

# Winning Support by Distributing Houses? Evidence from India

Shikhar Singh

20 July 2021



8.8 million houses in 4 years. 62% beneficiaries are [outside](#) the BJP's ethnic core.

Census-based targeting, use of technology to minimize discretion and leakages.

## Did programmatic distribution achieve its immediate and long term *political* objectives?

- ▶ Yes, the housing program did win subaltern support for the BJP in an upcoming election. BUT for different reasons:
  - ▶ **Gratitude** Beneficiaries more likely to think BJP has done something for them, and some people voted for the BJP because they got a house.
  - ▶ **Sociotropic Considerations** Non-beneficiaries support BJP at similarly high levels, potentially because “many people like [them] got a house”. I rule out a range of alternative explanations.
- ▶ No, the housing program was not as successful in shaping perceptions of distributive intent.
  - ▶ **Reversion to Ethnic Considerations** More than half the study participants pick a co-ethnic politician over a BJP-cueing politician in the Choose Your Dictator Game.

# Agenda

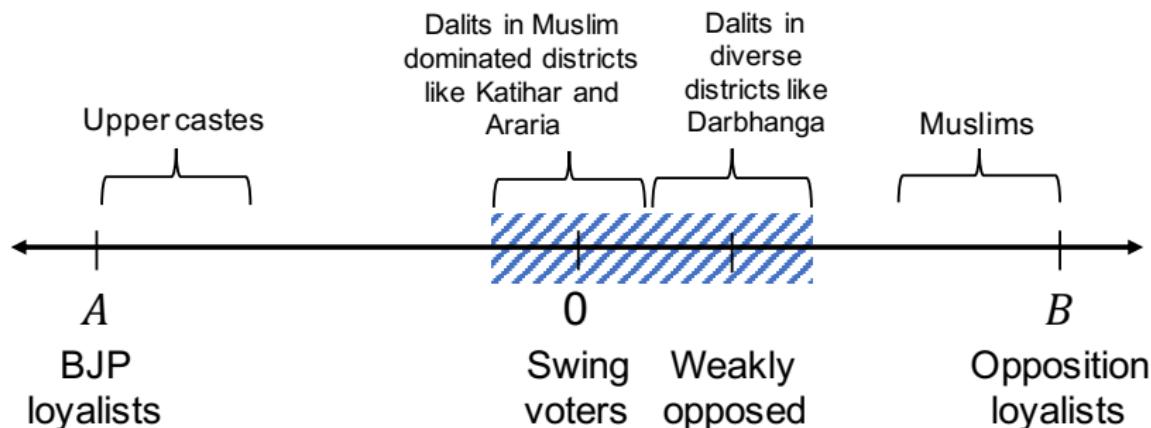
- ▶ Case Selection
  - ▶ Why study Dalits in Bihar's Araria, Darbhanga and Katihar districts?
- ▶ Research Design (Identification and Estimation)
  - ▶ Novel and principled research design that leverages a naturally occurring regression discontinuity.
- ▶ Results
  - ▶ Wins support through two mechanisms: gratitude and sociotropic considerations
  - ▶ Ethnic considerations still salient while Dalits form expectations about distributive intent in the local political context.

## Literature

- ▶ Optimal for parties to target benefits at swing voters ([Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987](#); [Dixit and Londregan, 1996](#)) and weakly opposed voters ([Stokes, 2005](#)), or network-proximate/core voters. ([Cox and McCubbins, 1986](#))
- ▶ Mixed empirical evidence on the impact of material benefits on political preferences (For example, [Nazareno, Stokes, and Brusco, 2006](#); [Manacorda et al., 2011](#); [De La O, 2013](#); [Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches, 2009](#) BUT [Wilkinson, 2007](#); [Goyal, 2019](#))
- ▶ Brokers are locally influential and pivotal in the distributive process ([Krishna, 2007](#); [Auerbach, 2016](#); [Kruks-Wisner, 2018](#)). Programs that by-pass brokers may reduce leakages and favoritism but also have weaker credit claiming and voter monitoring.

## Case Selection

- ▶ Ethnicity moderates the relationship between material benefits and vote choice.
- ▶ Focus on Dalits who are ethnically cross-pressured and electorally pivotal.



# Research Design

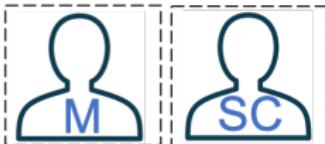


## Census, 2011

Identify the universe of eligible beneficiaries, assign each household a "deprivation score"



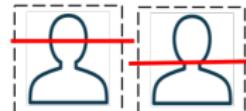
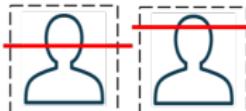
## Village Assemblies, 2015-16



Assign each beneficiary to a category (SC, ST, Minority, Other), and rank order ("prioritize") beneficiaries within each category. **Every household must be assigned a distinct rank, and the ranking must be complete.** The village assembly can never prioritize a less-deprived household over a more-deprived household. It can only break ties in deprivation scores, relying on a set of centrally set guidelines.

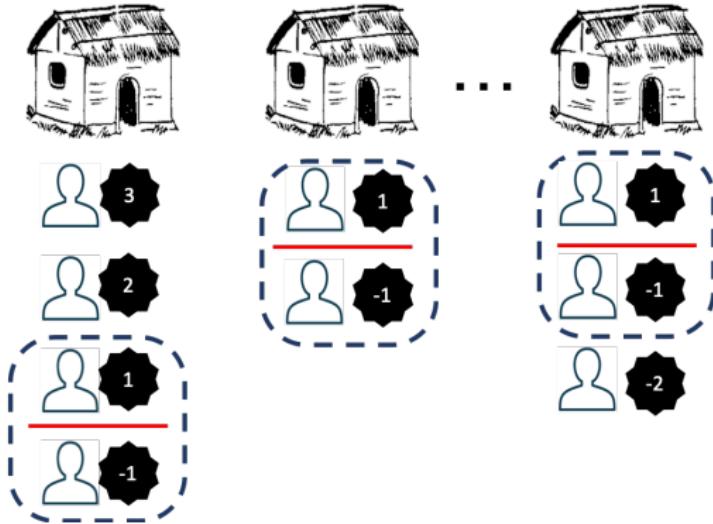


## Implementation, 2016-19



The central government fixes an "**annual construction target**" and **releases money** to the state government. These governments then **set district-level targets** and allocate money. A non-political district-level bureaucrat then **allocates money to each village-category**.

## Research Design



- ▶ Estimand:  $E[Y_i(1) - Y_i(0)|\text{Distance}_i = 0]$
- ▶ Visit 60 villages, interview everyone within the pre-registered bandwidth ( $\pm 3\%$ ), and 10% of people randomly selected from outside the bandwidth ( $n = 832$ ). Identified a replacement sample *before* collecting data.
- ▶ We interview 530 households in 53 villages. Contact rate of 63.7%.

# Gratitude

Table 1: Primary Outcomes Analysis

Outcome	Hyp.	RD (MSE optimal BW)					RD (BW = 3%)					$\bar{Y}_{Z=0}$
		$\hat{\tau}$	SE	p	n	$\hat{\tau}$	SE	p	n			
BJP has done something for me (0-4)	Pos	0.615	0.295	0.037	348	1.015	0.578	0.079	180			2.255
Some people voted for the BJP because they got a house (0/1)	Pos	0.189	0.089	0.035	299	0.216	0.162	0.184	152			0.199
Programmatic Awareness Index (0-4)	Pos	0.42	0.18	0.02	295	0.87	0.35	0.01	152			2.55

These are results from a survey conducted on Dalits in Darbhanga, Araria, and Katihar between January and March, 2020. The estimation strategy was pre-registered. Columns 3-6 report the bias-corrected robust estimates and standard errors using an MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular weights, and linear specification ( $p = 1$ ). Columns 7-10 report conventional estimates and standard errors using the pre-registered bandwidth ( $h = 0.03$ ), triangular weights, and  $p = 1$ . Responses are clustered at the household level. There are 530 households (clusters), spread across 53 villages. Column 11 reports the mean value of the outcome to the left of the cut-point (i.e. among those who have not been offered a house, hence  $\bar{Y}_{Z=0}$ ).

## Sociotropic Considerations

- ▶ Dalits who have not been offered a house *also* think BJP has done something for people like them. On average they put 3 out of 4 coins in support of this statement.
- ▶ They also think the condition of Dalits has improved in the last five years. On a +1 to -1 scale, the average response is 0.8
- ▶ Their social networks are saturated with the benefit:
  - ▶ 70% ( $se = 4$ ) know at least one other beneficiary
  - ▶ On average, they *personally* know 9 other beneficiaries ( $se = 1.58$ )
- ▶ Can rule out a range of alternative explanations like the role of material and ethnic factors, clientelistic capture or inertia, misattribution, low satisfaction, and anticipation effects at the cut-point.

# Choose Your Dictator Game



In this example match-up respondents are shown two (hypothetical) local politicians. Politician 1 is Kishori Lal Paswan (Age 35), Politician 2 is Giriraj Jha (Age 29). Politician 1's last name (Paswan) cues their ethnicity, or Dalit identity in this case. Politician 2's last name (Jha) cues an upper caste identity, while a saffron gamcha (scarf) and tilak cues partisan affiliation to the BJP. Respondents have to pick one of the two politicians.

## CYD: Party label v. Co-ethnicity

Choose your Dictator Game: Percentage picking BJP politician

Z	Anonymous Round		Profiled Round		
	Percent	se	Percent	se	n
0	47.9	4.2	48.6	4.2	140
1	49.7	2.6	43.2	2.5	382

- ▶ Dalits who are offered a house ( $Z_i = 1$ ) are 6.5 percentage points less likely to pick the BJP politician in the profiled round ( $t = 1.82$ ,  $p = 0.069$ ).
- ▶ Dalits next-in-line pick the BJP politician at comparable rates to beneficiaries.

Thank you for tuning in!

