

LWE Research Abstracts

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[[Bardhan et al., 2010](#)] Political reservation for disadvantaged groups is believed to be a way of improving targeting of publicly provided goods to those groups. This paper examines the impact of political reservations for women and scheduled castes and tribe (SC/ST) candidates in local governments in West Bengal, India between 1998-2004 on targeting to landless, low caste and female-headed households. It differs from existing literature by differences in geographic coverage, time span, and use of self-reported household benefits across a broad range of programs. Reservation of chief executive (pradhan) positions in local government for women was associated with a significant worsening of within-village targeting to SC/ST households, and no improvement on any other dimension of targeting. Reservation of pradhan posts for SC/ST members was associated with a significant increase in benefits received by the village as a whole, improvement in intra-village targeting to female-headed households, and to the group (SC or ST) of the pradhan. The effects of women's reservations are not consistent with simple citizen-candidate or elite capture models of electoral politics. They are consistent with a more complex hypothesis of capture-cum-clientelism which is weakened by election of politically inexperienced women to reserved pradhan posts.

[[Beath et al., 2011](#)] Development programs have been increasingly used not only as an instrument for economic and political development, but also as a tool for counterinsurgency. Using a large-scale randomized field experiment we test this approach by examining the effect of the largest development program in Afghanistan. We find that the introduction of this program leads to significant improvement in villagers' economic wellbeing as well as in their attitudes towards government. The program also leads to an improved security situation in the long run. These positive effects on attitudes and security, however, are not observed in districts with high levels of initial violence.

[[Berman et al., 2011a](#)] Most aid spending by governments seeking to rebuild social and political order is based on an opportunity-cost theory of distracting potential recruits. The logic is that gainfully employed young men are less likely to participate in political violence, implying a positive correlation between unemployment and violence in locations with active insurgencies. The authors test that prediction in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines, using survey data on unemployment and two newly available measures of insurgency: (1) attacks against government and allied forces and (2) violence that kill civilians. Contrary to the opportunity-cost theory, the data emphatically reject a positive correlation between unemployment and attacks against government and allied forces ($p < .05$ percent). There is no significant relationship between unemployment and the rate of insurgent attacks that kill civilians. The authors identify several potential explanations, introducing the notion of insurgent precision to adjudicate between the possibilities that predation on one hand, and

security measures and information costs on the other, account for the negative correlation between unemployment and violence in these three conflicts.

[Berman et al., 2011b] We develop and test an economic theory of insurgency motivated by the informal literature and by recent military doctrine. We model a three-way contest between violent rebels, a government seeking to minimize violence by mixing service provision and coercion, and civilians deciding whether to share information about insurgents. We test the model using panel data from Iraq on violence against Coalition and Iraqi forces, reconstruction spending, and community characteristics (sectarian status, socio-economic grievances, and natural resource endowments). Our results support the theory’s predictions: improved service provision reduces insurgent violence, particularly for smaller projects and since the “surge” began in 2007.

[Blattman and Annan, 2016] States and aid agencies use employment programs to rehabilitate high-risk men in the belief that peaceful work opportunities will deter them from crime and violence. Rigorous evidence is rare. We experimentally evaluate a program of agricultural training, capital inputs, and counseling for Liberian ex-fighters who were illegally mining or occupying rubber plantations. 14 months after the program ended, men who accepted the program offer increased their farm employment and profits, and shifted work hours away from illicit activities. Men also reduced interest in mercenary work in a nearby war. Finally, some men did not receive their capital inputs but expected a future cash transfer instead, and they reduced illicit and mercenary activities most of all. The evidence suggests that illicit and mercenary labor supply responds to small changes in returns to peaceful work, especially future and ongoing incentives. But the impacts of training alone, without capital, appear to be low.

[Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004] This paper uses political reservations for women in India to study the impact of women’s leadership on policy decisions. Since the mid-1990’s, one third of Village Council head positions in India have been randomly reserved for a woman: In these councils only women could be elected to the position of head. Village Councils are responsible for the provision of many local public goods in rural areas. Using a dataset we collected on 265 Village Councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan, we compare the type of public goods provided in reserved and unreserved Village Councils. We show that the reservation of a council seat affects the types of public goods provided. Specifically, leaders invest more in infrastructure that is directly relevant to the needs of their own genders.

[Chauchard, 2017] 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 multimethod 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.

[Dasgupta et al., 2017] Theory and extensive evidence connect poverty and underdevelopment to civil conflict, yet evidence on the impact of development programs on violence is surprisingly mixed. To break this impasse, we exploit a within-country policy experiment to examine the conditions under which anti-poverty programs reduce violence. The roll-out of India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme caused a large long-run reduction in Maoist conflict violence, as measured with an original data set based on local language press sources. These pacifying effects were not uniform, however, but overwhelmingly concentrated in districts with sufficient pre-existing local state capacity to implement the program effectively. The results demonstrate the potential for anti-poverty programs to mitigate violent civil conflict by improving livelihoods, but also highlight the crucial role of state capacity in shaping these effects.

[Dunning, 2011] Two recent research programs—one on the sources of democratic consolidation another on the causes and consequences of violent conflict—have tended to evolve in relative isolation. The contributions to this special issue of *Journal of Conflict Resolution* help to bridge this gap, through explicit theoretical and empirical analysis of the relationship between fighting and voting. Armed conflict and electoral politics may be strategic substitutes, in that political actors may optimally choose to submit to the ballot box or instead attempt to impose their will by force; or they may be strategic complements, in that actors use violence to bolster their electoral appeal or use electoral returns as sources of information on underlying preferences they exploit in armed campaigns. In either case, the distribution of popular support for contending parties can shape not only the incidence but also the type of armed conflict, and it can also influence the incentives of parties to invest in institutional mechanisms that mitigate commitment problems and help to bring violent conflicts to an end. The contributions to this issue illuminate these themes and demonstrate the value of bringing these separate research programs into closer dialogue.

[Dunning and Nilekani, 2013] Ethnic quotas are often expected to induce distribution of material benefits to members of disadvantaged groups. Yet, the presence of an ethnic quota does not imply that political mobilization takes place along ethnic lines: Cross-cutting affiliations within multi-ethnic party organizations may lessen the tendency of politicians to target benefits to particular ethnic groups. In this article, we evaluate the impact of quotas for the presidencies of village councils in India, a subject of considerable recent research. Drawing on fine-grained information from surveys of voters, council members, presidents, and bureaucrats and using a natural experiment to isolate the effects of quotas in the states of Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Bihar, we find weak distributive effects of quotas for marginalized castes and tribes, but suggestive evidence of the importance of partisanship. We then use survey experiments to compare the influence of party and caste on voting preferences and expectations of benefit receipt. Our results suggest that especially when politicians have dynamic political incentives to allocate benefits along party lines, cross-cutting partisan ties can blunt the distributive impact of ethnic quotas.

[Keele and Titiunik, 2015] Political scientists often turn to natural experiments to draw causal inferences with observational data. Recently, the regression discontinuity design (RD) has become a popular type of natural experiment due to its relatively weak assumptions. We study a special type of regression discontinuity design where the discontinuity in treatment assignment is geographic. In this design, which we call the Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design, a geographic or administrative boundary splits units into treated and control areas, and analysts make the case that the division into treated and control areas occurs in an as-if random fashion. We show how this design is equivalent to a standard RD with two running variables, but we also clarify several methodological differences that arise in geographical contexts. We also offer a method for estimation of geographically located treatment effects that can also be used to validate the identification assumptions using observable pretreatment characteristics. We illustrate our methodological framework with a re-examination of the effects of political advertisements on voter turnout during a presidential campaign, exploiting the exogenous variation in the volume of presidential ads that is created by media market boundaries.

[Pande, 2003] A basic premise of representative democracy is that all those subject to policy should have a voice in its making. However, policies enacted by electorally accountable governments often fail to reflect the interests of disadvantaged minorities. This paper exploits the institutional features of political reservation, as practiced in Indian states, to examine the role of mandated political representation in providing disadvantaged groups influence over policy-making. I find that political reservation has increased transfers to groups which benefit from the mandate. This finding also suggests that complete policy commitment may be absent in democracies, as is found in this case.

[Calonico et al., 2019] We study regression discontinuity designs when covariates are included in the estimation. We examine local polynomial estimators that include discrete or continuous covariates in an additive separable way, but without imposing any parametric restrictions on the underlying population regression functions. We recommend a covariate-adjustment approach that retains consistency under intuitive conditions and characterize the potential for estimation and inference improvements. We also present new covariate-adjusted mean-squared error expansions and robust bias-corrected inference procedures, with heteroskedasticity-consistent and cluster-robust standard errors. We provide an empirical illustration and an extensive simulation study. All methods are implemented in R and Stata software packages.

[Calonico et al., 2014a] In this article, we introduce three commands to conduct robust data-driven statistical inference in regression-discontinuity (RD) designs. First, we present `rdrobust`, a command that implements the robust bias-corrected confidence intervals proposed in Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014d, *Econometrica* 82: 2295–2326) for average treatment effects at the cutoff in sharp RD, sharp kink RD, fuzzy RD, and fuzzy kink RD designs. This command also implements other conventional nonparametric RD treatment-effect point estimators and confidence intervals. Second, we describe the companion command `rdbwselect`, which implements several bandwidth selectors proposed in the RD literature. Following the results in Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014a, Working paper, University of Michigan), we also introduce `rdplot`, a command that implements several data-driven choices of the number of bins in evenly spaced and quantile-spaced partitions that are used to construct the RD plots usually encountered in empirical applications. A companion R package is described in Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014b, Working

paper, University of Michigan).

[Calonico et al., 2014b] In the regression-discontinuity (RD) design, units are assigned to treatment based on whether their value of an observed covariate exceeds a known cut-off. In this design, local polynomial estimators are now routinely employed to construct confidence intervals for treatment effects. The performance of these confidence intervals in applications, however, may be seriously hampered by their sensitivity to the specific bandwidth employed. Available bandwidth selectors typically yield a “large” bandwidth, leading to data-driven confidence intervals that may be biased, with empirical coverage well below their nominal target. We propose new theory-based, more robust confidence interval estimators for average treatment effects at the cutoff in sharp RD, sharp kink RD, fuzzy RD, and fuzzy kink RD designs. Our proposed confidence intervals are constructed using a bias-corrected RD estimator together with a novel standard error estimator. For practical implementation, we discuss mean squared error optimal bandwidths, which are by construction not valid for conventional confidence intervals but are valid with our robust approach, and consistent standard error estimators based on our new variance formulas. In a special case of practical interest, our procedure amounts to running a quadratic instead of a linear local regression. More generally, our results give a formal justification to simple inference procedures based on increasing the order of the local polynomial estimator employed. We find in a simulation study that our confidence intervals exhibit close-to-correct empirical coverage and good empirical interval length on average, remarkably improving upon the alternatives available in the literature. All results are readily available in R and STATA using our companion software packages described in Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014d, 2014b)

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