India, some villages that are formally part of the Bikaner *tehsil* can be several hours away from the city.

Why Focus on Male *Sarpanches*?

An important limitation of the research presented in this book is that it focuses solely on male *sarpanches*. Why is this the case?

Given the limited resources available to me to run a relatively costly quantitative survey (which was the initial objective of this research program), it was clear to me from the beginning of this research that I would have to make some difficult choices if I were to identify the effect of caste-based descriptive representation on any type of outcome, let alone potentially elusive and noisy psychological outcomes. A third of all *gram panchayats* in India are reserved for women; accordingly, many *sarpanches* (in fact, about 35 percent of all *sarpanches*) in rural India are women. Because the politics of *gram panchayats* headed by women somewhat differ from the politics of other *gram panchayats* (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004), excluding *gram panchayats* headed by women (or rather, focusing on those headed by men) in my quantitative study made sense for a purely methodological reason: because they would have made my sample more heterogenous, they would have likely limited my ability to detect any effect at all, given the limited resources available.

Given this unfortunate methodology-driven focus on men in the quantitative study, I resigned myself to a similar focus for my field research. Since this preliminary research was in part thought of as a way to work inductively on the psychological consequences of reservations, this made sense. In order to make the best possible inferences about the specific mechanisms that may lead to psychological changes, it makes sense to focus on *gram panchayats* that are as closely comparable as possible. While I would likely have come up with different or more complex hypotheses about the effect of female *sarpanches*, I would not have been able to properly test these hypotheses.

While this is a clear limitation of this research project, hopefully further works on this question will remedy it.

When Did We Visit?

The first stage of my field research took place through the first nine months of 2009, during which I spent an average of nine days a month in the area. While I usually spent the day in a single village, the proximity of the different villages on occasion allowed me to visit several over the course of a single day.

The second round of fieldwork was then carried out from December 2011 to March 2012 in three villages of the Bassi *tehsil* in the Jaipur district. I visited these three villages three times, each time for one week.

What Did We Do During Those Visits?

This field research was equally composed of observations and unstructured discussions. Not being a native Hindi (let alone Rajasthani) speaker, I required the assistance of an Indian research assistant[3] during these visits.

In order to make inferences on the role played by *sarpanches* in village life and on the changes that may derive from the accession of a member of the Scheduled Castes to that office, we first followed the *sarpanches*. This led me to attend a number of official and informal meetings, transactions, and interactions between the *sarpanch* and various local officials and citizens. This allowed me to understand the way in which *sarpanches* concretely spend their time, their relations with villagers of different caste groups, the administrative and political actors with whom they interact in accordance with their function, and the benefits they derive from being in that position. This in turn led us to follow a number of officials with whom *sarpanches* interact on an almost daily basis: *gram panchayat* secretaries (known as *gram sevaks* in Rajasthan), village council members, as well as various officials and institutions located outside their village, at the block or *panchayat samiti* level, and in one case at the district level. We tried to speak with these officials (including *sarpanches*), both one on one and along with other officials.

Finally, in order to make inferences about the social perception of these officials among their constituents, we also conducted more structured focus group interviews in each village with a handful of villagers from each of the four biggest caste groups. These interviews allowed me to make inferences on the specific reasons that led villagers to approach their GP, and to learn about the different ways in which *sarpanches* and GPs can concretely impact the living conditions of their constituents. In those villages that had an SC *sarpanch*, those interviews often took a chronological shape, with the emphasis being placed on the changes that had taken place in the functioning of the GP and beyond, in caste relations, since the SC *sarpanch* had arrived in office.

In order to make inferences on caste relations in these villages, on the practice of untouchability in the region, and on the evolution of untouchability in each village, we primarily relied on interviews with members of the Scheduled Castes.[4] In order to facilitate the discussion, and to spur

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[3] Shankare Gowda or Gopal Singh Rathore. Shivam Vij also briefly contributed in 2009.

[4] We also carried out interviews with members of the upper castes on this question (we used many of the declarations made during these interviews later on, when building the audio instrument); we placed the emphasis on members of the Scheduled Castes during these collective interviews due the frequent lack of cooperation of upper-caste villagers on these questions.

a debate on this potentially sensitive question, these interviews often – though not always – took the form of focus groups in which we encouraged participants to respond to one another and to react to one another's statements. Due to the topic of these discussions, we went to great length to ensure that only members of the Scheduled Castes were attending these discussions.

While these discussions did not always leave us with clear ideas as to the impact of reservation on untouchability-related practices, they provided me with a number of hypotheses, which the quantitative survey presents and then tests in Chapters 5–8. More importantly, they gave me a sense of the current state of untouchability in rural Rajasthan – information that was also used in order to design context-relevant questions in the quantitative survey.

Appendix B   The Pair-Matches

District	Pair number	Treatment	Distance city	Population	SC percent GP	caste makeup	Non-SC caste	main SC caste
Jhunjhunu	1	1	14	3,092	11.58	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	1	0	8	2,671	11.54	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	2	1	13	3,972	13.72	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	2	0	12	3,226	13.37	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	3	1	12	1,057	15.25	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	3	0	10	1,198	16.36	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	4	1	10	2,998	18.21	0	Jat	meghwal
Jhunjhunu	4	0	18	2,592	17.03	0	Jat	meghwal
Jhunjhunu	5	1	15	1,621	18.27	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	5	0	18	3,535	15.50	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	6	1	35	2,855	16.21	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	6	0	15	3,958	13.99	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	7	1	22	1,989	22.39	0	Rajput	meghwal
Jhunjhunu	7	0	10	1,347	17.86	0	Rajput	meghwal
Jhunjhunu	8	1	17	1,663	22.08	1		meghwal
Jhunjhunu	8	0	10	1,095	19.83	1		meghwal
Bikaner	9	1	100	1,297	21.09	1		meghwal
Bikaner	9	0	45	1,203	19.16	1		meghwal
Bikaner	10	1	104	2,533	20.07	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	10	0	109	2,820	20.03	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	11	1	35	4,023	19.44	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	11	0	90	2,586	18.71	0	Jat	meghwal

(continued)

District	Pair number	Treatment	Distance city	Population	SC percent GP	caste makeup	Non-SC caste	main SC caste
Bikaner	12	1	40	3,044	19.4	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	12	0	30	4,947	15.56	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	13	1	45	4,014	19.99	1		meghwal
Bikaner	13	0	30	3,640	16.32	1		meghwal
Bikaner	14	1	14	2,655	23.53	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	14	0	24	2,033	20.26	0	Jat	meghwal
Bikaner	15	1	36	4,039	18.67	1		meghwal
Bikaner	15	0	30	4,131	16.45	1		meghwal
Bikaner	16	1	30	2,368	21.68	1		nayak
Bikaner	16	0	95	3,022	19.46	1		nayak
Tonk	17	1	22	913	15.13	1		bairwa
Tonk	17	0	24	853	14.27	1		bairwa
Tonk	18	1	12	1,146	15.47	0	jhakad	bairwa
Tonk	18	0	21	1,092	14.08	0	jhakad	bairwa
Tonk	19	1	48	1,801	16.58	1		regar
Tonk	19	0	35	3,068	15.24	1		regar
Tonk	20	1	30	2,192	20.04	1		bairwa
Tonk	20	0	19	3,570	18.21	1		bairwa
Tonk	21	1	9	1,196	19.28	1		bairwa
Tonk	21	0	28	1,095	18.70	1		bairwa
Tonk	22	1	25	1,145	21.59	1		bairwa
Tonk	22	0	30	3,911	17.08	1		bairwa
Tonk	23	1	22	1,113	20.20	0	gujjar	bairwa
Tonk	23	0	17	1,936	19.77	0	gujjar	bairwa
Tonk	24	1	13	1,790	24.17	1		bairwa
Tonk	24	0	10	1,032	22.83	1		bairwa
Jalore	25	1	17	1,364	22.31	1		meghwal
Jalore	25	0	29	1,188	20.23	1		meghwal

Jalore	26	1	14	3,720	22.55	1	meghwal
Jalore	26	0	15	3,249	16.11	1	meghwal
Jalore	27	1	29	2,415	23.43	1	meghwal
Jalore	27	0	40	2,520	21.65	1	meghwal
Jalore	28	1	25	3,417	20.15	1	meghwal
Jalore	28	0	25	2,681	19.64	1	meghwal
Jalore	29	1	45	2,734	21.70	1	meghwal
Jalore	29	0	50	4,499	18.77	1	meghwal
Jalore	30	1	14	1,666	17.35	1	meghwal
Jalore	30	0	13	2,966	17.26	1	meghwal
Jalore	31	1	15	3,476	21.59	1	meghwal
Jalore	31	0	17	1,671	18.38	1	meghwal
Jalore	32	1	36	1,597	19.74	1	meghwal
Jalore	32	0	38	2,583	17.30	1	meghwal

Appendix C Additional Balance Tests

This appendix contains two tables. In Table C.1, I provide additional tests showing that Reserved and Unreserved GPs targeted are statistically indistinguishable on an additional set of covariates drawn from the 2001 Census of India. In Table C.2, I show that respondents living in Reserved and Unreserved GPs are comparable on all key demographic characteristics measured by the survey.

Table C.1. *Additional Balance Tests on Pre-Treatment Covariates*

	Reserved GPs (group 1)	Unreserved GPs (group 2)	Difference of Means (Group 1–2)	P-value (two-sided)
Mean Male Nonworkers	1,261.71	1,265.87	4.15	.97
(st. error)	(80.68)	(126.20)	(149.79)	
Mean Female Cultivators	403	405.40	2.40	.97
(st. error)	(52.80)	(49.73)	(72.54)	
Mean Household Industry Workers	34.62	44.37	9.75	.34
(st. error)	(5.24)	(8.63)	(10.09)	
Mean Male Marg. Agricultural Workers	36.40	36.53	.125	.99
(st. error)	(6.38)	(6.38)	(8.81)	
Mean Population	4,837.21	4,782.25	−54.96	.91
(st. error)	(318.02)	(437.35)	(540.75)	
Mean Population aged 0–6	985.28	951.00	−34.28	.75
(st. error)	(69.90)	(83.73)	(109.07)	
Mean Female Literates	666.68	695.37	28.68	.81
(st. error)	(75.77)	(93.94)	(120.69)	
N	32	32	64	

Note: The unit of analysis is the GP. All data are from the 2001 census of India. Standard errors are in parentheses. The **p**-values in the final column give the probability of observing a **t**-statistic as large in absolute value as the observed value, if Group (A) and Group (B) have equal means.

Table C.2. *Characteristics of Villagers Sampled in Reserved and Unreserved GPs.*

	Reserved GPs (group 1)	Unreserved GPs (group 2)	Difference of Means (Group 1–2)	P-value (two-sided)
Mean Age (*in years*)	36.23	36.45	.213	.82
(st. error)	(.671)	(.661)	(.942)	
Mean Education (*in years of schooling*)	9.44	9.36	–.07	.81
(st. error)	(.246)	(.216)	(.327)	
Mean Education of Father (*in years of schooling*)	3.51	3.47	–.04	.90
(st. error)	(.221)	(.215)	(.309)	
Proportion of Respondents that lived in a caste-homogenous neighborhood	.71	.73	–.02	.42
(st. error)	(.023)	(.023)	(.033)	
Proportion of Respondents Belonging to the Other Backward Castes	.64	.63	.01	.65
(st. error)	(.02)	(.02)	(.03)	
Mean Number of Persons Living at Respondent's Residence	7.70	7.53	.172	.59
(st. error)	(.217)	(.233)	(.319)	
Mean Number of Rooms in Residence	3.88	3.69	–.190	.28
(st. error)	(.137)	(.109)	(.175)	
Proportion of Respondents Living in a *Paka* House	.58	.60	.02	.55
(st. error)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	
Proportion of Respondent Whose Household Owns a Two-wheeler or a Four-Wheeler Vehicle	.42	.43	.01	.81
(st. error)	(.03)	(.04)	(.05)	
N	384	384	768	

Note: The unit of analysis is the individual. Standard errors are in parentheses. The **p**-values in the final column give the probability of observing a **t**-statistic as large in absolute value as the observed value, if Group (A) and Group (B) have equal means.

Appendix D   Did Members of the Scheduled
               Castes Self-Select into Reserved
               Villages?

The objective of this appendix is to provide evidence showing that my results do not stem from selection due to the mobility of members of the SCs, and hence to disprove an important alternative explanation. If SC villagers commonly moved to GPs in which non-SC villagers are more tolerant, then they could increase the proportion of SCs in those GPs, which in turn implies that these GPs could have been more likely to be reserved in 2005. In this case, the results presented in the book may simply stem from the fact that reserved GPs have experienced inward migrations from members of the SCs – because they were "more tolerant" – rather than from the fact that they were reserved.

   This appendix provides various elements that jointly allow me to show that this alternative explanation is implausible. In points 1–3, I show that this scenario is generally unlikely, given migration patterns to rural areas (as described by the NSSO[1]). In points 4–6, I specifically show that this scenario is unlikely to cause the variation in untouchability-related attitudes detected in my sample.

1. **Discounting marriage-related female migrations and short-term, partial, or seasonal migrations (neither of which would presumably increase the recorded population of GPs[2]), migrations *to* rural areas are extremely rare in India, especially so in the state of Rajasthan. This is especially true among members of the SCs.**

   The National Sample Survey, which collects data on the proportion of migrants at the village/town level, provides evidence about the

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[1] National Sample Survey Office (2010). *NSS report No. 533: Migration in India*. Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, New Delhi.

[2] In rural India, women traditionally move into the household of their husband. One may, however, reasonably expect "marriage-related female migrations" to even out at the village level, and hence not to increase the population. One may also expect short-term, partial, or seasonal migrants not to increase a given village's population given census rules.

frequency of migrations *to* rural areas in India. According to the latest NSS report on migrations in India[3] (NSSO 2010[4]), "the proportion of migrant households in rural areas is very low, nearly 1 per cent." In other words, given the definition of a "migrant household" in the NSS survey, an average of less than 1% of all rural households have moved to their current place of residence during the year preceding the survey. In the rural areas of Rajasthan, the number is however smaller than at the national level, at 0.7%. A separate indicator (at the individual rather than at the household level) shows that SCs as a caste group count the smallest proportion of migrants of all caste groups (SC, ST, OBC, general), both in rural and urban areas. In other words, it can be inferred that *less* than 0.7% of members of the SCs living in the rural areas of Rajasthan have moved to their current place of residence during the year preceding the NSS survey. NSSO (2010) in addition presents estimates from previous rounds of the NSS that suggest that these estimates have been extremely stable over time.

Given the average number of households in the GPs of my sample, the Rajasthan migration rate of 0.7 percent – once again, an overestimation among SCs – suggests that an average of less than one SC household per GP would have been defined as a migrant household by the NSS in 2007. Given much higher migration rates to urban areas (NSS0 2010), this suggests that the average net annual growth in the number of SC households at the GP level would be close to zero, if not negative (there are, generally speaking, about twice more out-migrants than in-migrants in the rural areas of Rajasthan, as shown in NSSO 2010).

Since this is an average across all GPs, this does not necessarily dispel the possibility that these results could be due to migrations of SCs, since a few GPs could receive many SC migrants while most do not. But it probably makes this scenario less plausible. Migrations to rural areas are on average very uncommon among SCs in Rajasthan, and large migration fluxes between GPs are thus generally quite unlikely. Rosenzweig and Munshi (2009)[5] provide one possible explanation for this low spatial mobility by arguing that extremely low

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[3] The sixty-fourth-round NSS survey on Employment & Unemployment and Migration Particulars was conducted between July 2007 and June 2008. The survey covered a sample of 125,578 households (79,091 in rural areas and 46,487 in urban areas) and a sample of 572,254 persons (374,294 in rural areas and 197,960 in urban areas).

[4] National Sample Survey Office (2010). *NSS report No. 533: Migration in India*. Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, New Delhi.

[5] Rosenzweig, M., & Munshi, K. (2009). Why Is Mobility in India So Low? Social Insurance, Inequality and Growth. NBER Working Paper 14850. www.nber.org/papers/w14850

spatial mobility in rural India is due to the existence of sub-caste networks that provide mutual insurance to their members. Since migrating implies reduced access to the local caste networks that provide households with a mean to smooth consumption over several years, spatial mobility remains very limited.

2. **It can be assumed that only a small share of this 0.7 percent of migrants to rural areas is driven by differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs.**

   To the best of my knowledge, no systematic analysis of the motivations of migrations to rural areas exists in the literature on migrations in rural India, let alone among SCs or among SCs in Rajasthan. Figuring out the extent to which the quality of inter-caste relations is a factor of migrations is thus difficult. The reason for this lack of research likely lies in the fact that the main source of data available on the issue (the NSS data) is not suited to answering this question. While NSSO (2010) presents data on the self-reported motivations of migrant households, the categories are too large and imprecise to allow researchers to make inferences on the question of the relationship between discriminations/untouchability and migrations.[6]

      This being said, I see several theoretical reasons to assume that only a very small share of the 0.7 percent of SC migrant households in the rural areas of Rajasthan owes to differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs.

   a. If differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs played a major role in shaping the migratory patterns of SC villagers, one may expect to observe more migrations among SCs than among members of all those groups that are *not* the victims of untouchability-related practices. Yet, members of the SCs are *less* likely to be migrants than members of the ST, OBC, and General categories. This holds when income or education are taken into account: SC households are less likely to be migrants to rural areas at all levels of income or education (NSS 2010), which shows that it is not simply that SCs lack the *ability* to move.

   b. Even if differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs cause *some* migrations among SCs, one may assume that many other reasons cause migrations, and hence that only a very small share of

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[6] Suppose that a respondent declares having migrated for "employment-related reasons," "to open a business," "to study," or because he or she "bought a house" (all of which are categories of the NSS); it remains difficult to ascertain whether caste discrimination played a role in each of these actions. Note, however, that one of the answer categories of the motivation question of the NSS is "social or political problems," which is the reason provided by 0.7 percent of the migrant households at the national level.

those 0.7 percent of migrants move for reasons that pertain to caste relations. While untouchability can play a role in the unemployment of SCs (Shah et al. 2006), it is, for instance, difficult to argue that the 5 percent of migrant households in rural areas that the NSS records as having moved because they were transferred by their employer, or the 27 percent that moved in order to attend a school, or to study, have anything to do with caste relations.

Moreover, it can be assumed that an important share of SCs that move to rural areas "in search of employment," "in search of better employment," or "to take up better employment" do so for reasons that have nothing to do with caste relations and derive purely from differences in employment opportunities across GPs. The development of a mine or a quarry – as is frequently the case in rural Rajasthan – may, for instance, attract laborers who are unemployed in their village. This may certainly be because they are discriminated against in their village, but also simply may be because there is much more unemployment (across castes) for daily laborers in their village. The point here is that in the total absence of variation in caste relations across GPs, one would still expect to obverse some work-related migrations among SCs, at a rate that could not be much smaller than the negligible rate suggested by the NSS (once more, less than 0.7 percent of households, according to NSSO 2010).

As a result, it can be argued that a small share of the small number of migrations to rural areas among SCs is prompted by differences in the quality of caste relations across GPs, and hence that a scenario that would involve major migrations toward GPs in which the quality of caste relations is superior would be rather implausible.

c. More than 70 percent of migrations to rural areas originate in the rural areas of the very same district, including among SCs (NSSO 2010). Given that migrations to cities – in which SCs can hope to be treated marginally better – are commonplace and twice as frequent as migrations to rural areas, it is difficult to understand why caste relations would prompt these migrations to rural areas. It is theoretically puzzling that SC villagers seeking to leave a place in which the upper castes are hostile would move to another village of the same district, in which caste relations are unlikely to be significantly different, when moving to cities is such a commonplace possibility. More generally speaking, it can be assumed that the bigger share of villagers that try to escape untouchability in their village would move to a city – and not to a village – if they could.

3. **Even if some villages attracted SC migrants because their upper castes are less hostile to SCs, this would only affect their reservation status under certain conditions.**
   To put it simply, in order for the proportion of SCs in villages receiving SC migrants to increase, SCs would need to move to those villages at a higher rate than non-SCs.

   Given that many of the employment opportunities that potentially attract SC villagers would presumably attract comparable workers from other groups (most of whom are *not* classified as SC), the arrival of SC migrants may only have a minor effect on the proportion of SCs in the village. The proportion of SCs should only increase when a village receives proportionally more SCs than non-SCs, which would presumably not be the case in all villages that attract SC migrants. This implies that discrimination-related migrations of SCs – when they occur – may not have a major effect on the proportion of SCs across GPs.

4. **Points 1–3 provided empirical and theoretical arguments that suggest that migrations of SCs villagers toward less discriminatory villages, and hence self-selection into less hostile villages, are generally unlikely to be common.**

   Assuming, for the sake of the argument, that discrimination-based migrations were frequent, and that the proportion of SC villagers was, as a result, correlated to levels of discriminations, these migrations may not, however, impact my sample. Villages in my sample (both reserved and unreserved villages, given that the difference in the proportion of SCs between the two groups is overall not statistically significant) have a proportion of SCs that is very close to the median proportion of SCs in their respective districts. This implies two things:

   1. If the proportion of SCs at the village level was correlated to the number of SC villagers having migrated to those villages, we should expect reserved villages in my sample to have received only a few more migrants than unreserved villages in my sample (although this difference should be expected not to be statistically significant!).

   2. More importantly, even if migrations played an important role in the proportion of SCs at the village level, we should expect inward migrations to have been much more frequent in those villages that count for a much higher proportion of SCs (and were reserved at previous rounds in 1995 and 2000), and outward migrations to have been much more likely in those villages that count for a much smaller proportion of SCs (and will be reserved in two or three

Table D.1. *Proportion of SC Villagers in Surveyed Villages in My Sample*

	Reserved Villages in my sample N = 32	Unreserved Villages in my sample N = 32
Proportion of SC villagers in 1961 (based on 1961 census of India)	**18.00** **(1.16)**	**16.32** **(1.05)**
Proportion of SC villagers as of 2001 (based on 2001 census of India)	19.34 (1.06)	**18.69** **(.92)**

Source: Village-level statistics from the Censuses of India 1961 and 2001.

electoral rounds). In other words, the fact that the villages in my sample have a proportion of SCs that is very close to the median proportion of SCs in their respective districts may suggest that the net balance of inward and outward migrations in those villages would be smaller than in villages with larger or smaller proportions of SCs.

5. **Using village-level data from the 1961 census of India (the oldest disaggregated data I could find), I can show that the proportion of members of the SCs in reserved villages was already higher than in the proportion of members of the SCs in unreserved villages in 1961. This is what Table D.1 shows.**

   This implies that the relative share of SCs in reserved vs. unreserved villages only changed marginally since 1961 (it increased in both cases, as it did in the rural areas of Rajasthan overall during this period). This pattern also clearly undermines the hypothesis according to which members of the SCs were drawn to villages reserved in 2005.

   If anything, the fact that the proportion of SC population of unreserved villages grew slightly faster since 1961 suggests that unreserved villages may have been more "attractive" in this period.

6. **Generally speaking, the correlation implied by this alternative explanation – that the proportion of members of the SCs would be correlated with more positive attitudes – does not exist in my sample.**

   Given that the local threshold for reservation differs in each of the sixteen *Panchayat Samitis* from which my data is drawn, my sample actually contains a fair bit of variation in terms of the share of SC villagers at the GP level. In other words, when pulling data *across Panchayat Samitis*, reservation status is far from being perfectly correlated with

SC share at the GP level. This allows me to provide rough tests of the effect of SC share at the GP level.

Table D.2 reproduces the main results presented in Table 8.2 but compares responses in the thirty-two GPs counting the largest share of SC population (only eighteen of which are reserved) with responses in the thirty-two GPs with the smallest proportion of SCs (fourteen of which are reserved) instead of comparing GPs according to their reservation status.

This analysis shows that the thirty-two GPs with the largest share of SCs (which, on average, count 20.88 percent of SCs) are *not* significantly more tolerant than the thirty-two GPs with the smallest proportion of SCs (which, on average, only count 15.73 percent of SCs). While respondents living in reserved villages are significantly more tolerant on a number of items (Table 8.2), respondents living in the subsample of GPs with the highest proportion of members of the SCs do *not* display more tolerance toward members of the Scheduled Castes. The only significant difference in mean in Table D.2 (on item 5) actually implies that respondents living in villages with a higher proportion of members of the SCs are *less* tolerant toward members of the SCs.

Because these two sets of GPs do not contain the same number of GPs from each of Panchayat Samitis from which the study sampled, Table D.2 admittedly constitutes an imperfect test. Similar results emerge, however, when running specific tests within each of the four districts sampled.[7] In other words, the eight GPs that count the largest share of SCs in each district are not associated with more positive attitudes when compared to the eight GPs with the smallest share of SCs. While the N is likely too small to allow me to detect any significance difference in these analyses (once my sample is divided in four, the N in each group is 96; the village N is 8), the average responses themselves do not suggest that a bigger sample would have led me to detect any significant difference in the direction suggested.

Take the example of the Jhunjhunu district (Table D.3). Because the threshold for reservation in Jhunjhunu was wildly different across each of the four *Panchayat Samitis* selected, my sample for that state contains large variations in terms of SC share of the population. As a result, Jhunjhunu is particularly interesting, since only four of the eight GPs with the largest share of SCs selected in this district were reserved in

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[7] Three-quarters of migrations to rural areas originate from a place in the same district (NSS 2010), so running these comparisons within each district makes sense.

Table D.2. *Untouchability-Related "Behavioral Intentions" by Proportion of SCs at the GP Level (1 = Yes, 0 = No)*

	Average Response in GPs with a Low Proportion of SCs (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Average Response in GPs with a High Proportion Of SCs (N = 384; Village N = 32)	Difference in Means across the Two Groups
1. "I saw [SC] villagers seating in the middle of other villagers on plastic chairs at village meetings. It made me really angry and I told them they should leave the chairs for others to sit".	.22 (.02)	.24 (.02)	.02 (.03)
2. "Some [SCs] were protesting that they weren't allowed to enter the temple; I threatened them that if they continued to protest villagers would organize and give them a lesson".	.45 (.03)	.43 (.03)	.02 (.05)
3. "One day I was at the police station, and I saw that officers were refusing to file an FIR [a complaint] for a village SC that I knew for a fact had been badly cheated by some merchant from the city; I came forward to plead the man's case and help him get his FIR recorded"	.83 (.02)	.84 (.02)	.01 (.03)
4. "Some village SC needed to borrow money in order to buy new machines for his farm; I happened to have some savings at that time so I lent him what I could"	.90 (.01)	.87 (.02)	−.03 (.03)
5. "A SC villager invited me in his house to thank me for my help. I went there and drank tea with him"	.60 (.03)	.53 (.03)	.07* (.04)
6. "Children from my family were playing in the street with SC children; when they came back home I told them that they should rather play with children from their own caste"	.25 (.02)	.28 (.02)	.03 (.03)

Significant at the .1 level in a two-sample t-test of cluster means.

Table D.3. *Untouchability-Related "Behavioral Intentions" by Proportion of SCs at the GP Level in the Jhunjhunu District (1 = Yes, 0 = No)*

	Average Response in GPs With a Low Proportion of SCs (N = 96; Village N = 8)	Average Response in GPs With a High Proportion Of SCs (N = 96; Village N = 8)	Difference in Means across the two groups
1. "I saw [SC] villagers seating in the middle of other villagers on plastic chairs at village meetings. It made me really angry and I told them they should leave the chairs for others to sit on".	.17 (.02)	.20 (.04)	.03 (.05)
2. "Some [SCs] were protesting that they weren't allowed to enter the temple; I threatened them that if they continued to protest, villagers would organize and give them a lesson".	.51 (.04)	.50 (.06)	.01 (.07)
3. "One day I was at the police station, and I saw that officers were refusing to file an FIR [a complaint] for a village SC that I knew for a fact had been badly cheated by some merchant from the city; I came forward to plead the man's case and help him get his FIR recorded"	.87 (.03)	.91 (.03)	.04 (.04)
4. "Some village SC needed to borrow money in order to buy new machines for his farm; I happened to have some savings at that time so I lent him what I could"	.93 (.03)	.90 (.02)	.03 (.04)
5. "A SC villager invited me into his house to thank me for my help. I went there and drank tea with him"	.75 (.07)	.59 (.04)	.15* (.08)
6. "Children from my family were playing in the street with SC children; when they came back home I told them that they should rather play with children from their own caste"	.18 (.05)	.20 (.04)	.02 (.06)

2005 (the correlation between reservation status and SC share of the population is, in other words, almost null when pulling across *Panchayat Samitis* within this district). Comparing, in Table D.3, responses in the eight GPs counting the largest share of SC population (on average, 18.74 percent of SCs) with responses in the eight GPs with the smallest proportion of SCs (on average, 13.62 percent of SCs), I similarly do not find that GPs counting the largest share of SC population are "friendlier" or more tolerant. Although most difference-in-means remain insignificant, the average response on the first, seventh, and eighth items actually suggest that GPs with large SC population may be less rather than more tolerant (in the case of item 7, the difference in mean is even large and significant). This, once again, suggests that respondents living in GPs with a higher proportion of SCs are not friendlier or more tolerant.

While these analyses cannot dissipate the possibility that respondents living in GPs with a much larger share of SCs (that is, those GPs that were reserved in 1995 and 2000) might be more tolerant, they at the very least allow me to reject the hypothesis that the GPs of my sample that count a larger share of SCs are more tolerant, and hence the possibility that my results may be attributed to the proportion of SCs rather than to reservation.

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