

The Discerning Voter:

Party-Voter Linkages and Local Distribution Under Multi-Level Governance

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What shapes voters' expectations of receiving private benefits and local public goods in developing world democracies? Models of instrumental voting suggest that voters' expectations are shaped by co-partisanship; however, this work does not consider the calculations that voters make in multi-level systems where different types of goods are allocated by different tiers of government. In this article, I argue that voters condition their expectations of private benefits on co-partisan ties with the local leader, but only do so with respect to local public goods when the local leader is aligned with the state government that controls the allocation of pork barrel spending. I test my argument with a vignette experiment conducted in rural India that randomly assigns the partisan affiliation of *real* village politicians and find empirical support for the argument. I also find suggestive evidence of strategic voting in local elections toward leaders aligned with the ruling party.

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What shapes voters' expectations of receiving private state benefits and local public goods? Existing research on distributive politics in developing countries suggests that politicians often favor their co-partisan supporters in the allocation of private state benefits and services and local public goods (Stokes et al. 2013; Dunning and Nilekani 2013; Min 2016; Bohlken 2017). Models of instrumental voting, thus, focus on the cues that voters use to determine which party will favor people like them, which shapes their vote preferences (Chandra 2004; Conroy-Krutz et al. 2016; Chauchard 2016; See Snyder and Ting 2002; Schafner and Streb 2002). Following from the view that voters make blunt judgments under limited information, this work broadly expects voters to form consistent distributive expectations vis-à-vis their preferred party across a wide range of state benefits. This work, however, does not consider partisan alignment in multi-level systems where different tiers of government (e.g., local, state, federal), which may be controlled by different political parties, hold discretion over private goods (e.g., welfare benefits) and local public goods (e.g., infrastructure). Are voters sufficiently sophisticated to take partisan alignment between local and higher levels of government into account in their *distributive expectations* and vote preferences in local elections?ⁱ

In this article, I present a theory that explains the calculations that voters make in multi-level settings where elected local leaders have substantial discretion over the allocation of private benefits (e.g., welfare benefits), but rely on higher levels of government for discretionary funds for pork barrel projects that are often non-excludable within a village. I argue that voters expect favoritism in the allocation of private benefits and services from co-partisan local leaders, who are likely to share socio-political ties in the context of personalized village politics, but also understand that state leaders are likely to exclude localities represented by leaders from opposition parties. An important implication of this logic is that voters who are likely to fall

outside core partisan networks and those who value non-excludable local public goods are likely to vote for local leaders aligned with the ruling party at the state level.

To test my argument, I develop a *real candidate* vignette survey experiment that tests for the extent to which voters in the rural state of Rajasthan, India perceive the partisan affiliation of elected local leaders to shape the targeting of private goods (e.g., anti-poverty benefits) and local public goods (state development funds). Consistent with my argument, I find that voters were more likely to expect co-partisan sarpanch to provide private benefits over which they have significant discretion. Co-partisanship (relative to its absence), however, only impacts expectations of access to state funds when the local leader is affiliated with the governing party at the state level. I also find suggestive evidence of strategic voting toward the BJP, the party broadly believed to win the state elections, which is an implication of the argument.

Partisan Alignment and Distributive Expectations in Multi-Level Systems

While voters base their expectations of receiving state benefits, or *distributive expectations*, on a range of types of information from stereotypes of group-party linkages to beliefs about the credibility of parties to deliver on their promises, models of instrumental voting broadly view the vote decision as an instrumental act where voters strategically vote for the party they believe will be most likely to deliver state resources and services to people like them (Chandra 2004; Posner 2005; Calvo and Murillo 2013). My argument takes core propositions of instrumental voting models set in developing countries as a point of departure. First, politicians at various levels of government often target their co-partisan supporters (Calvo and Murillo 2004, 2013; Cox and McCubbins 1986; Stokes et al. 2013; Bohlken 2017; Dasgupta 2017; Nunes 2013).ⁱⁱ Second, voters demand private goods targeted at the individual level and local public

goods that all members of a village can often access.ⁱⁱⁱ Third, whether based on stereotypes of group-party linkages (Green et al. 2002; Chandra 2004), past distribution (Magaloni and Diaz-Cayeros 2007), or proximity to patronage networks (Calvo and Murillo 2013; Dunning and Nilekani 2013), voters know their partisan types (including non-partisans) and expect co-partisan representatives to be more likely to deliver resources to people like them than representatives from other parties.

Multi-level systems have important implications particularly for the third proposition above. First, local governments in multi-level systems such as India have substantial discretion over the selection of beneficiaries to central and state government programs (Bohlken 2016; Besley et al. 2004), but local leaders must lobby the ruling party at higher tiers of government (e.g., state and federal levels) for local public goods, which are widely understood to favor localities represented by co-partisan leaders (Armesto 2009; Dasgupta 2017; Bohlken 2017).^{iv} Second, recent work makes an important distinction between the allocation of private benefits that can be conditioned on individual characteristics, such as proximity to partisan networks (Calvo and Murillo 2013; Dunning and Nilekani 2013), and local public goods, which can be targeted to constituencies represented by co-partisan politicians, but are accessible to all residents of the locality (Ichino and Nathan 2013). Since leaders from different political parties may hold power at the local and state levels in this setting, which has implications for the allocation of different types of goods, voters in multi-level systems are faced with a complex task in forming their distributive expectations across candidates for local office. Thus, rather than basing one's distributive expectations on co-partisan bias broadly, a voter in a multi-level systems should also consider which party holds power at the state level; which types of benefits (public or private goods) she prioritizes most, and the impact of partisan alignment between local

and higher-level leaders on her chances of receiving different types of benefits. An important implication of this calculation is that voters who value local public goods over private goods should strategically vote for a local candidate affiliated with the ruling party at the state level.

At the same time, following from co-partisan biases at the local level, voters who strategically support a non-co-partisan leader face a risk of exclusion from private benefits if their choice wins the election. Evidence from rural India, for example, shows that local leaders favor voters whom they perceive are their co-partisan supporters with private welfare benefits (Dunning and Nilekani 2013; Markussen 2011; Schneider and Sircar 2017). Thus, voters who prioritize private goods over local public goods should vote for a co-partisan local leader irrespective of the ruling party at higher levels. Finally, I expect non-partisans to vote for the local politician affiliated with the ruling party at the state level given that they are unlikely to benefit from co-partisan favoritism in the targeting of private goods and will benefit from the provision of non-excludable local public goods.^v This yields the following hypotheses:

H1: Voters, irrespective of party, will expect to receive greater access to private goods when they are co-partisans of the local representative.

H2: Voters will condition their distributive expectations on access to local public goods on co-partisanship when local representatives and the ruling party in state government belong to the same party.

H3: Instrumental non-partisan voters should support local leaders aligned with the party in power at the state level.

Distributive Politics in Rajasthan

I test the argument with data from a 2013 survey of rural voters in Rajasthan, a poor, rural state in north India. Rajasthan was selected for this study because it meets the scope conditions of my argument. First, following the passage of the 73rd amendment, substantial authority over the implementation of federal and state programs was devolved to elected village

councils (gram panchayats, GPs). This gave GP presidents (sarpanch) discretion over the selection of beneficiaries to state and federal welfare schemes and authority over the implementation of a large right to work program, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which guarantees 100 days of paid manual labor to all citizens (Dasgupta 2017). In addition, sarpanch selectively grant favors to villagers and facilitate access to higher level bureaucrats and politicians, which is often necessary for citizens to obtain benefits and routine services from an unresponsive state (Krishna 2011; Bohlken 2016). At the same time, state and federal governments have authority over policy-making and GPs rely on state funds for a wide range of public goods (e.g., roads, schools) and discretionary pork barrel projects (Devraj et al. 2008). This demonstrates that GPs in Rajasthan, and across India, fit my characterization of a multi-level system where discretion over targeting varies across types of goods.

Second, voters in Rajasthan value the goods examined in this paper: private anti-poverty benefits and state funds for local public goods. According to estimates based on consumption data from the 2004-5 National Social Survey, Rajasthan has a rural poverty rate of 19 percent, which is modestly below the 22.5 percent average for Indian states (Dev and Ravi 2007).^{vi} This suggests that voters in Rajasthan are likely to value private welfare benefits,^{vii} which are understood to be allocated with significant political biases (Dunning and Nilekani 2013). Research on the provision of schools, roads, and other pork barrel projects similarly establishes that political biases are widespread in the allocation of pork barrel project and other local public goods (Bohlken 2017; Min 2016).

Third, Rajasthan has an institutionalized, competitive two-party system where the Congress Party and BJP have alternated in power at the state level each term since 1993.^{viii} This was similarly the case at the time of my survey in January 2013. Interviews at that time

suggested a widely held expectation among voters that the BJP would decisively defeat the incumbent Congress Party in the upcoming state elections in late 2013, which was the case.^{ix} Moreover, although the election commission formally bans party symbols from the ballot in GP elections, evidence of partisan salience at the local level is widespread. Dunning and Nilekani (2013), for example, find that voters in Rajasthan correctly identified the party of the sarpanch 96 percent of the time, and sarpanch in my sample overwhelmingly (95%) identified with one of the state's two major parties. Following from the pervasiveness of partisan ties at the local and state levels, and the staggered timing of state and local elections,^x multi-level governance is often characterized by heterogeneity in partisan alignment across local and state governments.

Finally, GP elections in Rajasthan are contexts of high-information and dense social ties. GPs in Rajasthan comprise 1,100 households on average and have stable populations, which means that voters and local leaders are likely to know each other personally. In my data, for example, sampled sarpanch reported to know 95 percent of voters sampled from their GP personally.^{xi} The high-information context of GP politics, thus, warrants the research design described below as an alternative to fictional candidate experiments designed for low-information environments.

The Challenge of Identifying the Effects of Candidate Traits on Distribution

Due to the endogeneity of a leader's partisan affiliation, fictional candidate vignette experiments have become the method most commonly employed to identify the *causal* effect of politician characteristics on voters' assessments of candidates and votes. In this design, respondents are exposed to hypothetical politicians, which gives researchers the ability to randomly assign candidate traits in the context of a survey experiment (See Carlson 2015; Conroy-Krutz 2013; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013). There are several reasons that I consider

this approach problematic for studying the effects of party-voter linkages on distributive expectations at the local level. First, since politician-voter linkages in local elections are rooted in personal ties characterized by fine-grained information on numerous candidate traits accumulated over a long period of time, voters' distributive expectations are unlikely to rely on the information shortcuts that fictional candidate experiments capture. Second, fictional candidate experiments are often characterized by high cognitive demands and low motivation on part of the respondent because they require respondents to process complex, unfamiliar information in a short period. Research on the psychology of survey response suggests that when cognitive burdens are high and motivation is low, respondents are likely to engage in passive non-compliance or a strategic attempt to fool the researcher (McDermott 2011; Krosnick 1991; Stolte 1994). Third, fictional candidate vignette survey experiments make the strong assumption that respondents' responses are a result of the profile of fictional candidate characteristics alone. Recent work, however, suggests that experimental cues prime respondents to consider other unobserved traits that are perceived as correlated with the treatment (Dafoe et al. 2016; See Gaines et al. 2007). The experimental design introduced in this article addresses these concerns by minimizing cognitive burdens, increasing realism, and capturing the informational and social context of village elections.

Research Design

To test my argument, I developed a *real candidate* vignette experiment that randomly assigns respondent-provided local partisan politician cues across the two major parties in Rajasthan, and asked respondents for their vote preferences and distributive expectations across private and public goods after exposure to the treatment. Specifically, earlier in the survey, I

asked respondents to identify the *most popular politicians from Congress and BJP in their gram panchayat*. Subsequently, I randomized whether respondents were exposed to the Congress or BJP politician they named earlier in the survey.^{xii} Since local politicians and voters in this context overwhelmingly know each other, voters are understood to have accumulated fine-grained information on the local leaders they identified prior to the implementation of the survey experiment. While this design is likely to produce heterogeneity on the specific leaders respondents identify, I interpret cued leaders on average to represent partisan leaders that respondents consider to be plausible candidates for sarpanch in the 2015 local elections.^{xiii} The experimental design, thus, captures voters' (across partisan types) distributive expectations under a plausible, known Congress and BJP sarpanch. This crucially differs from other work that seeks to capture the effect of partisan information shortcuts (Conroy-Krutz et al. 2016).

In the vignette, I developed a scenario that would be simple and familiar to respondents. Sarpanch have discretion over the proposal of local public works projects in the gram panchayat and significant discretion over the selection of laborers for these projects, which often are funded through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act right to work program. Qualitative interviews with sarpanch suggest that the selection of local infrastructure projects such as the building of community centers or local roads are an important and visible aspect of the sarpanch position. The experimental vignette, thus, exposes respondents to partisan leader cues in the context of a local infrastructure project. After reading the vignette to the respondent, voters were asked to report their distributive expectations over salient private benefits and state funds for local public goods *if the cued (Congress/BJP) local politician were to win the next election to sarpanch*, which were scheduled for 2015.

Distributive expectations (post-treatment) include two measures of private state (anti-poverty) benefits and one measure of local public goods provision. The main dependent variable concerns access to a job on the infrastructure project described in the vignette; which is an ordinal measure with a 4-point scale. Second, I include a dichotomous measure of expectations of obtaining a below poverty line (BPL) Card, which is required for eligibility to a wide range of benefits for the poor. Third, my measure on whether the cued leader would bring funds to the GP from the state government, which captures expectations of pork-barrel spending, is dichotomous. Finally, I include a dichotomous vote intention item that measures whether respondents would vote for the cued partisan leader.^{xiv} Since I am interested in the extent to which voters of different partisan types condition their distributive expectations on the partisan affiliation of the sarpanch, I focus on differences in means across the Congress and BJP leader cue treatment conditions.

Figure 1: Experimental Treatment (Vignette)

You must know that the sarpanch requests funds for public projects in the gram panchayat such as building a village road, school, or health center. For these projects, the sarpanch can tell the BDO [Block Development Officer] that he will choose workers for the project among people with a (MGNREGA) job card.

Let's say the **Congress/BJP** leader named _____ (*the strongest leader in the GP from Congress/BJP mentioned by the respondent in item B8/B9*) becomes sarpanch in the next GP elections two years from now.

The **Congress/BJP** leader named _____ will choose workers for a project to build a small community center in the village and a small number of people from the village will get jobs. Please think carefully about this situation and answer the questions about the project. Remember that Congress/BJP leader _____ is the sarpanch in this situation.

Outcome Measures

- 1) Would you or a member of your family get one of these jobs?
- 2) If this person were sarpanch next time, do you think he could help get you access to a below poverty line (BPL) card or Public Distribution System (PDS) benefits-- when new BPL cards become released?
- 3) If this person were sarpanch next time, would he be able to bring funds from the state government to the GP?
- 4) Would you give _____ **[Politician Name given]** your vote if he ran in the next GP elections?

Survey Sampling

The data for this article is based on a survey of 959 heads of household across 96 village councils (gram panchayats, GPs) in Rajasthan, which was administered nine months before the 2013 state assembly elections won decisively by the BJP.^{xv} Respondents were sampled from relatively poor and politically competitive sub-districts (blocks) across Rajasthan.^{xvi} These restrictions were applied to ensure that both Congress and BJP local candidate cues would be credible and that anti-poverty benefits would be salient in sampled GPs. Along with the vignette experiment, I collected data on demographics, political preferences, and access to government programs.^{xvii}

Testing the Argument

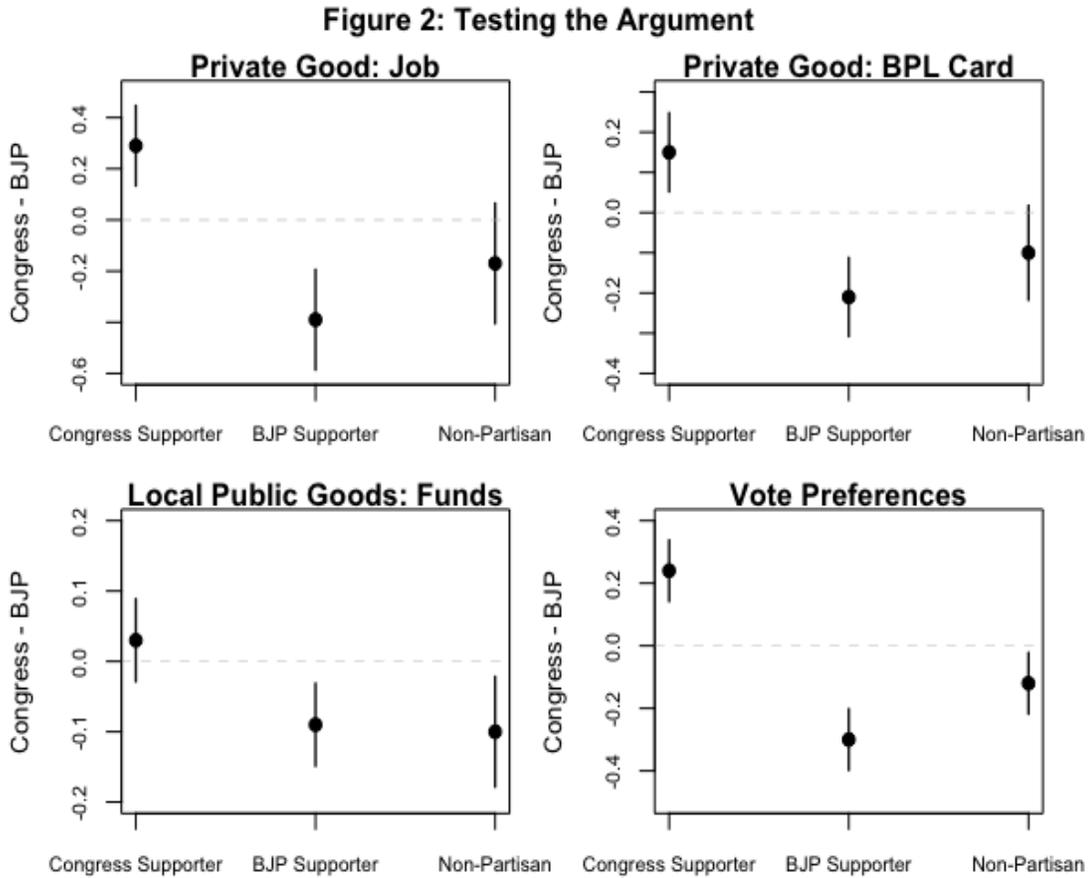
To test hypotheses 1 through 3, I take advantage of the randomization of Congress and BJP leader cues and compare distributive expectations and vote preferences across Congress and BJP leader treatments.^{xviii} Since the argument concerns the effect of co-partisan ties (or their absence) between voters and leaders, I condition my analysis of treatment effects on partisan sub-groups— BJP supporters, Congress supporters, and non-partisans— using a standard measure of psychological attachment.^{xix} The results that follow present tests of differences in means, subtracting average distributive expectations for respondents in the BJP treatment from those in the Congress treatment groups with Welch’s standard errors to take different sample sizes into account. When differences in means are below zero, respondents assigned to the BJP treatment group reported higher distributive expectations than those in the Congress treatment and vice versa.

Results

I present differences in means in confidence intervals in figure 2 to test hypotheses 1 and 2 on distributive expectations. Evidence presented in the first row of confidence interval plots supports the expectation of hypothesis 1 that voters' distributive expectations of private goods are conditioned on co-partisanship irrespective of party. Congress Party and BJP supporters exposed to a co-partisan politician reported job expectations that were respectively .29 and .39 points higher (on a 4-point scale) than was the case when Congress and BJP partisans were exposed to a non-co-partisan. Similarly, Congress and BJP partisans were 15 and 21 percentage points more likely to expect a Below Poverty Line (BPL) card when the cued leader was a co-partisan leader as compared to a non-co-partisan leader. Non-Partisans held higher expectations of receiving both private goods (i.e., jobs, BPL card) under a BJP sarpanch, although these results fall below conventional levels of statistical significance.

Difference-in-means tests in the lower-left plot of figure 2 confirm hypothesis 2 that voters condition their expectations of local public goods on partisan alignment between the local leader and state government. BJP supporters and non-partisans were 9 and 10 percentage points more likely to expect a BJP sarpanch to bring state funds to their GP as compared to a Congress politician. Congress supporters reported no significant differences across treatments on local public goods provision, contrary to their strong expectations for targeted goods from a co-partisan. This null result suggests that 9 months before an election in which Congress was expected to be displaced from power, even committed Congress supporters, held little expectation that their preferred co-partisan local leader could bring local public goods to their GP under a BJP state government. While Congress supporters were likely to face cognitive biases toward their preferred party, which plausibly explains why they did not report higher

expectations for the BJP leader, this demonstrates that voters consider partisan alignment and benefit characteristics before conditioning their distributive expectations on co-partisanship.



This figure provides 95% confidence intervals for differences in means on the four outcomes of the vignette experiment, conditioning on partisan sub-groups. Differences are calculated by subtracting mean BJP treatment outcomes from mean Congress outcomes (i.e., Congress–BJP Treatments). The job outcome has a scale of 1 to 4. The remaining three are dichotomous outcomes. See table A5 in the appendix for details.

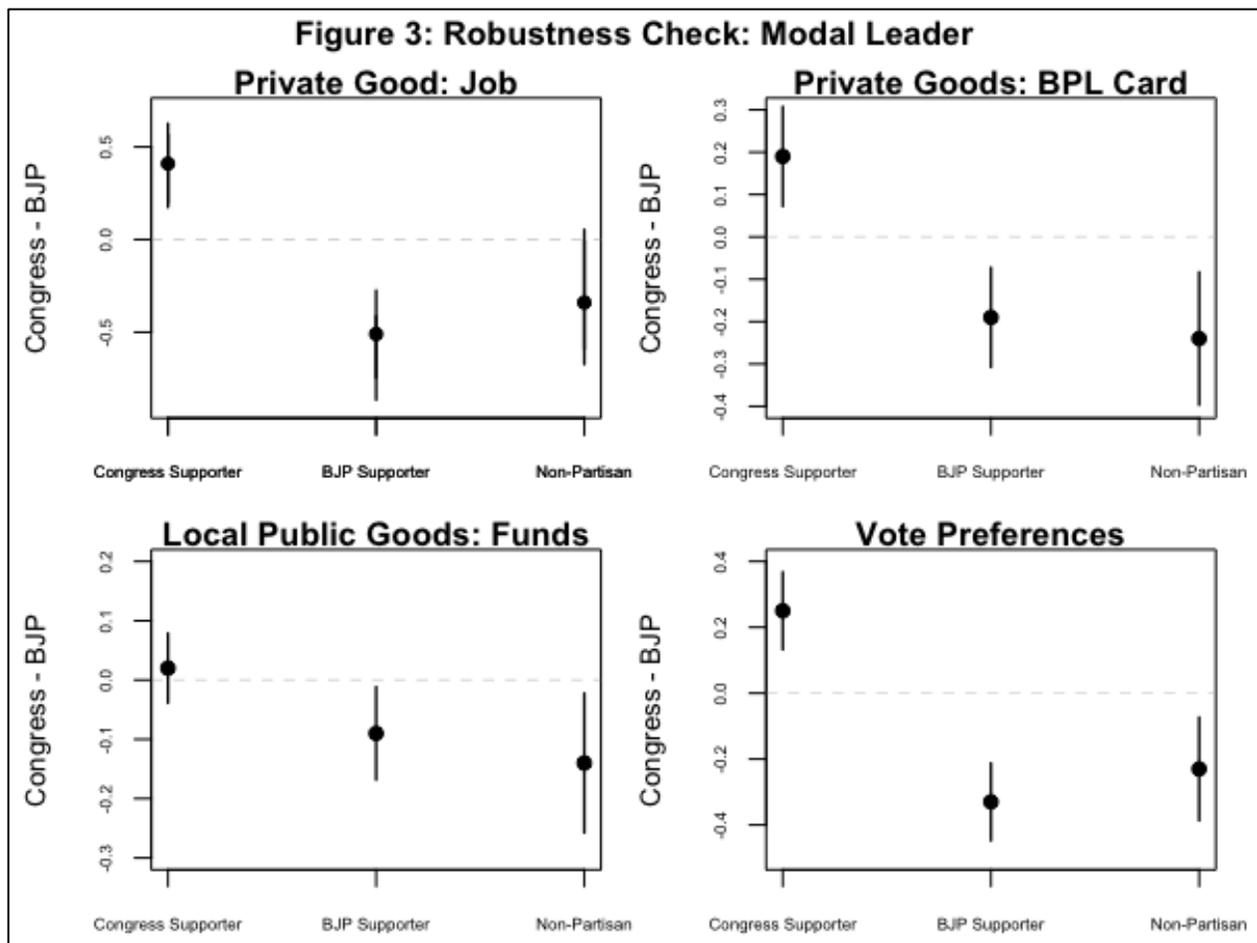
Robustness Tests

The evidence presented above supports hypotheses 1 and 2; however, due to the heterogeneity in partisan leader names provided by respondents in the same GP, it is plausible that these results are in-part a result of the unobserved characteristics of leaders identified by voters. To establish the robustness of

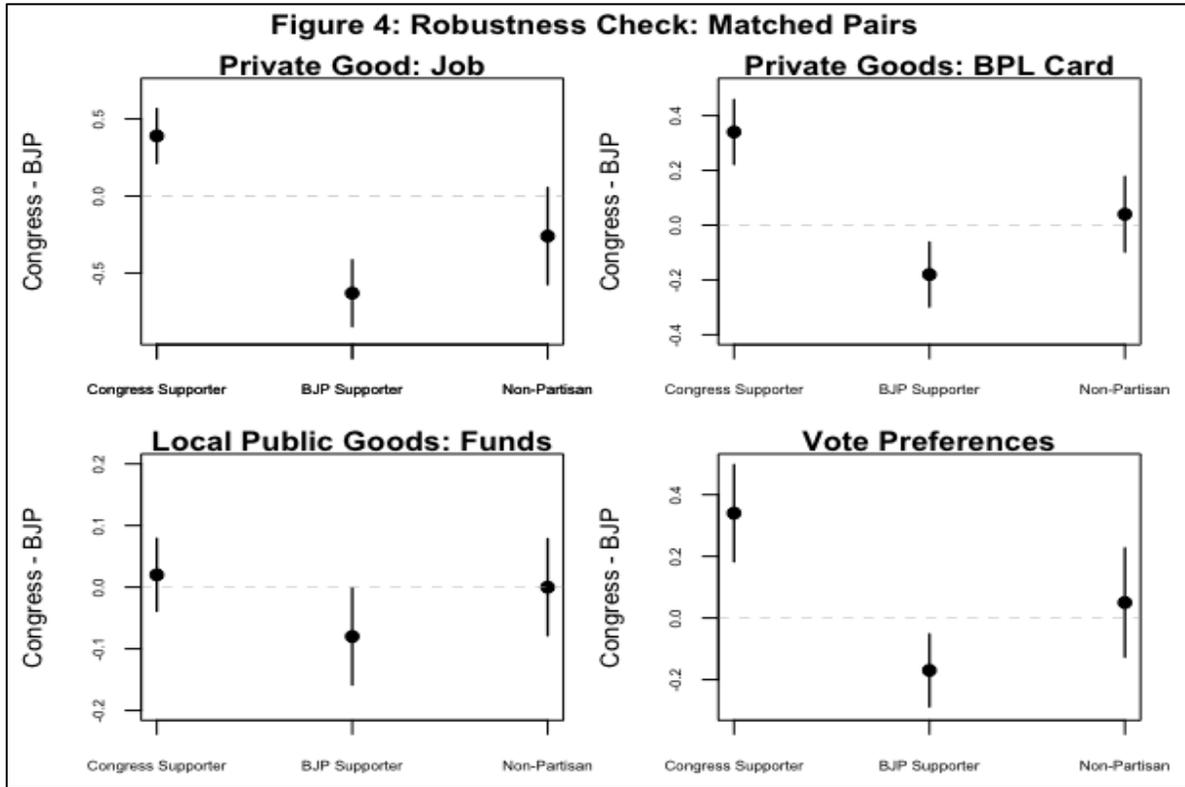
my findings, I conduct two robustness tests that hold leader names constant within GPs.^{xx} First, I restrict the analysis to 549 respondents (approximately 57% of the full sample) who identified the modal named Congress and BJP leader conditional on treatment assignment. For this test, I identified respondents who identified the most common Congress leader and BJP leader names in their GP and were assigned to treatment conditions that cued those leaders in the vignette.^{xxi} By holding constant leader characteristics (among the treated), this robustness check addresses the concern that the effect of partisan ties and partisan alignment is explained by responses to leaders' unobserved personal traits or idiosyncratic features of voters' leader selections. Second, I conduct a more restrictive test with matched pairs (with replacement), using the *matching* package in R. Here, I match pairs of respondents in the same GP who identified the same Congress and BJP leaders—thus holding constant leader characteristics that inform voters' comparative assessments across plausible Congress and BJP candidates. This includes approximately 340 observations (35% of the full sample) who identified the same BJP and Congress leaders in their GP.

Confidence intervals from robustness tests displayed in figures 3 and 4 support hypothesis 1. Congress supporters reported distributive expectations for jobs that were .41 and .39 points (of 4) higher when the cued leader was a co-partisan (as compared to a non-co-partisan) across the modal leader and matched pairs robustness checks respectively; BJP supporters reported expectations that were .51 and .63 points higher across modal leader and matched pairs robustness checks respectively. Congress and BJP supporters were both 19 percentage points more likely to expect a BPL card from a co-partisan leader (than a non-co-partisan) in the modal leader robustness check. On the more restrictive matched pairs test, Congress supporters were 34 percentage points more likely to expect a BPL card when the cued leader was a co-partisan as compared to BJP supporters who were 19 percentage points more likely to expect a BPL card from a co-partisan.

Results also confirm hypothesis 2. BJP supporters expected co-partisan leaders to be 9 and 8 percentage points more likely to bring state funds (i.e., pork) to their GP (as compared to a Congress leader) across the modal leader and matched pairs analyses respectively. The partisan affiliation of the sarpanch had no effect on expectations of state funds among Congress supporters. Finally, results from the modal leader test shows that non-partisans expected the ruling party to be more likely to attract funds from the state by 14 percentage points; the non-partisan sample size in the matched pairs test (approximately 50 respondents) is too small to detect effects for these voters.



This figure provides 95% confidence intervals based on differences in means from the modal leader robustness check across four outcomes of the experiment. Differences are calculated by subtracting mean BJP treatment outcomes from mean Congress outcomes (i.e., Congress–BJP Treatments). The Job outcome has a scale of 1 to 4. The remaining three are dichotomous outcomes. See appendix A for details.



This figure provides 95% confidence intervals based on differences in means from the matched pairs robustness check across four outcomes of the experiment. Differences are calculated by subtracting mean BJP treatment outcomes from mean Congress outcomes (i.e., Congress– BJP Treatments). The job outcome has a scale of 1 to 4. The remaining three are dichotomous outcomes. See appendix A for details. See TableA7 for details.

Ethnic Vs. Partisan Effects on Distributive Expectations

Although I do not have causal leverage on the ethnic identity of the cued leader, which varies according to voters’ perceptions of the most popular Congress and BJP leaders in their GP, I examine the extent to which the effects of partisan ties and partisan alignment on distributive expectations are robust to ethnic considerations in tables 1 and 2. To code the caste identities of voter survey respondents, I asked them to self-report their caste identities. I code the castes (and Muslim religion) of named leaders by asking survey respondents to provide the castes of the leaders they named earlier in

the survey.^{xxiii} At the outset, 35 percent of respondent-named partisan leaders (with respect to treatment) were co-ethnics according to politically relevant caste and Muslim religion. This suggests substantial ethnic heterogeneity across the two major parties in Rajasthan, and that respondents did not name only leaders from their own community who are likely to live in their rural neighborhoods (See also Dunning and Nilekani 2013).

Results broadly show that partisanship shapes voters' distributive expectations over private goods (e.g., jobs and BPL card) when a variety of caste characteristics of named leaders and voters are considered. First, I find the co-partisan effect on expectations of private goods to hold when respondents identified both BJP and Congress leaders from the same caste—thus holding caste constant in the partisan comparison. For this subset, Congress and BJP supporters' distributive expectations for jobs were .35 and .44 points (out of 4) higher when the cued leader was a co-partisan (as compared to a non-co-partisan), while Congress and BJP supporters expected a co-partisan sarpanch to be 25 and 22 percentage points more likely to provide them with a BPL card (than a non-co-partisan) when the castes of named leaders from both parties are held constant. Second, Congress and BJP supporters who identified leaders from different castes, who plausibly perceived caste to be salient to local partisan competition, reported distributive expectations for jobs that were .25 and .35 points (out of 4) higher when the cued leader was a co-partisan (as compared to a non-co-partisan) while expectations for a BPL card were 17 and 22 percentage points higher for Congress and BJP supporters in this subset when the cued leader was a co-partisan (as compared to a non-co-partisan). Third, co-partisanship shapes distributive expectations for both private goods (jobs and BPL cards) when the cued leader is a non-co-ethnic (irrespective of the caste of the untreated leader). Co-partisan effects broadly hold for expectations of a job benefit when respondents are exposed to a co-ethnic leader, although the result for

Congress supporters is statistically significant at the 90 percent level. Co-partisan effects on BPL cards have the correct sign but do not reach conventional levels of confidence.

Results on expectations of local public goods displayed in table 2 are generally weak when cued leaders' ethnic characteristics are taken into account due to low variation on this measure, however, the general pattern of results are consistent with hypothesis 2. While these effects often fall below conventional levels of statistical significance (95%) due to low variation on this measure, BJP partisans broadly are more likely to expect a BJP sarpanch to bring state funds to their GP. All differences in means among BJP supporters have the expected sign, however, the effect of co-partisanship reaches conventional levels of statistical significance only for the sub-group of BJP supporters who identified two leaders from the same caste. The effect of co-partisanship is statistically significant at the 90 percent level for of sub-groups of BJP supporters exposed to co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic leaders. Non-partisans also are more likely to expect the BJP leader to bring state funds to their GP as indicated by the negative sign, although the strength of these results is mixed when caste is not held constant. The partisan cue treatment has no effect on Congress partisans' expectations of local public goods across the full range of leaders' ethnic characteristics. In short, results that take the ethnicity of cued leaders into account tentatively support hypotheses 1 and 2, although ethnic considerations also play a role in shaping distributive expectations in some cases. Given that named leaders' ethnic characteristics are endogenous to voter and GP characteristics, and not directly addressed in the experimental design, future studies are required to evaluate the relative impact of co-ethnic and co-partisan ties.

Table 1: Partisan and Ethnic Effects on Expectations of Private Benefits (Caste)

	<u>Jobs</u>			<u>BPL Card/ Public Benefits</u>		
	Congress Partisans	BJP Partisans	Non-Partisans	Congress Partisans	BJP Partisans	Non-Partisans
Same Caste (For Both leaders)	.35** (.14) N=117	-.44** (.14) N=112	-.1 (.18) N=84	.22** (.08) N=115	-.15** (.07) N=167	.01 (.09) N=84
Different Castes	.25** (.1) N=212	-.35** (.15) N=196	-.16 (.16) N=152	.17*** (.07) N=163	-.22** (.07) N=159	-.14* (.08) N=146
Co-ethnic (W/ Cued Leader)	.32* (.18) N=97	-.45*** (.15) N=155	-.19 (.21) N=80	.17* (.09) N=96	-.08 (.07) N=153	0 (.09) N=78
Non-Co-Ethnic (W/Cued Leader)	.28*** (.1) N=237	-.35*** (.13) N=216	-.35*** (.15) N=161	.13** (.06) N=234	-.31*** (.06) N=209	.14* (.08) N=157

Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.001*** p<0.05 +p <0.1 ** p<0.01 + >.05* N indicates the number of respondents in both treatment conditions in a given cell. Differences in means are calculated by subtracting the average distributive expectations of respondents exposed to the BJP cue from the average distributive expectations of those exposed to the Congress cue (i.e.: Congress –BJP).

Table 2: Partisan and Ethnic Effects on Expectations of Local Public Goods (State Funds)

	Congress Partisans	BJP Partisans	Non-Partisans
Same Caste (For Both leaders)	0 (.05) N=115	-.12** (.05) N=170	-.08* (.05) N=83
Different Castes	.05 (.04) N=208	-.05 (.05) N=192	-.09 (.06) N=144
Co-ethnic (W/ Cued Leader)	.05 (.05) N=93	-.11* (.05) N=153	-.08 (.06) N=79
Non-Co-Ethnic (W/Cued Leader)	.02 (.03) N=234	-.07* (.04) N=211	-.11** (.05) N=153

Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.001*** p<0.05 +p <0.1 ** p<0.01 + >.05* N indicates the number of respondents in both treatment conditions in a given cell. Differences in means are calculated by subtracting the average distributive expectations of respondents exposed to the BJP cue from the average distributive expectations of those exposed to the Congress cue (i.e.: Congress –BJP).

Implications for Vote Choice

Finally, I consider the implications of the argument on distributive expectations for vote preferences in local elections. Returning to figure 2 above, I find that non-partisans were 12 percentage points more likely to report vote preferences for the BJP leader as compared to the Congress leader, while self-identified Congress and BJP supporters were 24 and 30 percentage points more likely to report vote intentions for a co-partisan leader than a leader from the other major party. As 94 percent of non-partisans expected the BJP leader to bring state funds to the GP, compared to 84 percent under the Congress leader treatment, this provides suggestive evidence of strategic voting. This is consistent with comparable evidence from a 2011 survey of voters in Rajasthan, which shows that 57 percent of voters who did not consider themselves party members reported to have voted for the incumbent Congress Party.^{xxiii} Moreover, the large share of non-partisans in my data (25%) and rather high level of BJP partisans in a poor rural area that elected sarpanch from the Congress Party more than 60 percent of the time in 2010 suggests that there was movement in party attachments and vote preferences away from Congress and toward the BJP in rural Rajasthan in 2013 when the BJP was ascendant. That said, the strong co-partisan pattern in vote preferences suggests that the discretion that sarpanch holds over private distribution is consequential. Consistent with my argument, it is plausible that Congress supporters in poor rural societies, given their low-income profile in Rajasthan,^{xxiv} particularly value private goods and personal responsiveness. It is also plausible that self-identified Congress Party supporters are particularly close to the Congress Party, given the level of attrition in 2013, and thus, consistent co-partisan voters. In short, while future research is required to more systematically test hypothesis 3, evidence from the vignette experiment is consistent with the strategic voting implication of the argument.

Discussion

This paper shows that voters condition their expectations of receiving private state benefits on the party affiliation of local representatives (e.g., the sarpanch). When it comes to private benefits over which the sarpanch has discretion, voters condition their expectations on co-partisan ties with the sarpanch; however, voters take partisan alignment with the ruling party at the state level into account when it comes to the provision of local public goods. These results are consistent with my argument that voters take variation in the level of government that holds discretion across different types of benefits and the impact of partisan alignment across levels of government into account in forming their distributive expectations. My results show that BJP supporters strongly condition expectations on local public goods provision on co-partisanship with a leader aligned with the ruling party in the state, while Congress supporters, whose party was expected to be displaced from power at the state level, are unresponsive to partisan cues for this outcome. On the other hand, both Congress and BJP supporters both strongly condition their distributive expectations on co-partisanship with respect to private goods. These results support the view that partisan discrimination is substantial at multiple levels of government and that voters understand and respond to this environment.

This article also takes a first step toward developing an experimental design that takes the informational context of local politics into account. I argue that fictional candidate experiments have weaknesses in identifying the causal effects of partisanship on distribution in this informational setting and that their degree of experimental control is likely to be exaggerated. At the same time, there are limitations to the experimental design presented here. First, perhaps due to the nature of leader-voter ties of named local leaders, I find substantial floor effects in distributive expectations measures, which limits the level of variation I observe on distributive

outcomes. For this reason, I emphasize the impact of partisan cues on partisan sub-groups rather than variation on distributive expectations in absolute terms. This captures the extent to which party-voter linkages shape local distribution. Second, although fictional candidate experiments have their own potential for confounder effects, real candidate experiments also introduce unobserved characteristics of leaders that may impact my results. I address this concern through robustness checks that demonstrate that my conclusions hold when leader characteristics are held constant. Moreover, in village elections, where party-voter linkages reflect a personal socio-political tie, a mix of unobserved personal characteristics (beyond ethnicity which I test for) reflects the realistic nature of party-voter linkages on the ground. In short, while my experimental design does not solve a difficult methodological problem—identifying causal effects of endogenous candidate traits—it takes an important step toward addressing this challenge.

My argument and results suggest important avenues for future research. First, although detailed data collection on voters' policy preferences is beyond the purview of this study, future research on voters' preferences across types of government policy benefits and the information that voters have on discretion across these goods would be valuable for more nuanced theorizing in distributive politics. It would also be valuable to map preferences over goods to vote preferences, vote switching, and changes in partisan attachments. For example, while Magaloni and Diaz-Cayeros (2007) argue that party preferences and the erosion of party loyalties are endogenous to past distribution, understanding how this logic applies when voters vary in their preferences over goods and the party they think is most able to provide valued goods would be a major contribution.

In conclusion, this article contributes to an accumulation of evidence from developing country contexts that suggests voters are savvier participants in their democracies than previously expected

(Baldwin 2013; Sircar 2016; Ichino and Nathan 2013). My argument suggests that these calculations may be complex, particularly in multi-level systems where the level of government that holds discretion over allocation varies across types of goods. This more nuanced view of political behavior has broad explanatory power in India and beyond.

ⁱ *Distributive expectations* refer to voters' prospective judgments of government allocation of state benefits of various types.

ⁱⁱ While this research is diverse in its characterization of core supporters, there is extensive evidence of partisan targeting across private and local public goods.

ⁱⁱⁱ Private goods may include anti-poverty benefits and everyday responsiveness to constituent requests (Schneider and Sircar 2016; Kruks-Wisner Forthcoming).

^{iv} Local government in India and many other developing countries primarily perform an implementation (i.e., targeting) role rather than a policy-making role (Bohlken 2016).

^v In India's decentralized system, highly salient resources are controlled by the state (Chhibber et al. 2004). Where valued goods are under the discretion of the federal government, we should see strategic voting for local leaders aligned with the ruling party at the center.

^{vi} This takes into account the 17 most populous states.

^{vii} In my data, 60% of respondents reported to have participated in the MGNREGA right to work program and 34% reported to have a BPL card.

^{viii} Chhibber and Nooruddin (2008) place Rajasthan in the bottom third among major Indian states in their measures of electoral volatility (See also Heath 2005).

^{ix} The BJP and Congress Party won 45.2% and 33% of votes respectively in 2013. In 2008, the BJP and Congress won 33.3% and 37.8% of the votes respectively.

^x Local and state assembly elections in Rajasthan are conducted three years apart.

^{xi} This result is based on a survey of sarpanch that cross-referenced sampled voters conducted by the author. Research in other settings similarly establishes the high-information context of village politics (Alderman 2002).

^{xii} Respondents provided both Congress and BJP local leader names 84% of the time and the leader of the party for the partisan treatment condition to which they were assigned 93% of the time. When voters could not provide leader names, I provided a list of four alternate backup names provided by the sarpanch prior to the survey. The first name on the list that a respondent reported to know was used as a backup cue. See appendix C for details.

^{xiii} In the robustness check, I demonstrate that the results hold when I restrict the analysis to respondents who identified the same partisan leaders (within a GP).

^{xiv} Since I cue only one politician in the treatment, I do not interpret this as a measure of vote choice per se; however, I expect it to capture voters' partisan vote preferences in local elections.

^{xv} I sampled predominately male heads of household as males are most likely to request and receive state benefits, and therefore have informed distributive expectations (Asop et al. 2000).

^{xvi} I restricted sampling to blocks with average margins of victors of 15% or less and below poverty line rates of 20% or more. See Appendix B for further details on the sampling procedure.

^{xvii} See Appendix A for descriptive statistics on the survey sample.

^{xviii} I provide balance statistics in appendix A.

^{xix} The survey question asked: Do you feel close to any party? If so, which one. I respondents as non-partisans if they answered ‘No’ to the first question. I identify voters as partisan supporters (BJP, Congress, or a third party) if they answered ‘yes’ and provided the party name. I exclude 5 respondents who reported preference for third parties from the analysis.

^{xx} Robustness checks include respondents who provided relevant leader names (those who required backups are excluded).

^{xxi} In GPs where there treated leader names were all unique, I included the modal leader name irrespective of treatment. When names were included in the treatment the same number of times, I randomly selected one name.

^{xxii} Caste categories included the following mutually exclusive categories: upper castes, Rajputs, Jats, Yadavs Other Backward Castes, scheduled castes, Meenas, scheduled tribes, and Muslims. I coded self-reported caste names into politically relevant caste categories using a codebook provided by Lokniti, a national survey organization in Delhi. Since Muslim religion is a politically relevant category in rural India, I code Muslims as an ethnic category that does not overlap with caste.

^{xxiii} See replication materials from Dunning and Nilekani (2013). This survey similarly uses a sample frame that targets a high level of poorer citizens given its focus on GPs with reasonably high populations of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

^{xxiv} Congress supporters are .6 (of 5) wealth quantiles poorer than BJP supporters on average.

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Appendix

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics—Voter Survey

	Mean	SD
Male	0.99	0.1
Upper Castes	0.1	0.29
Rajputs	0.11	0.32
Jats	0.1	0.3
Other Backward Castes (OBCs)	0.32	0.47
Scheduled Castes (SCs)	0.48	0.36
Scheduled Tribes (STs)	0.06	0.24
Muslims	0.1	0.3
Illiterate	0.36	0.48
Primary School Educated	0.24	0.43
Middle School Educated	0.22	0.42
Secondary School (Includes Matriculation)	0.35	0.53
Post-Secondary School	0.09	0.28
Voter Turnout in 2008 State Elections	0.91	0.29
Non-Partisans	0.25	0.44
Congress Supporters	0.35	0.48
BJP Supporters	0.39	0.49
Required backup name	0.11	0.31
BPL Card	0.34	0.47
MGNREGA	0.6	0.49
Expected a BPL Card (from cued leader)	0.71	0.46
Expected a job (from the cued leader)	3.34	0.91
Expected state funds (from the cued leader)	0.9	0.3

I provide descriptive statistics from the voter survey in Table A1 above. The variables described above include:

Wealth Quantile: This is an index variables based on the following 15 assets: number of rooms in the respondent's home, number of buffalo, number of cows, self-reported land holdings (in bighas), and indicator variables for the following asset: a houses is made of concrete and brick (pakka), a separate kitchen, a fan, a car/jeep/van, a tractor, scooter or motor bike, TV, toilet, fridge, electric pump set for irrigation, mobile phone, bicycle, and a computer. The index is calculated using weights from principal component analysis and then split into wealth quintiles 1 through 5 in ascending order from poorest to richest.

Caste Indicators: I code voters' caste categories by locating respondents' self-reported sub-castes (or jatis) in a Rajasthan codebook of jatis according to caste categories compiled by MORSEL and check this against a codebook produced by Lokniti, a national survey institute based in Delhi. Muslims are coded as a single group irrespective of caste because they are treated as an ethnic voting bloc in most analyses of Indian electoral behavior. Thus, I include the following ethnic group indicators above: Upper castes, Rajputs (a prominent upper caste in Rajasthan), Jats (an upwardly mobile OBC), scheduled castes (a broad group of marginal castes also referred to as dalits), scheduled tribes (STs), and Meenas (a scheduled tribe that is relatively upwardly mobile among the generally very poor category category of STs).

Education indicators: Respondents were asked to respond to the following question: 'Until what level did you study?' Responses were coded according to class level from 0 (illiterate) to class 10. Above class 10 were three levels of educational attainment that do not fit into years of education: secondary school post-matriculation (class 11-class 12), college education, and post-graduate education. In balance statistics below I standardize an ordinal variable with a range of 0 (illiterate) to 13 (college graduate). In descriptive statistics above, I break this variable into a series of indicators for illiterates and those who completed only primary education, middle school, secondary school, and post-secondary school.

Non-Partisans refer to those who responded that they do not feel close to a party.

Congress and BJP supporters are coded according to a follow-up question: To which party do you feel closest. Respondents who named Congress were coded as Congress Party supporters. Those who named the BJP as the party they feel closest to were coded as BJP supporters.

Required backup name refers to respondents who did not name a leader as most popular for the party they were assigned to in the treatment. A list of 4 backup names for both parties was provided by the sarpanch in interviews my team conducted prior to beginning the voter survey. As described in the article, voters who did not provide names were presented with these names in sequence for the relevant party or parties to which they required backups. The first name on the list that they reported to know was applied to the treatment conditional on the party cue treatment assignment.

BPL Card is an indicator for whether or not respondent possessed a current Below Poverty Line card. Interviewers requested to see the card directly to verify that the card was BPL and not expired.

MGNREGA refers to whether the respondent reported to have participated in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme in the past two years (approximately covering the time while the sarpanch in office at the time held that post).

Distributive Expectations: I provide descriptive statistics on the three distributive expectations analyzed in the article: expectations of a job (described in the vignette), expectations of a BPL card (in the forthcoming round of allocation scheduled to occur soon after fieldwork concluded), and expectations of state funds for the GP.

Table A2: Balance Statistics: Full Sample

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	0.07 (0.23)	0.05 (0.27)
Upper Castes	-0.24 (0.24)	-0.24 (0.29)
Rajput	-0.34 (0.23)	-0.23 (0.26)
Jat	-0.31 (0.25)	-0.39 (0.28)
SC	-0.18 (0.21)	-0.12 (0.26)
ST	-0.16 (0.29)	-0.23 (0.35)
Meena	-0.04 (0.29)	-0.06 (0.32)
Muslim	-0.04 (0.24)	0.04 (0.30)
Education	-0.09 (0.14)	-0.13 (0.17)
Wealth Q1	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.15 (0.25)
Wealth Q2	-0.15 (0.21)	-0.22 (0.24)
Wealth Q4	0.12 (0.21)	0.16 (0.24)
Wealth Q5	0.06 (0.22)	0.14 (0.26)
BPL Card	0.11 (0.15)	0.07 (0.17)
MGNREGA	0.08 (0.14)	0.11 (0.16)
Partisans	0.02 (0.15)	
Backup Used	-0.40* (0.23)	-0.48 (0.32)
BJP Supporter		0.04 (0.18)
Log Likelihood	-658.60	-486.23
Num. obs.	957	708

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

In Table A2, I display logit regression results of demographic and political characteristics on treatment assignment. I include caste and Muslim indicators, A standardized ordinal measure of education with a range from 0 (illiterate) to 12 (college graduate)¹ that is weighted by two standard deviations, indicators for whether respondents received a BPL Card and whether they participated in the MGNREGA right to work program in the past 2 years, and whether a backup name as used due to the respondent failing to provide a name themselves. In Model 1, I include an indicator for partisans (i.e., those who feel close to any party where 0 on this measure captures non-partisans). In model 2, I include an indicator for BJP supporters where a value of 1 captures

¹ I also found no statistically significant effects on education when I used indicators for illiterates, primary school completion, middle school completion, secondary school completion, and college graduates.

self-reported BJP supporters and a value of 0 captures self-reported Congress supporters. I do not include the partisan measure in model 2 due to collinearity. These results show that the randomization was successful.

Table A3: Distributive Expectations Conditioned on Voters' Partisan Characteristics (Full Sample)

	Job	BPL Card	State Funds (Pork)	Vote Intention
Full Sample	.1* (.06) N=955	-.06** (.03) N=936	-.05*** (.02) N=931	-.06** (.03) N=934
Congress Partisans	.29*** (.08) N=334	.15** (.05) N=330	.03 (.03) N=327	.24*** (.05) N=329
BJP Partisans	-.39*** (.1) N=371	-.21*** (.05) N=362	-.09** (.03) N=364	-.3*** (.05) N=366
Non-Partisans	-.17 (.12) N=241	-.1* (.06) N=235	-.1** (.04) N=232	-.12** (.05) N=230

This table provides differences in means (Congress – BJP) on the four outcomes of the vignette experiment. Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.001 *** p<0.05 +p <0.1 ** p<0.01 + >.05* N indicates the number of respondents in both treatment conditions in a given cell. These results are the basis for figure 2.

Table A4: Balance Statistics: Modal Leader Robustness Check

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	0.25 (0.30)	-0.03 (0.33)
Upper Castes	-0.04 (0.32)	-0.00 (0.37)
Rajput	-0.13 (0.30)	-0.05 (0.34)
Jat	-0.24 (0.31)	-0.42 (0.36)
SC	-0.02 (0.28)	0.07 (0.34)
ST	-0.03 (0.40)	-0.13 (0.45)
Meena	0.78* (0.44)	0.62 (0.45)
Muslim	0.26 (0.31)	0.40 (0.38)
Education	-0.06 (0.19)	-0.07 (0.21)
Wealth Q1	-0.26 (0.28)	-0.33 (0.32)
Wealth Q2	-0.22 (0.27)	-0.22 (0.30)
Wealth Q4	0.11 (0.28)	0.22 (0.31)
Wealth Q5	-0.14 (0.28)	0.00 (0.32)
BPL Card	0.08 (0.20)	0.05 (0.22)
MGNREGA	-0.11 (0.18)	-0.02 (0.20)
Partians	-0.11 (0.22)	
BJP Supporter		0.14 (0.23)
Log Likelihood	-376.38	-295.89
Num. obs.	549	433

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

This table provide balance statistics on the modal leader robustness check based on a logic model on treatment assignment. I include the same variables in the balance check as in the prior check presented in Table A2. This shows that the modal leader restriction achieves balance across treatments. Note that this restriction is a subset and randomization was not conducted conditional on whether respondents provided modal leader names.

Table A5: Difference in Means Table (Modal Leader Robustness Check)

	Job	BPL Card	State Funds (Pork)	Vote Intention
Full Sample	-.13* (.08) N=546	-.06 (.04) N=540	-.06*** (.02) N=538	-.09** (.04) N=535
Congress Partisans	.41*** (.11) N= 200	.19** (.06) N=198	.02 (.03) N=197	.25*** (.06) N=198
BJP Partisans	-.51*** (.12) N=220	-.19** (.06) N=228	-.09** (.04) N=230	-.31*** (.06) N=218
Non-Partisans	-.34* (.17) N=112	-.24* (.08) N=110	-.14** (.06) N=107	-.2** (.08) N=104

This table provides differences in means (Congress – BJP) on the four outcomes of the vignette experiment for the modal leader robustness check. Standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001 + >.05* N indicates the number of respondents in both treatment conditions in a given cell.

Table A6: Balance Statistics: Matched Pairs Robustness Check

Variable	Difference (Congress-BJP)
Upper Castes	-.02 (.26)
Rajput	-.02 (.28)
Jat	-.02 (.37)
Other Backward Castes	.01 (.84)
Scheduled Castes	.03 (.16)
Scheduled Tribes	-.03** (.04)
Meena	.01 (.53)
Muslim	.04** (.03)
Education (Standardized)	.05 (.21)
Wealth Q1	.01 (.74)
Wealth Q2	-.02 (.49)
Wealth Q3	.03 (.3)
Wealth Q4	.04 (.18)
Wealth Q5	-.05 (.11)
Partisans	-.04 (.25)
BJP Supporters	.02 (.55)

*p<0.001*** p<0.05 +p <0.1 ** p<0.01 + >.05* This table presents balance statistics from the *match balance* function in the matching package in R. P-Values are provided in parentheses. This shows substantial balance across treatment groups for under the restriction of this robustness check with the exceptions of STs and Muslims. Note that this test captures a sub-group of respondents and randomization was not conditioned on whether respondents in the same GP provided matched on the politician names they provided for Congress and BJP.

Table A7: Difference in Means Table (Matched Pairs Robustness Check)

	Job	BPL Card	State Funds (Pork)	Vote Intention
Full Sample	-.1 (.07) N=344	.05 (.04) N=340	.03 (.02) N=341	.04 (.03) N=334
Congress Partisans	.39*** (.09) N= 117	.34*** (.06) N=117	.02 (.03) N=117	.34*** (.08) N=116
BJP Partisans	-.63*** (.11) N=135	-.18** (.06) N=132	-.08** (.04) N=134	-.17*** (.06) N=128
Non-Partisans	-.26 (.16) N=50	.04 (.07) N=50	0 (.04) N=48	.05 (.09) N=45

This table provides differences in means (Congress – BJP) on the four outcomes of the vignette experiment for the matched pairs robustness check. Standard errors are rounded to the second decimal place and in apprentices. * $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.05$ + $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.01$ + $> .05$ * N indicates the number of respondents in both treatment conditions for a given cell.

Appendix B: Sampling Design

The survey sampled 96 gram panchayats in seven districts, twelve blocks and six of Rajasthan’s seven administrative divisions.² The sample generalizes to voters and GP politicians in rural contexts with a moderately high share of households below the poverty line and inter-party competition. To build the sample frame for this population, I used 2001 census data on the rural composition of blocks,³ data from the Government of Rajasthan on the share of below poverty line (BPL) households across blocks in 2001, and Election Commission data on political competition in panchayat samiti elections—the tier of the panchayat raj system above gram panchayats, which aligns with administrative blocks.⁴ I restricted my sample to blocks with a 75 percent rural population according to the 2001 census to reduce the chance of sampling GPs that function as suburbs, and excluded blocks with less than 20 percent of households in the BPL category in 2001 to ensure that the chance of sampling voters eligible for anti-poverty programs

² Rajasthan has 33 districts, 249 blocks, 7 administrative divisions, and 9177 gram panchayats in all.

³ Government data on the share of BPL households across gram panchayats was from 2001. More recent data was not available at the time of fieldwork in 2013.

⁴ This is the lowest level of aggregation at which election commission data is available from a central source and the lowest level that permits party symbols on the ballot.

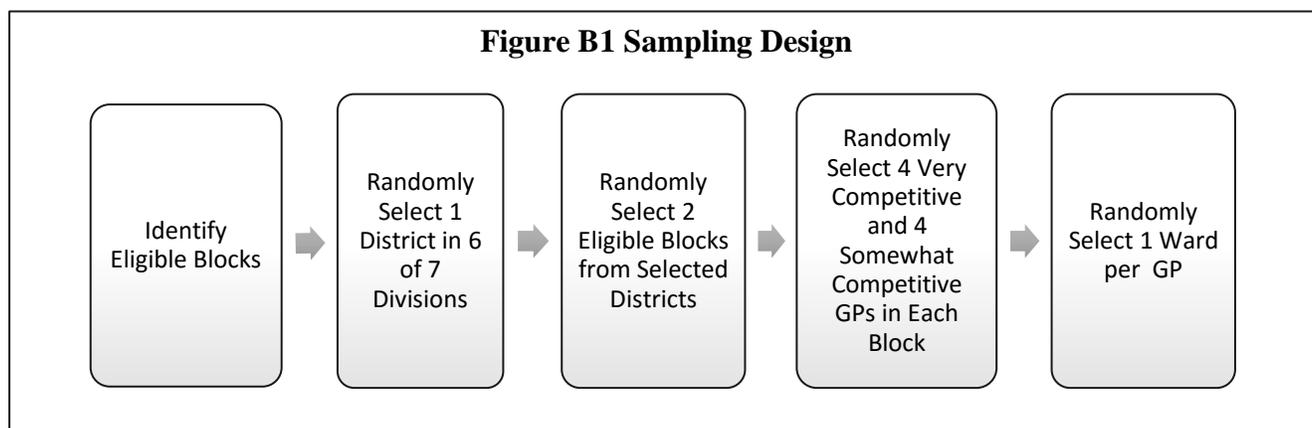
at random was non-trivial. I also excluded blocks where the median margin of victory across Panchayat Samiti ward elections was greater than 15 percent to increase the chance that I selected competitive GPs.⁵ After this restriction was applied, approximately 60 of 249 blocks were eligible for sampling. Logistical concerns required that we sample two blocks in each district to the extent possible. This reduced the list to approximately 50 blocks. I randomly sampled one district in 5 of Rajasthan's seven divisions from a pool of districts in which three or more blocks were eligible for sampling according to these criteria. Two blocks were randomly selected from the pool of eligible blocks in each district. In Udaipur, the sixth division selected, three eligible blocks did not exist in any one district; As a practical alternative, I randomly selected one block each from two neighboring districts in the division: Udaipur and Rajsamand.

Once 12 blocks were sampled, I collected data on political competition across gram panchayats through interviews.⁶ Members of my research team and I interviewed block party presidents—party organizers immersed in the politics of gram panchayats in their block—who were asked to characterize the level of competition between Congress and the BJP as non-competitive, somewhat competitive, or very competitive. Of the 452 GPs in 12 sampled blocks, 180 were described as non-competitive, 133 as somewhat competitive, and 139 as very competitive. To increase the chance that the target population would be sampled, given resource constraints, non-competitive GPs were dropped from the pool for sampling. In each block, I randomly selected 4 GPs among those coded as somewhat competitive and very competitive respectively. I then randomly selected one ward in each sampled GP and randomly sampled household in sampled wards using the gram panchayat voters' list, which is public information

⁵ Each member of this block-level legislative body is elected from one single member ward and elected according to a first past the post electoral rule. I use the median margin of victory across ward election in each panchayat samiti as gram panchayat electoral data could not be obtained.

⁶ This was necessary because electoral commission data on gram panchayat elections is not available from a centralized source.

provided by the Election Commission.⁷ I sampled (predominantly male) heads of household in randomly sampled households because they are generally the household member most engaged in village politics and citizen-state relations.⁸ The elite survey was fielded the day after the vote survey was completed in a given GP. I illustrate the steps in sampling in figure B1 below.



Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics on Local Politician Cues

In this sub-section, I provide several checks on validity of the real candidate experimental design. First, I provide data on the local politicians identified by respondents to demonstrate that responses capture relevant and known local politicians. To identify politicians, I asked respondents the following: *What is the name of the most popular BJP/Congress leader in this gram panchayat?* 93 percent of respondents provided the name and caste of politicians from the partisan treatment condition to which they were assigned; 84 percent provided names for both Congress and BJP politicians irrespective of treatment assignment. Respondents among the 93 percent who named treated politicians are understood to know cued politicians since they named

⁷ This was done because the elite survey samples one ward member in each GP for analysis not included in this paper. To analyze ward member-voter ties, all sampled voters must live in one GP member's ward.

⁸ To identify heads of household, interviewers were instructed to request to speak to the head of household upon approaching each sampled household. If heads of household were not at home, interviewers were instructed to either interview them in the fields in which many of them worked or to return to the household later in the day. If they did not return, supervisors provided alternative respondents who were also randomly selected from a voters list.

them without assistance. For those who refused or did not know the answer to the Congress/BJP politician name survey items, I used a list of three to four backups provided by the sarpanch, or if he or she was unavailable, the elected gram panchayat ward member from the respondent's ward, before the voter survey began in a particular GP.⁹ Interviewers asked respondents if they knew the first backup on the list and proceeded down the list until voters affirmed that they knew the named local politician.¹⁰ The first *known* politician on the list was then used as a partisan cue treatment in the vignette experiment. In short, whether respondents provided politician names or received a backup, all respondents knew the politicians they were exposed to as experimental cues.¹¹ Later in the survey, I randomized the partisan politician (Congress or BJP) respondents were exposed to across two partisan cue treatments.¹²

Second, I address the concern that non-response is correlated with partisan treatments. Overall, 90 and 87 percent of respondents provided names for Congress and BJP politicians respectively irrespective to treatment. Aggregating to gram panchayats, the share of respondents (according to treatment) who provided Congress and BJP names are similar as shown in the kernel density plot in figure C1, which shows the share of respondents across GPs who provided names for Congress and BJP leaders. We see here that the share of respondents who named BJP and Congress politicians varies across GPs; however, Congress and BJP response rates are consistent across the two partisan treatments. To explain this distribution in terms of percentages, respondents who received the Congress or BJP treatment provided names for the partisan politician they were exposed to in the experiment 100 percent of the time in 65 and 61 (of 96)

⁹ The ward is a smaller unit than the GP, so these individuals are more likely to be close neighbors of sampled voters than sarpanch. Recall that the survey design sampled all voters in a GP from one ward only.

¹⁰ Of the 100 respondents who required a backup, 73 knew the first name on the list. Only 6 required a third or fourth backup.

¹¹ I present treatment effects for the full sample and only those who provided names for both Congress and BJP politicians to show that the use of replacements does not significantly affect results.

¹² Politician name were included in the second section (B) of the survey; the experiment was in the fourth section (D). This created a substantial time buffer.

sampled gram panchayats respectively while respondents in these treatments provided 80 percent of relevant politician names in 18 and 22 percent of sampled GPs respectively. In only 1 and 6 GPs did less than 50 percent of respondents provide relevant names for Congress and BJP treatments respectively. This shows that response rates were high and broadly consistent across respondents exposed to the two treatment conditions.

Third, I use evidence from the survey to address the concern that respondents provided the names of idiosyncratic politicians such as their friends or close neighbors rather than the prominent politicians the survey question aims to identify. To explore whether or not voters identified politicians who were understood as prominent in the GP in general, I identified the Congress and BJP politician that most respondents from the same gram panchayat provided, which I refer to as modal politicians.¹³ I code modal politicians according to the pattern of responses of all respondents in a particular GP (irrespective of treatment) to increase the number of observations I have to identify the modal politicians. Out of 10 respondents per GP, respondents from the same GP provided the same Congress and BJP names 6 and 5 times on average in a given GP. Next, I calculated the share of voters sampled from the same GP who provided the modal local politician's name for Congress and BJP with respect to treatment. At the level of gram panchayats, 66 percent of respondents from both Congress and BJP treatment groups identified the modal Congress and BJP politician respectively.¹⁴ I show the distribution on the share of respondents across GPs who named modal politician names with respect to the party affiliation of their assigned treatment in the kernel density plot in figure C2. This shows that respondents not only identified local politicians whom others agreed were prominent

¹³ Note that this definition of modal politicians is different than the one employed in the modal leader robustness check, which selects the most frequently named leader with respect to treatment

¹⁴ In the full sample (irrespective of treatment), 62 and 57 percent of respondents provided the most commonly identified Congress and BJP names respectively.

partisan politicians to a substantial degree, but that the share of cued politicians who were modal was similar across treatment groups.

Fourth, I address the concern that instead of identifying prominent local politicians, respondents are simply identifying politicians who are socially proximate. Although the survey did not include data on friendship, kinship, or close neighbor ties vis-à-vis cued politicians, I asked respondents to provide the sub-caste (jati) of named local leaders, which I subsequently coded into broader politically relevant caste categories.¹⁵ I provide data on variation in co-ethnicity across treatment conditions and across the ethnic groups in table C1. This table shows the share of respondents who named co-ethnics as the most popular politician in their GP (conditional on their treatment assignment) across major ethnic group in Rajasthan. We see here that 34 and 36 percent of the respondents identified a co-ethnic politician with respect to Congress and BJP treatments respectively. Since Rajasthan's social geography is ethnically segregated by neighborhood (in larger villages) or by (small) village, which means that respondents are more likely to be geographically and socially closest to co-ethnic leaders than non-ethnic ones, this is a relatively modest number of co-ethnic responses. We might be concerned that respondents chose politicians who were friends or neighbors—which is correlated with co-ethnicity in a village setting— if most of the named politicians were co-ethnics. This is not the case. Table C1 also indicates that respondents who identified co-ethnic politicians often did so in a discerning manner that reflected the nature of group-party linkages in Rajasthan. For example, among Rajput respondents, 12 percent more respondents identified co-ethnic BJP politicians than co-ethnic Congress politicians, while 6 percent more scheduled caste respondents named co-ethnic Congress politicians as compared to those who identified co-ethnic BJP

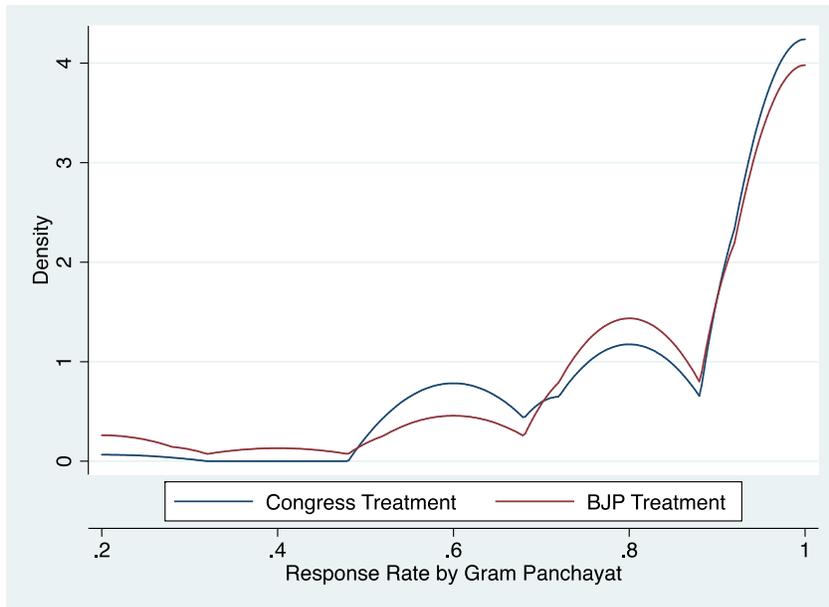
¹⁵ As discussed in Appendix A and in the article, these groups include: Brahmins (Upper Castes excluding Rajputs), Rajputs, Jats, Other Backward Castes (excluding Jats), Scheduled Castes, Meenas, Scheduled Tribes (excluding Meenas), and Muslims.

politicians. Moreover, respondents were overall more likely to have identified BJP leaders from the upper castes (e.g. Rajputs) and Congress leaders from the lower castes (e.g. scheduled castes and scheduled tribes). This is pattern is consistent with the groups broadly understood as core bases of these parties (Lodha 2009).

In short, variation in the ethnicities of the politicians respondents identified suggests that voters are not merely selecting the most familiar co-ethnics from their neighborhood irrespective of their political prominence in the GP. That said, 57% of respondents who identified a co-ethnic leader that was included in the treatment to which they were assigned selected co-ethnics for both Congress and BJP leaders. Approximately 75% of these cases come from 20 GPs where 50% or more of respondents identified co-ethnic leaders for both parties. As is the case broadly with respondent-provided leader selection, this suggests that the selection of co-ethnic leaders is endogenous to voter and GP characteristics. I examine the response to treatment among these sub-groups in the article.

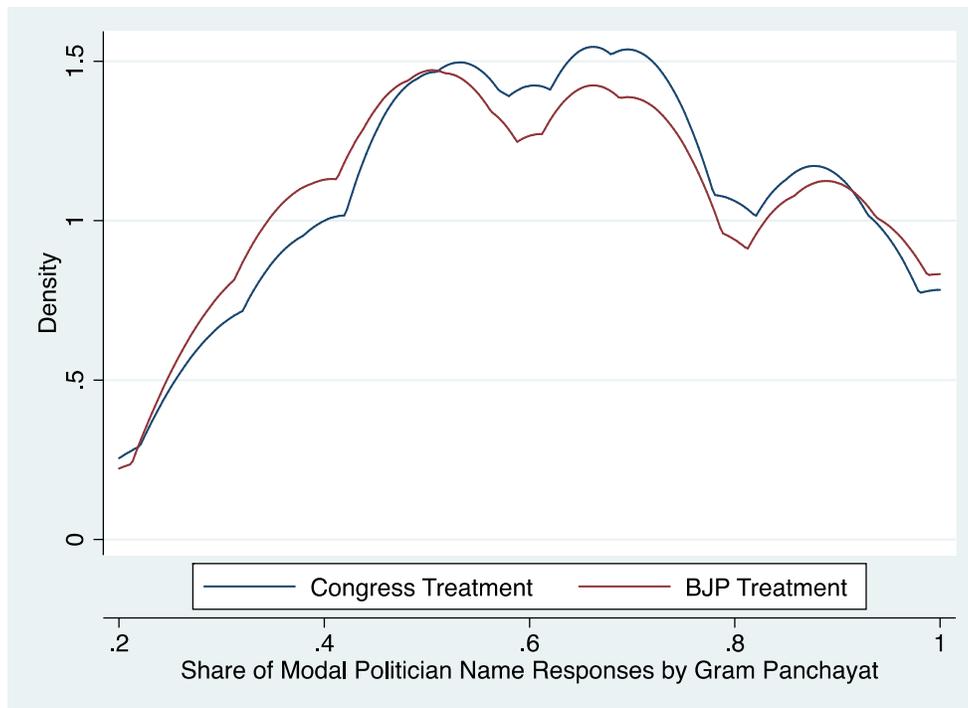
Finally, to support the argument that voters are identifying relevant local politicians, interviewers were asked to collect data on named politicians' positions in parties and local government. Voters provided responses on 439 cases for Congress leaders and 396 cases for Congress politicians in the full sample (irrespective of treatment). The most common answers (in order of frequency) were party workers, sarpanch, and former sarpanch. Although there is substantial missing data, this is what we should expect the backgrounds of plausible candidates for sarpanch (i.e., prominent local leaders) to look like. As a whole, descriptive statistics suggest that respondent-identified partisan politicians capture the population of local politicians the design intended to identify.

Figure C1: Rates On Congress and BJP Politician Names Across GPs



I plot kernel densities for the share of respondents within GPs who provide politician names from both Congress and BJP. The x-axis indicates these proportions. The y-axis plots densities based on a normal distribution.

Figure C2: Share of Congress and BJP Modal Answers (by Treatment Assignment)



I plot kernel densities for the share of respondents within GPs identify the same partisan politician as most popular in the GP. The x-axis indicates these proportions. The y-axis plots densities under the curve of a probability density function.

Table C1: Co-Ethnic Named Politicians (by Group)

Group	Mean (Congress Treatment)	Mean (BJP Treatment)	Difference In Means (w/ s.e.)
Co-ethnic (Overall)	.36 (172)	.34 (165)	.02 (.03)
Rajputs	.12 (55)	.24 (112)	-.12** (.024)
Upper Castes (Other)	.13 (62)	.18 (86)	-.05* (.024)
Jats	.15 (71)	.12 (57)	.03 (.022)
OBCs (Other)	.31 (146)	.34 (163)	-.04 (.031)
Scheduled Castes	.1 (49)	.04 (20)	.06** (.008)
Meenas	.09 (42)	.04 (19)	.05* (.016)
Scheduled Tribes	.03 (16)	.01 (6)	.02* (.01)
Muslims	.07 (33)	.02 (10)	.05** (.013)