# Are Poor Voters Indifferent to Whether Elected Leaders are Criminal or Corrupt? A Vignette Experiment in Rural India

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## Abstract

Although in theory, elections are supposed to prevent criminal or venal candidates from winning or retaining office, in practice voters frequently elect and re-elect such candidates. This surprising pattern is sometimes explained by reference to voters' underlying preferences, which are thought to favor criminal or corrupt candidates because of the patronage they provide. This paper tests this hypothesis using data from the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, where one in four representatives in the state legislature has a serious criminal record and where political corruption is widespread. Contrary to the voter preference hypothesis, voters presented with vignettes that randomly vary the attributes of competing legislative candidates for local, state, and national office become much less likely to express a preference for candidates who are alleged to be criminal or corrupt. Moreover, voters' education status, ethnicity, and political knowledge are unrelated to their distaste for criminal and venal candidates. The results imply that the electoral performance of candidates who face serious allegations likely reflects factors other than voters' preferences for patronage, such as limited information about candidate characteristics or the absence of credible alternative candidates with clean records.

Competitive elections are thought to keep official misconduct in check by creating incentives for those contesting office to expose wrongdoing of other candidates and for those holding office to avoid allegations of criminal or unethical behavior. In practice, however, even countries with competitive elections described as free and fair by outside observers routinely elect large numbers of officials who are believed to be corrupt or prone to illegal conduct (Golden and Tiwari 2009, Dutta and Gupta 2012).

One prominent example of a setting in which checkered candidates frequently win office is Uttar Pradesh (UP), one of the most populous and impoverished states in India. Multi-party competition is vigorous in UP, and its election administration is regarded as reasonably fair. Even so, politicians who have been charged with or convicted of serious criminal offences have participated in Indian state assembly elections in increasing numbers over the last decade. During the 2007 election in UP, 575 candidates for 403 contested assembly seats had criminal backgrounds or faced criminal charges; 140 of these candidates won assembly seats. Five years later, during the 2012 election, 759 candidates had criminal backgrounds or faced criminal charges, with 189 of these candidates winning assembly seats (ADR 2012a). Elected officials in UP are also widely reputed to engage in corrupt activities, such as embezzlement of public funds. Watchdog organizations have documented a variety of corrupt activities involving public officials in the state (e.g. BBC News India 2012, India Today 2012). Widespread corruption may also be inferred from a close examination of the assets that candidates must report to the government when running for office. Despite the fact that UP state legislators earn an average annual salary of approximately $12,000, the 287 incumbents who were elected in 2007 and ran

again in 2012 saw an increase in their average asset value from $220,613 to $658,804 over their term in office. Only three incumbents reported that their net assets declined during this period.[1]

What explains the electoral success of legislators who are reputed to be criminal or corrupt? Two leading and related explanations ascribe this phenomenon to voter tastes. One explanation holds that deep-seated ethnic identities cause voters to make choices based on their ethnic ties to candidates and parties, rather than on candidates' qualifications or performance in office (Horowitz 1985).[2] In UP, the major political parties have since the 1980s been closely associated with distinct castes, and the caste affiliation of candidates is easily surmised by their surnames. The ethnic voting hypothesis holds that strong caste ties cause Hindu voters to select parties and candidates affiliated with their caste or religion, even if it means overlooking allegations of wrongdoing (Banerjee and Pande 2009). Another, related hypothesis emphasizes the role of direct side-payments to voters, such as vote-buying and patronage. This explanation holds that voters focus on the immediate material benefits offered by candidates and parties rather than their policy stances or accomplishments in office.[3] A corollary argument is that voters come to affiliate with candidates and parties because of the patronage that they routinely furnish (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). It has been argued that poor voters in particular prefer

[1] Incumbents belonging to the ruling party BSP saw their asset value increase on average almost $500,000, whereas incumbents belonging to the opposition party SP saw their asset value increase less than $300,000. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and the head of BSP, Kumari Mayawati, saw her wealth increase $6.2 million over her five-year term. Data were downloaded from National Election Watch (http://myneta.info), which compiles information from affidavits submitted by candidates during the nomination process. Calculations are our own. For a more comprehensive analysis of Indian candidates' assets, see Fisman, Schulz, and Vig (2012).

[2] See Adida, Davenport, and McClendon (2013) for recent evidence about the effects of ethnic primes on vote choice in the United States.

[3] The two hypotheses are interrelated. Voters of a given caste may surmise that candidates and parties affiliated with their caste may, if elected, be more likely to provide material benefits. This pattern is thought to be especially likely when voters have little information about the political process (Chandra 2004).

corrupt or criminal politicians precisely because these candidates are believed to be willing and able to provide patronage (Wade 1985). The ethnic ties hypothesis and the patronage hypothesis share a common theme: both ascribe the success of criminal or corrupt candidates to voter tastes that favor identities or side-payments over good governance.

A counterpoint to the ethnic ties hypothesis is the idea that the Indian electorate evaluates public officials according to their qualifications for office and therefore responds to allegations of wrongdoing by withdrawing support. This perspective on voter decision-making suggests that credible information can convince voters to reject criminal or corrupt candidates. A burgeoning literature lends credence, directly or indirectly, to the hypothesis that information leads voters to place greater weight on candidate quality. In highly aggregated studies, cross-national panel data suggests that press freedom tends to limit corruption (Brunetti and Weder 2003). Similar conclusions emerge from studies at lower levels of aggregation. In Indian regions where newspapers are present, public officials are especially responsive to food shortages and other calamities (Besley and Burgess 2002), and in Brazilian regions served by radio, audits that expose municipal corruption are especially likely to result in electoral defeat of incumbent officials (Ferraz and Finan 2008). Experimental studies suggest that information plays a convincing causal role. When leafleting campaigns publicize federal audits exposing municipal corruption, electoral support for the incumbent party drops (Chong et al. 2012). Similarly, when door-to-door canvassers distribute report cards that grade Indian elected officials on their performance (e.g., their attendance at legislative sessions), vote preferences change (Banerjee et al. 2011). The question is whether hard-hitting allegations of criminality or corruption dissuade voters from supporting their caste-preferred party.

The expression of caste preferences amid charges of misconduct may be tested experimentally using variations in survey wording and ordering (Sniderman and Grob 1996). By providing information about candidate attributes, including allegations of criminal or corrupt behavior, surveys in effect simulate an information environment that exposes voters to credible, high salience news coverage of campaigns (Chong and Druckman 2007). Although the attention that voters pay to such information is likely to be much greater than the attention that they typically devote to campaigns, the effect of this information nevertheless tells us something important about voter reactions conditional on exposure and attention. To what extent are Indian voters predisposed to vote for the party favored by their caste?[4] Is caste voting so strong that voters resist allegations of criminality or corruption? Do they resist rumors of misconduct and insist that allegations be backed by hard evidence?

The present study challenges the claim that Indian voters are unresponsive to allegations of criminality or corruption. We conducted a survey experiment in which approximately 5,000 UP voters were presented with choices between candidates whose attributes varied along five dimensions: (1) putative caste, (2) political party, (3) whether the office was local, state, or national, (4) whether each candidate was alleged to be criminal or corrupt, and (5) whether the evidentiary basis for these allegations was strong or weak. In the absence of information about criminality or corruption, voters are prone to choose their caste-preferred candidate: 59.7% of the respondents side with their caste-preferred candidate, 11.4% are unwilling to choose either candidate despite being asked to do so, and the rest choose the other candidate. Allegations of wrongdoing, however, sharply reduce the probability that a voter expresses a preference for the

[4] Caste is traditionally associated with Hinduism, and our study will focus on Hindu voters, who comprise roughly 80% of the electorate. As noted below, we obtain similar results when experimental vignettes are presented to non-Hindu voters.

tainted candidate, even when the candidate is nominated by the political party most closely associated with the voter's caste. Strong allegations of corruption, for instance, reduce the likelihood of voters choosing their caste-preferred candidate to only 18.4%. These results have important theoretical implications for our understanding of why tainted candidates prevail in elections; they also have important implications for the design of interventions that reduce voter support for candidates who are reputed to be criminal or corrupt.

This essay is structured as follows. We begin with a brief overview of the electoral context of Uttar Pradesh and the district from which respondents were sampled. Next, we describe the randomly generated vignettes that allow us to estimate the effects of allegations of corruption or criminality. Experimental results are presented showing how the experimental treatments affect the probability that a voter expresses support for his caste-preferred party. The strong treatment effects associated with allegations of wrongdoing are shown to hold across a range of socioeconomic and ethnic subgroups. We conclude by discussing the relationship between our survey findings and the growing experimental literature that assesses the effects of voter information campaigns in the developing world.

**Research Setting**

Our study occurred in the context of Uttar Pradesh, whose population of almost 200 million makes it the world's most populous subnational unit; indeed, if UP were a country, it would be the fifth most populous in the world. It is also one of the poorest states in India. Literacy rates are 77% among men and 57% among women, and 60% of its population is engaged in agriculture (Census of India 2011). Elections in UP therefore occur on a massive

scale and within a context in which large segments of the electorate have limited access to information and material resources.

More than 80% of UP's population is Hindu, and politics are closely tied to the Hindu caste system. Historically, the caste system has divided Hindu society into a hierarchically ordered set of endogamous groups consisting roughly of Brahmins (upper-tier castes), Other Backward Castes (middle-tier castes), and Scheduled Castes (lower-tier castes). Until the mid-1980s, the Congress Party, which drew its leadership from the upper castes, dominated UP politics. But during the 1980s, the growth of popular low-caste movements led to the formation of political parties explicitly catering to specific caste groups. In 1984, an explicitly Scheduled Castes (SC) party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), was formed, followed by the creation of the Samajwadi Party (SP) for Other Backward Castes (OBC) voters. Since the early 1990s, one or both of these two parties have formed the majority coalition in the state legislature, enabling their party leaders to be named Chief Minister. Opposition to the policies of the BSP and SP helped galvanize support for the BJP among upper-caste voters. The caste composition of electoral districts, which was a weak predictor of electoral returns in the late 1970s, became a strong predictor by the late 1980s and continues to be the most important determinant of election results (Banerjee and Pande 2009), with exit polls indicating that more than half of all Hindus voted for the party most closely affiliated with their caste (Center for Study of Developing Societies 2007).

Accompanying the realignment of the party system has been a striking increase in the prominence of criminals among the ranks of elected officials. Although the upward trend was clear to those close to UP politics, the proportion of candidates with criminal backgrounds could

not be determined with precision until relatively recently. In the wake of a 2002 Supreme Court ruling, election officials now require that candidates disclose their criminal records and financial assets. According to affidavits filed by candidates prior to the 2012 elections, 189 of 403 members of the current UP legislature have pending criminal charges (ADR 2012b). This is a marked increase from the previous legislature, which had 140 members with pending criminal charges. Remarkably, 98 legislators, distributed more or less evenly among political parties, have been charged with what are termed "heinous" crimes, defined as a criminal charge, such as aggravated assault, for which the minimum sentence is at least 2 years of punishment (Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, as modified in 2002, p.104). At least thirty candidates for the state legislature campaigned from jail (One India News 2012).

**Survey Sampling and Recruitment**

Our survey experiment was conducted between January 19 and February 17, 2010 in Sitapur, a rural district 100km northwest of the state capital, Lucknow. Sitapur is socially typical among districts in UP: male and female literacy rates are 70% and 51%; 88% of the population lives in rural villages; 80% of the population is Hindu; and 32% is low-caste (Census of India 2011). Local politics in Sitapur are also representative of state-wide shifts in the political climate: in the 2012 elections, 7 of the district's 9 assembly seats went to SP, the main opposition party in 2007 and the majority party in 2012. Three of the nine winning candidates have pending criminal charges.

The multi-stage sampling frame started with the 18 rural blocks of Sitapur. Within these blocks, we randomly sampled 260 clusters of villages (geographic units called *gram*

*panchayats*), and within each cluster a single village was randomly selected. For each village, we obtained the list of registered voters from the Election Commission of India (Chief Electoral Officer 2010). From this list, we randomly selected 20 male respondents from each village, along with 40 male respondents per village as substitutes.[5]

A local survey firm, Mass Oriented Research and Social Elevation Lab, recruited and trained the field team. Due to seasonal labor migration, approximately half of the respondents in the initial sample of 20 per village were temporarily or permanently away at the time our surveyors visited the village. For this reason, we provided the survey team with 40 additional substitutes per village. However, in order to reduce the risk of surveyors selecting the "easiest" respondents and to ensure that we collected a representative sample of voters in the district, we randomly assigned respondents and substitutes to survey forms and pre-printed their names on the cover sheets. In other words, each survey form had three names printed on the cover sheet – original respondent, substitute #1 and substitute #2. Surveyors were instructed to first attempt to survey the original respondent, and failing that to note down the reason. Upon approval from a supervisor, the surveyor attempted to survey substitute #1, and failing that to note down the reason and attempt to survey substitute #2. In the final sample, 42% of respondents were from the original list, 32% were substitute #1 and 26% were substitute #2. In 80% of substitutions, the intended respondent was found to be permanently or temporarily absent from the village. Once respondents were located, cooperation rates were very high: respondents refused consent to

[5] We omitted women from our sample due to cost. During piloting, we found that women were much harder to identify using e-rolls and took approximately twice as long to survey. Additionally, husbands or other males in the household insisted on being present during the survey and oftentimes on answering for the respondent. Since cultural norms prevented our male surveyors from requesting privacy, we found that it was only feasible to administer our survey to an all-male sample.

participate less than 1% of the time. Of the 5,200 sampled or substituted men, 5,105 gave their consent to the human subjects disclosure and completed the survey.

Table 1 presents descriptive information for respondents, and Table 2 presents descriptive information for political leaders in Sitapur. The vast majority (88%) of our respondents are Hindu, with 36% SC and 40% OBC. Two-thirds are farmers, and almost everyone has lived in the village his entire life. In keeping with the fact that sampling was restricted to men whose names appeared on the electoral rolls, the sample contains a high proportion of those who report voting in the previous election. Nevertheless, the modal respondent reports reading a newspaper "rarely" or "never." Based on comparisons with other Indian surveys conducted during the same period, our respondents seem to be typical of those sampled in rural Hindu areas (Banerjee et al 2012).

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 here]

**Experimental Design**

Vignettes are an innovative way to elicit respondent preferences (see Nock and Rossi 1983; Martin 2006). They allow researchers to simulate real-world scenarios while controlling information flow, enabling us to distinguish the effects of several candidate characteristics that might otherwise be intertwined (Carlson 2011). For example, a vignette might describe candidates whose caste background is different from the caste mainly associated with the political party that nominated them. In actual practice, these two attributes tend to be correlated (although not perfectly so), which makes it difficult to assess their distinct effects. Moreover,

actual candidates have other attributes or reputations that we might fail to measure, jeopardizing our ability to isolate the effects of the experimental factors of interest.

In our survey, after a brief set of introductory questions, each subject was presented with a series of three vignettes. Each vignette described two hypothetical candidates in a hypothetical district of UP, providing varying pieces of information; at the conclusion of each vignette a question asked respondents to indicate which candidate they prefer. The first vignette features hypothetical candidates competing in a *gram panchayat* (village-level) election; the second vignette features a *vidhan sabha* (state-level) election; and the third vignette features a *lok sabha* (national-level) election.

Vignettes include information on each candidate's caste, which is conveyed by reference to the candidate's surname. Our caste groups are broadly categorized as follows: (1) Brahmin (upper-tier castes); (2) Other Backward Castes (middle-tier castes); and (3) Scheduled Castes (lower-tier castes). For our hypothetical candidates, we selected surnames from a list of the most popular caste-affiliated surnames in UP. Eighteen surnames are used across all surveys, or three possibilities for each candidate, thus ensuring that the same surname is never used twice within a survey. Examples of surnames include Bharadwaj for a Brahmin candidate, Yadav for an OBC candidate, and Bhargava for an SC candidate. The caste affiliated with each of these surnames is common knowledge across Uttar Pradesh. The only restriction that we place upon the random selection of surname for each candidate is that a respondent never faces the same caste-pairing twice. As a result, there are nine possible caste-surname pairings, and after deleting permutations that include repeated pairings, there are 378 possible caste-surname permutations.

The second random factor in our experimental vignettes is political party. We use the three most popular political parties in UP: (1) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), (2) Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and (3) Samajwadi Party (SP). In the 2007 UP legislative elections, these parties obtained 13%, 51%, and 24% of seats in the state legislature and 17%, 30% and 26% of the popular vote, respectively (Election Commission Results 2007). While these parties are affiliated with caste groups (BJP with Brahmins, SP with OBCs, and BSP with SCs), it is not unheard of to have a candidate from one caste group represent the party of an opposing caste. Since two candidates from the same party cannot face each other in an election, each respondent faces one BJP-BSP pairing, one BSP-SP pairing, and one BJP-SP pairing, where the order in which parties appear in each pairing is randomly permuted.

The factor of primary theoretical interest is alleged misconduct. One of the three vignettes alleges that *one* candidate is corrupt; we randomly select which vignette receives this treatment and randomly select which candidate within that vignette is corrupt. The other candidate in that vignette is described as honest. A second randomly selected vignette states that one candidate has criminal charges levied against him, while the other has no criminal record. Finally, each respondent is presented with a pair of candidates, with no allegations of misconduct against either of them. The ordering of the three vignettes is random, allowing us to assess the effects of associating misconduct with a party in an early vignette on subsequent support for that party's candidate in a later vignette.

In order to add realism to our treatments, we further distinguish between strong and weak allegations. This distinction is theoretically meaningful for two reasons. First, except in the few cases where someone is caught red-handed, accusations of corruption are typically contested by UP candidates. Our vignette describes a corrupt act in which a candidate accepts a bribe from a public works contractor. Second, corruption is a charge commonly leveled by Indian candidates and their parties at their opponents, regardless of their actual behavior. We therefore seek to test not only the effect of describing a candidate as corrupt but also whether this effect varies according to the source of the allegation. In the "weak" condition, the allegation is a rumor from an unidentified source (in this case the applicable sentence reads "The candidate is rumored to have accepted a bribe of Rs [amount] lakh from a contractor"); in the "strong" condition, the allegation is described as common knowledge in the community. For the sake of realism, the size of the bribe varies by the level of office: Rs 20 lakh ($36,000) for state and national parliamentary candidates and Rs 10 lakh ($18,000) for village-level candidates (Rs one lakh is equal to Rs 100,000, or roughly $1,800).

The other allegation concerns criminal behavior. Criminal charges and convictions can be verified, but offences obviously vary in severity. In our vignettes, a "strong" criminal allegation consists of a previous conviction for murder, for which the candidate served a prison sentence. Murder might seem like an outlandish allegation, but there are in fact well-known examples of murderers who contested and won office in UP. One candidate for office in 2007, Mitra Sen, was convicted of two murders and accused of three others, including the killing of a party worker from an opposing party. Another candidate, Mukhtar Ansari, is a reputed mob boss who was imprisoned for ordering the murder of six people, including an opposing legislator, whose seat

Ansari's brother subsequently took over. Ansari won three elections while in jail. In our experiment, the corresponding "weak" allegation is a so-called First Information Report, which means that the candidate is a murder suspect but has not been arrested or charged. Our use of an unusually severe criminal charge is interesting in its own right and useful in terms of calibrating the effects of the corruption treatment. The effects of allegations of corruption can be interpreted in comparison to the effects of allegations of murder.

In sum, our vignettes consist of a series of random variations of surnames, parties, and allegations. Taken together, the number of unique permutations is: 378 caste-surname permutations*48 party permutations*96 corruption/criminality permutations = 1,741,824. From this pool of possibilities, which are summarized in the Appendix, 5,200 of these permutations were randomly selected, without replacement, to be presented to survey respondents. Due to some nonresponse, we have completed interviews for 5,105 distinct permutations. Randomization inference was used to verify that the party, corruption, and criminality factors at the heart of our experiment are statistically independent of subjects' background attributes (caste, literacy, and socio-economic status): as expected, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that these background attributes bear no relationship to the assigned treatments ($p > 0.20$).

The vignette questions are worded (in Hindi) according to the following template:

> Imagine that you were living in a village in another district in Uttar Pradesh and that you were voting for candidates in [VILLAGE/STATE/NATIONAL] election. Here are the two candidates who are running against each other: The first candidate is named [CASTE

NAME] and is running as the [BJP/SP/BSP] party candidate. [CORRUPTION/CRIMINALITY ALLEGATION]*. His opponent is named [CASTE NAME] and is running as the [BJP/SP/BSP] party candidate. [OPPOSITE CORRUPTION/CRIMINALITY ALLEGATION]*. From this information, please indicate which candidate you would vote for in the [village/state/national] election.

1. First candidate

2. Second candidate

3. Neither candidate

4. Other *(specify):* _____

999. Don't Know/Won't Answer

* Possible allegations include the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Criminal (Strong): | The candidate has been convicted for murder and served a prison sentence, and was released two years ago. |
| Criminal (Weak): | The candidate has been charged with murder (in a First Information Report), but has not been formally arrested. |
| Not Criminal: | The candidate does not have a criminal record. |
| Corrupt (Strong): | It is common knowledge that the candidate has accepted a bribe of Rs 10/20 lakh from a contractor. |
| Corrupt (Weak): | The candidate is rumored to have accepted a bribe of Rs. 10/20 lakh from a contractor. |
| Not Corrupt: | The candidate has a reputation for honesty. |

Interviewers were instructed to only prompt "1. First candidate" and "2. Second candidate."

In order to structure our discussion in a theoretically meaningful way, we confine our attention to Hindu voters and focus on whether the respondent selected the candidate of his caste-preferred party.[6] Although caste voting is by no means universal in UP, it is sufficiently widespread to cause most Hindu respondents to be attracted to the party associated with their caste. Our dependent variable is scored 1 if a Brahmin respondent selected a BJP candidate, an OBC respondent selected an SP candidate, or an SC respondent selected a BSP candidate; otherwise, this variable is scored zero. By comparing responses across experimental variations, we will assess the degree to which allegations drive voters away from their caste-preferred parties.

**Results**

How do allegations of wrongdoing affect the probability that a voter sides with the candidate nominated by his caste-preferred party? Table 3 presents the experimental results for local, state, and national contests as well as for contests at all levels combined. The outcome measure is defined as preference for the respondent's caste-preferred party's nominee, so we confine our attention to those vignettes that presented respondents with a choice between their

[6] We obtain similar results for the 622 non-Hindu respondents when we assume that their ethnically *dis-preferred* party is the BJP, given the widespread view that "Muslims will never vote for the BJP" (Dnaindia 2013). Approximately 60% of these respondents prefer the non-BJP candidate in the absence of allegations; this figure falls below 18% when the non-BJP candidate is alleged to be criminal or corrupt and rises above 85% when allegations are directed against BJP candidates.

caste-preferred party and some other party. Since every survey included all possible party pairings, every respondent saw their caste-preferred party in two of the three vignettes.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Looking first at the pooled results, we see that allegations of criminality or corruption sharply reduce voter support. In the absence of allegations, 59.7% of respondents side with their caste-preferred candidate, and 11.4% are unwilling to choose either candidate despite being asked to do so. When "weak" allegations of corruption are leveled against the caste-preferred candidate, support plummets to 22.4% ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, weak allegations of criminality cause support for the caste-preferred candidate to drop to 28.3% ($p < 0.001$). Strong allegations reduce support further, to 18.4% for corruption and 19.2% for criminality. A probit regression (reported in Appendix 4) of support for the caste-preferred party's nominee on indicator variables for each of the four treatment conditions shows all four estimates are significantly different from zero ($p < 0.001$) and that strong allegations are significantly more effective than weak allegations (one-tailed $p < 0.05$).

Just as allegations of wrongdoing by the caste-preferred party's candidate diminish voter support, allegations of wrongdoing against candidates from other parties increase support for the caste-preferred party's nominee. Weak allegations raise voter support from 59.7% in the control condition to 85.6% when the allegations involve corruption and to 83.8% when the allegations involve criminality. Strong allegations of corruption or criminality bump support up a bit more, to 88.5% and 86.9%, respectively. Again, probit confirms that each of these effects is significantly distinguishable from zero ($p < 0.001$) and that strong allegations are significantly more influential than weak allegations (one-tailed $p < 0.05$).

One interesting aspect of these results is that they apply equally to local, state, and national races. Caste voting tends to be slightly more prevalent when respondents evaluate national candidates, but the experimental effects of weak and strong allegations on vote choice are similar for all three levels of government. When voters evaluate candidates by name, party, and a brief description, the allegations contained in that description profoundly shape voter preferences. Only one-sixth of the male Hindu electorate in Sitapur is so deeply committed to his caste-preferred party that candidate choice is unaffected by strong allegations of wrongdoing. In scenarios where neither candidate is running on behalf of the respondent's caste-preferred party, candidates who are alleged to be criminal garner 10.1% of the vote, and candidates who are alleged to be corrupt garner only 9.9%.

It is frequently argued that the poorest and least educated segments of the electorate are prone to the look the other way when it comes to corruption or criminality, whether due to cynicism about politicians or an outright preference for candidates who can provide patronage. Table 4 provides no support for this argument. Although Scheduled Caste respondents are more likely than OBC or Upper Caste respondents to support their caste-preferred candidate in the control condition, all three caste groups are similarly affected by allegations. The same pattern holds for literate and illiterate respondents; allegations lower their support to a similar degree. Moreover, the same pattern holds for respondents who are currently represented by a public official who was accused or convicted of a felony. If criminals were attracted to or thrived in constituencies where voters are indifferent to allegations of criminality, we would see a very

different pattern. Instead, a taste for clean candidates seems widespread among the Sitapur electorate.[7]

[Insert Table 4 here]

Lest one think that *any* information provided in our vignettes induces voters to change their preferences, we find relatively weak effects of candidates' own caste background. For example, probit regression reveals no effect on vote preference (b = 0.000, SE = 0.002) of the candidate's ethnic name when standing as a non-caste-preferred party's candidate. When standing as a candidate of a caste-preferred party, having an ethnic name that matches the respondent's own caste leads to modest increases in support (b = 0.066, SE = 0.031). These weak effects temper the argument that caste affiliations trump other considerations that make up the voting calculus in low-information environments (Chandra 2004; Ferree 2006). Although survey vignettes may be discounted for lack of realism, the overall pattern of results comport with non-experimental studies of Indian voting behavior, which suggest that party cues have strong effects while candidates' caste backgrounds do not (Banerjee and Pande 2009).

Another substantively telling null finding concerns the effects of question order. At issue is whether allegations against a party's candidate in one vignette affect voters' support for that party in a subsequent vignette. In other words, do allegations of misconduct by its candidates tarnish the brand image of the party? The answer, shown in Table 5, appears to be no. When allegations are lodged against a caste-preferred candidate in a prior vignette, voters are only 2.5

[7] Each respondent faced one vignette (out of three) that did not feature a caste-preferred candidate. In two-thirds of these vignettes, one of the candidates was either criminal or corrupt. A comparison of the set of respondents who chose the criminal/corrupt candidate in these vignettes with the set of respondents who chose the honest candidate reveals that the only social predictor for preferring criminal/corrupt candidates is belonging to a Scheduled Caste. SC respondents were *less* likely to prefer the criminal/corrupt candidate than respondents from other castes (OBC or Upper Castes).

percentage-points less likely to support that party subsequently. This effect is substantively small and falls short of statistical significance ($p > .05$, one-tailed). Conversely, when allegations are lodged against a party other than one's caste-preferred party, subsequent support for the caste-preferred party increases by only 1.7 percentage-points, which is again not significantly greater than zero ($p > .05$, one-tailed). The implication appears to be that parties have little to lose from spillovers when fielding corrupt or criminal candidates, in that allegations lodged against specific candidates do not diminish support for others from the same party.

[Insert Table 5 here]

**Discussion**

The pattern of responses in our vignettes suggest that, all things being equal, allegations of impropriety powerfully diminish support for accused candidates, even in a region famous for electing candidates with criminal records and corrupt reputations. We observe marked shifts in voter preference even when allegations are based on rumor or unproven suspicions. Although Indian voters are sometimes characterized as cynics who expect misbehavior by their elected officials, the respondents in our survey are by no means inured to allegations of criminality or corruption. When allegations are made, respondents become much less likely to support their caste-preferred party's nominee. These allegation effects remain sizable when we partition the sample by caste, education, or whether the respondents' actual representative has a criminal background. Evidently, the norm of rejecting misbehavior among elected officials runs through all segments of the Hindu electorate. One may object that our respondents are merely offering socially desirable responses, but that is precisely the point: voters of all castes and economic circumstances perceive a powerful norm to repudiate criminal or corrupt candidates for office.

An intriguing implication of this finding is that voters' choices may be altered by public information campaigns that publicize criminality and corruption. Along these lines, recent field experiments have sought to test whether Indian voters' choices are altered when they are presented with information about incumbents' legislative record and criminal background. For example, Banerjee et al. (2011) distributed newspapers containing "report cards" of candidates for the 2008 Delhi state assembly to residents of 200 slums in the run-up to the elections. The report cards included information on each candidate's education, assets, and criminal background, among other performance metrics. Voters in that study exhibited considerable sophistication in interpreting and reacting to this information: while the treatment had no impact on the median-performing incumbent's vote share, the best-performing incumbent received a 7 percentage point boost in treatment slums. Another study evaluated the effects of similar report cards published in a major newspaper in the run-up to the 2010 state assembly elections in Bihar; legislators who were featured in the newspaper had lower vote shares relative to their counterparts.[8] Indian voters do appear to be responsive to information campaigns – a potentially important empirical finding that may help explain the recent electoral success of the reformist Aam Aadmi party, which campaigns on a clean government platform. Without diminishing the political significance of such information campaigns, their electoral effects of this information appear to be much less dramatic than the vignette results described here. The results in Table 3

[8] Analogous studies in countries such as Brazil (Ferraz and Finan 2008), Mexico (Chong et al. 2012), and Uganda (Humphreys and Weinstein 2012) have produced mixed support for the hypothesis that public information campaigns lead voters to withdraw support from candidates tainted by allegations of corruption. Ferraz and Finan (2008) find that official audits improve electoral accountability when publicized via mass media. de Figueiredo, Hidalgo, and Kasahara (2013) find that leaflets from a reputable interest group publicizing the corrupt behavior of leading mayoral candidates diminished their vote support. On the other hand, Chong et al. (2012) find no effect for public information campaigns that question the administrative competence of local officials in Mexico, and Humphreys and Weinstein (2012) find little effect of a campaign that informed Ugandan voters of the legislative effort expended by their representatives.

suggest that allegations of wrongdoing cut support for caste-preferred parties in half, whereas even the strong effects reported by Banerjee et al. (2011) suggest a much smaller reduction in votes occurs when an incumbent receives an unflattering report card.

Both the balance of prior field experimental evidence and theoretical intuition help explain why the effects of public information campaigns tend to be weaker than the effects generated by our vignettes. One constraint that a field campaign confronts is how to deliver information that alleges wrongdoing. Scorecards compiled by newspapers may be missed by less literate segments of the electorate; even avid newspaper readers may find it difficult to extract a clear evaluation from the many items that are reported in a full-page scorecard and retain the information until election day. Another complication is that in the context of an actual election campaign, accusations of wrongdoing are typically met with denials and counter-accusations. Unlike the survey context, which presents allegations in a distilled and uncontested form, actual elections involve competing efforts to frame the terms of debate (Druckman and Nelson 2003). In field settings, allegations of wrongdoing may be overwhelmed by other messages. Finally, the competitive structure of actual elections may diverge from the scenario envisioned in our vignette, where a tainted candidate was said to face a clean opponent. Even when voters are prepared to punish a caste-preferred party's candidate for misbehavior, their options may be limited. There may be no alternative candidate who is superior in terms of criminality or corruption. In Uttar Pradesh from 2005-2012, 46% of all state assembly contests featured *more than one* candidate with a criminal background, and an unknown proportion of the remaining contests may have featured candidates with a reputation for corruption.

Our experiment may therefore be interpreted as providing an upper bound for what an information campaign might achieve. Even in a society such as India, where ethnic ties are highly politicized, voters seem willing to vote against tainted candidates nominated by the party associated with their ethnicity. Indeed, voters seem willing to distance themselves from political parties that nominate tainted candidates. The challenge for reformers is to translate this willingness into actual electoral behavior, perhaps by distributing credible information in electoral contexts where voters have an opportunity to choose between tainted and untainted candidates. The empirical question is whether, in the midst of an actual campaign, Indian voters' apparent aversion to checkered candidates translates into votes when allegations of corruption are met with denials and counter-accusations.

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**Table 1: Profile of Respondents**

| *Variable* | *Average* | *Observations* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 0.000 | 5105 | |
| Age | 41.603 | 5104 | |
| Years in Village | 40.921 | 5061 | |
| Married | 0.863 | 5087 | |
| Literate | 0.567 | 5105 | |
| Read Newspaper | 4.222 | 4973 | 1-Daily 2-Frequently 3-Occasionally 4-Rarely 5-Never |
| Listen to News on Radio | 3.727 | 5013 | 1-Daily 2-Frequently 3-Occasionally 4-Rarely 5-Never |
| Watch News on TV | 4.450 | 5002 | 1-Daily 2-Frequently 3-Occasionally 4-Rarely 5-Never |
| College Degree | 0.050 | 5105 | |
| Farmer | 0.662 | 5105 | |
| OBC | 0.397 | 5105 | |
| SC | 0.363 | 5105 | |
| Hindu | 0.878 | 5105 | |
| Monthly Income (Rs) | 1675 | 4761 | |
| NREGA Work | 0.928 | 1496 | |
| Below Poverty Line (BPL) Card | 0.253 | 3781 | |
| Has Voter ID Card | 0.889 | 5096 | |
| Voted in 2007 Assembly Elections | 0.831 | 5105 | |
| Discuss Politics with Family | 3.823 | 5051 | 1-Daily 2-Frequently 3-Occasionally 4-Rarely 5-Never |
| Discuss Politics with Friends | 3.645 | 5048 | 1-Daily 2-Frequently 3-Occasionally 4-Rarely 5-Never |
| Supports Ruling BSP Party | 0.326 | 5105 | |
| Caste is Important when Voting | 0.238 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States MLA Name | 0.786 | 4930 | |
| Correctly States MLA Party | 0.709 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States MLA Caste | 0.630 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States MLA Criminality | 0.637 | 5105 | |
| Ranks MLA 1-5 | 2.171 | 4549 | 1-Best MLA and 5-Worst MLA |
| Correctly States Name of Congress Party | 0.830 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States Name of BJP Party | 0.595 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States Name of BSP Party | 0.785 | 5105 | |
| Correctly States Name of SP Party | 0.685 | 5105 | |

**Table 2: Profile of Political Leaders of Sitapur**

| | Village Leaders | State Legislators | Members of Parliament |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 0.37 | 0.00 | 0.50 |
| College | 0.12 | 0.44 | 0.75 |
| Low Caste | 0.29 | 0.44 | 0.25 |
| Constituency Reserved for Low Caste | 0.23 | 0.33 | 0.50 |
| BSP Party | N/A | 0.44 | 0.50 |
| Criminal | N/A | 0.44 | 0.00 |
| Heinous Criminal | N/A | 0.33 | 0.00 |
| Assets (Rs) | N/A | 7,060,103 | 18,500,000 |
| Observations | 260 | 9 | 4 |

**Table 3: Likelihood of Voting for Caste-Preferred Candidate (Means and Sample Sizes)**

| *Characteristics of Candidates in Vignettes* | | | *All* | *By Election Type* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ethnic-Preferred* | *Not Ethnic-Preferred* | *Experimental Treatment* | | *Village Election* | *State Election* | *National Election* |
| | | | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| No Allegations | No Allegations | Control | 59.7% (2937) | 58.9% (992) | 59.0% (954) | 61.0% (991) |
| Allegations of Wrongdoing | No Allegations | Criminal (weak) | 28.3%[a] (760) | 30.7% (231) | 27.0% (263) | 27.4% (266) |
| | | Criminal (strong) | 19.2% (757) | 17.3% (249) | 20.4% (221) | 19.9% (287) |
| | | Corrupt (weak) | 22.4%[a] (762) | 20.2% (253) | 24.4% (262) | 22.7% (247) |
| | | Corrupt (strong) | 18.4% (706) | 16.5% (242) | 19.8% (227) | 19.0% (237) |
| No Allegations | Allegations of Wrongdoing | Criminal (weak) | 83.8%[b] (753) | 84.2% (240) | 83.9% (254) | 83.4% (259) |
| | | Criminal (strong) | 86.9% (758) | 85.5% (256) | 90.4% (250) | 84.9% (252) |
| | | Corrupt (weak) | 85.6%[b] (765) | 88.8% (232) | 86.4% (264) | 82.2% (269) |
| | | Corrupt (strong) | 88.5% (762) | 93.1% (259) | 87.3% (260) | 84.8% (243) |

NOTES

1) Sample only includes vignettes with the respondent's preferred candidate and Hindu respondents.

2) 'Strong' refers to the more heinous versions of the vignettes, and 'weak' to the less heinous.

[a] Indicates that support under weak allegations is significantly higher than under strong allegations ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

[b] Indicates that support under weak allegations is significantly lower than under strong allegations ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

**Table 4: Likelihood of Voting for Caste-Preferred Candidate (Means and Sample Sizes)**

| *Characteristics of Candidates as Given in Vignettes* | | | *All* | *By Caste of Respondent* | | | *By Education of Respondent* | | *By MLA Criminal Status* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ethnic-Preferred* | *Not Ethnic-Preferred* | *Experimental Treatment* | | *Upper Caste* | *OBC* | *SC* | *Illiterate* | *Literate* | *Not Criminal* | *Criminal* |
| | | | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| No Allegations | No Allegations | Control | 59.7% (2937) | 58.1% (465) | 52.0% (1255) | 68.1% (1209) | 57.9% (1225) | 60.9% (1712) | 60.0% (1932) | 58.9% (1005) |
| Allegations of Wrongdoing | No Allegations | Criminal (weak) | 28.3% (760) | 29.9% (117) | 22.3% (319) | 33.5% (322) | 25.8% (318) | 30.1% (442) | 25.7% (474) | 32.5% (286) |
| | | Criminal (strong) | 19.2% (757) | 17.4% (132) | 15.0% (320) | 24.3% (301) | 18.8% (319) | 19.4% (438) | 18.6% (484) | 20.1% (273) |
| | | Corrupt (weak) | 22.4% (762) | 25.6% (117) | 19.3% (337) | 24.5% (306) | 20.4% (314) | 23.9% (448) | 23.4% (479) | 20.8% (283) |
| | | Corrupt (strong) | 18.4% (706) | 16.4% (110) | 12.0% (317) | 26.4% (277) | 21.6% (296) | 16.1% (410) | 17.4% (471) | 20.4% (235) |
| No Allegations | Allegations of Wrongdoing | Criminal (weak) | 83.8% (753) | 78.9% (123) | 83.3% (342) | 86.4% (286) | 84.4% (294) | 83.4% (459) | 85.1% (491) | 81.3% (262) |
| | | Criminal (strong) | 86.9% (758) | 82.2% (101) | 86.3% (342) | 89.4% (312) | 84.2% (335) | 89.1% (423) | 87.1% (489) | 86.6% (269) |
| | | Corrupt (weak) | 85.6% (765) | 83.5% (115) | 82.0% (317) | 89.8% (332) | 86.5% (318) | 85.0% (447) | 84.5% (497) | 87.7% (268) |
| | | Corrupt (strong) | 88.5% (762) | 87.5% (112) | 86.2% (349) | 91.6% (299) | 86.0% (301) | 90.0% (461) | 89.8% (511) | 85.7% (251) |

NOTES
1) Sample only includes vignettes with the respondent's preferred candidate and Hindu respondents.
2) 'Strong' refers to the more heinous versions of the vignettes, and 'weak' to the less heinous.

**Table 5: OLS Regression of the Likelihood of Voting for Caste-Preferred Candidate on the Order of Vignettes**

| | Votes for Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette | |
|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Criminal or Corrupt | -0.377*** | |
| | [0.017] | |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Not Criminal or Corrupt | 0.241*** | |
| | [0.017] | |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Criminal or Corrupt | -0.025 | |
| | [0.017] | |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Not Criminal or Corrupt | 0.017 | |
| | [0.017] | |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Criminal | | -0.366*** |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Not Criminal | | 0.251*** |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Corrupt | | -0.389*** |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 2nd Vignette Was Not Corrupt | | 0.232*** |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Criminal | | -0.025 |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Not Criminal | | 0.021 |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Corrupt | | -0.026 |
| | | [0.021] |
| Preferred Candidate in 1st Vignette Was Not Corrupt | | 0.012 |
| | | [0.021] |
| Constant | 0.612*** | 0.612*** |
| | [0.019] | [0.019] |
| | | |
| Observations | 4,467 | 4,467 |
| Control Mean | 0.563 | 0.563 |

NOTES

1) Sample only includes Hindu respondents (since others do not have an ethnically-preferred party).

2) The omitted groups in the first regression are when the Preferred Candidate in 2nd (1st) Vignette is Not Criminal or Corrupt and neither is his opponent. Similarly in the second regression.

**Appendix and Supplementary Materials**

## Appendix1: Structure of Vignettes

**SET UP**

| |
|---|
| Three vignettes per survey: (1) local election; (2) state election; (3) national election. |
| Two candidates per vignette. |
| Each candidate is assigned one caste, one party, and one indicator (or no indicator). |

**RANDOMIZED ELEMENTS AND STRUCTURE**

| Candidate Characteristic | Assignment Methodology | Possible Pairings and Alternates | | | | | Permutation count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Caste | randomly assign 3 of 6 possible pairings | Gen | Gen | | | | 378 |
| | | Gen | OBC | or | OBC | Gen | |
| | | Gen | SC | or | SC | Gen | |
| | | OBC | OBC | | | | |
| | | OBC | SC | or | SC | OBC | |
| | | SC | SC | | | | |
| Party | randomly assign all 3 pairings | BJP | BSP | or | BSP | BJP | 48 |
| | | BJP | SP | or | SP | BJP | |
| | | BSP | SP | or | SP | BSP | |
| Corruption Indicator | randomly assign 1 of 2 possible pairings to any vignette | Corr Strong | Neither | or | Neither | Corr Strong | 96 |
| | | Corr Weak | Neither | or | Neither | Corr Weak | |
| Criminality Indicator | randomly assign 1 of 2 possible pairings to one of remaining vignettes | Crim Strong | Neither | or | Neither | Crim Strong | |
| | | Crim Weak | Neither | or | Neither | Crim Weak | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Number of Permutations: | **1741824** |

## Appendix 2: Randomization Check

| | Chi-squared p-value |
|---|---|
| Caste (General, OBC, SC) | 0.281 |
| Literate | 0.218 |
| Political Knowledge (Bottom 25%, Middle 50%, Top 75%) | 0.375 |

NOTES

1) The chi2 values are from a randomization check for balance across the three categorical variables listed above. The randomization check was conducted in the following manner:

i) We randomly simulated treatment assignment, then calculated the chi2 value between each categorical variable and possible vignette treatment types (listed at right).

ii) We replicated part (i) 10,000 times to create a chi2 distribution.

iii) We calculated the probability that the chi2 value from actual treatment assignment came from this distribution.

2) Sample only includes Hindus from one of the three major caste groups.

**Vignette Treatment Type Categories:**

| Category Number | Preferred Candidate1 | Preferred Candidate2 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | corr_s | crim_s |
| 2 | corr_s | crim_w |
| 3 | corr_s | not_crim_s |
| 4 | corr_s | not_crim_w |
| 5 | corr_s | control |
| 6 | corr_w | crim_s |
| 7 | corr_w | crim_w |
| 8 | corr_w | not_crim_s |
| 9 | corr_w | not_crim_w |
| 10 | corr_w | control |
| 11 | not_corr_s | crim_s |
| 12 | not_corr_s | crim_w |
| 13 | not_corr_s | not_crim_s |
| 14 | not_corr_s | not_crim_w |
| 15 | not_corr_s | control |
| 16 | not_corr_w | crim_s |
| 17 | not_corr_w | crim_w |
| 18 | not_corr_w | not_crim_s |
| 19 | not_corr_w | not_crim_w |
| 20 | not_corr_w | control |
| 21 | control | crim_s |
| 22 | control | crim_w |
| 23 | control | not_crim_s |
| 24 | control | not_crim_w |

**Appendix 3: Voting by Caste Summary**

| Caste | Votes for BJP | Votes for BSP | Votes for SP | Abstains | Total Caste |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General | 0.359 | 0.240 | 0.277 | 0.124 | 2088 |
| | (0.480) | (0.427) | (0.448) | (0.329) | |
| OBC | 0.270 | 0.264 | 0.345 | 0.122 | 5847 |
| | (0.444) | (0.441) | (0.475) | (0.327) | |
| SC | 0.226 | 0.412 | 0.261 | 0.101 | 5466 |
| | (0.418) | (0.492) | (0.439) | (0.302) | |
| Total Votes | 3565 | 4295 | 4019 | 1522 | |

NOTES

1) Values in parentheses are standard errors.

2) Only includes Hindus from one of the three major caste groups.

3) Rows denote the caste of the respondent and columns denote the likelihood that those respondents "vote" for a particular party in the vignettes.

**Appendix 4: Probit Regression of Voting for Candidates of the Respondent's Caste-Preferred Party, by Demographic Attributes**

| | *Dependent Variable: Votes for Ethnic-Preferred Candidate* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *By Caste of Respondent* | | | *By Education* | | *By Political Knowledge* | | |
| | *All* | *Upper Caste* | *OBC* | *SC* | *Illiterate* | *Literate* | *Bottom 25%* | *Middle 50%* | *Top 25%* |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| Preferred Candidate is Criminal (Weak) | -0.819*** | -0.737*** | -0.811*** | -0.895*** | -0.849*** | -0.801*** | -0.673*** | -0.829*** | -0.945*** |
| | [0.052] | [0.132] | [0.084] | [0.079] | [0.082] | [0.068] | [0.104] | [0.074] | [0.106] |
| Non-Preferred Candidate is Criminal (Weak) | 0.743*** | 0.607*** | 0.919*** | 0.627*** | 0.811*** | 0.697*** | 0.807*** | 0.730*** | 0.712*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.132] | [0.088] | [0.099] | [0.094] | [0.075] | [0.122] | [0.080] | [0.122] |
| Preferred is Criminal (Strong) | -1.116*** | -1.145*** | -1.090*** | -1.167*** | -1.084*** | -1.141*** | -0.993*** | -1.168*** | -1.140*** |
| | [0.056] | [0.140] | [0.090] | [0.085] | [0.086] | [0.074] | [0.108] | [0.082] | [0.112] |
| Non-Preferred is Criminal (Strong) | 0.879*** | 0.713*** | 1.045*** | 0.779*** | 0.803*** | 0.956*** | 0.822*** | 0.876*** | 1.029*** |
| | [0.062] | [0.159] | [0.091] | [0.100] | [0.089] | [0.086] | [0.115] | [0.085] | [0.148] |
| Preferred is Corrupt (Weak) | -1.003*** | -0.871*** | -0.917*** | -1.162*** | -1.027*** | -0.988*** | -1.096*** | -0.978*** | -1.013*** |
| | [0.054] | [0.135] | [0.084] | [0.085] | [0.086] | [0.071] | [0.119] | [0.075] | [0.108] |
| Non-Preferred is Corrupt (Weak) | 0.818*** | 0.755*** | 0.865*** | 0.798*** | 0.903*** | 0.760*** | 1.007*** | 0.793*** | 0.682*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.147] | [0.088] | [0.097] | [0.091] | [0.077] | [0.121] | [0.082] | [0.120] |
| Preferred is Corrupt (Strong) | -1.144*** | -1.179*** | -1.225*** | -1.102*** | -0.984*** | -1.268*** | -0.952*** | -1.190*** | -1.254*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.153] | [0.096] | [0.088] | [0.087] | [0.080] | [0.115] | [0.085] | [0.115] |
| Non-Preferred is Corrupt (Strong) | 0.954*** | 0.933*** | 1.044*** | 0.912*** | 0.884*** | 1.007*** | 0.736*** | 1.046*** | 1.023*** |
| | [0.063] | [0.158] | [0.089] | [0.109] | [0.095] | [0.084] | [0.118] | [0.089] | [0.141] |
| Preferred Also Shares Caste in Name | 0.066** | 0.167** | 0.063 | 0.022 | 0.006 | 0.110*** | -0.002 | 0.034 | 0.213*** |
| | [0.031] | [0.077] | [0.047] | [0.048] | [0.047] | [0.040] | [0.061] | [0.043] | [0.063] |
| Non-Preferred Also Shares Caste in Name | 0 | 0.003 | -0.002 | 0.001 | -0.001 | 0.001 | -0.004 | 0.004 | -0.003 |
| | [0.002] | [0.004] | [0.003] | [0.003] | [0.003] | [0.002] | [0.004] | [0.003] | [0.004] |
| Constant | 0.223*** | 0.087 | 0.075 | 0.436*** | 0.210*** | 0.231*** | 0.184** | 0.165*** | 0.369*** |
| | [0.044] | [0.111] | [0.067] | [0.069] | [0.068] | [0.057] | [0.088] | [0.061] | [0.092] |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Observations | 8,960 | 1,392 | 3,898 | 3,644 | 3,720 | 5,240 | 2,176 | 4,608 | 2,176 |
| Control Mean | 0.597 | 0.581 | 0.52 | 0.681 | 0.579 | 0.609 | 0.542 | 0.598 | 0.648 |

NOTES

1) All regressions are maximum-likelihood probit models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

2) Vignettes that do not include the respondent's ethnically-preferred party are omitted.

3) Sample only includes Hindu respondents (since others do not have an ethnically-preferred party).

**Appendix 5: Probit Regression of Voting for Candidates of the Respondent's Caste-Preferred Party, by Political Context**

| | *Dependent Variable: Votes for Ethnic-Preferred Candidate* | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Caste Reservation of Pradhan Seat* | | | *MLA Criminal Status* | | *Caste Reservation of MLA Seat* | | *Caste Reservation of MP Seat* | |
| | *All* | *Not Reserved* | *Reserved (OBC)* | *Reserved (SC)* | *Not Criminal* | *Criminal* | *Not Reserved* | *Reserved (SC)* | *Not Reserved* | *Reserved (SC)* |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) |
| Preferred Candidate is Criminal (Weak) | -0.819*** | -0.888*** | -0.667*** | -0.596*** | -0.971*** | -0.603*** | -0.827*** | -0.862*** | -0.920*** | -0.817*** |
| | [0.052] | [0.154] | [0.168] | [0.180] | [0.116] | [0.155] | [0.122] | [0.143] | [0.108] | [0.174] |
| Non-Preferred Candidate is Criminal (Weak) | 0.743*** | 0.647*** | 1.020*** | 0.826*** | 0.805*** | 0.678*** | 0.892*** | 0.577*** | 0.733*** | 0.576*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.145] | [0.224] | [0.219] | [0.127] | [0.177] | [0.133] | [0.164] | [0.121] | [0.186] |
| Preferred is Criminal (Strong) | -1.116*** | -1.127*** | -1.691*** | -0.880*** | -0.955*** | -1.262*** | -1.043*** | -1.092*** | -1.048*** | -1.361*** |
| | [0.056] | [0.155] | [0.234] | [0.181] | [0.128] | [0.184] | [0.140] | [0.158] | [0.108] | [0.193] |
| Non-Preferred is Criminal (Strong) | 0.879*** | 0.704*** | 0.886*** | 1.169*** | 1.088*** | 1.069*** | 1.015*** | 1.294*** | 0.776*** | 0.680*** |
| | [0.062] | [0.148] | [0.186] | [0.265] | [0.151] | [0.184] | [0.138] | [0.225] | [0.123] | [0.199] |
| Preferred is Corrupt (Weak) | -1.003*** | -0.998*** | -0.973*** | -1.351*** | -1.028*** | -0.752*** | -0.783*** | -1.129*** | -1.001*** | -1.125*** |
| | [0.054] | [0.135] | [0.189] | [0.224] | [0.121] | [0.150] | [0.120] | [0.152] | [0.115] | [0.183] |
| Non-Preferred is Corrupt (Weak) | 0.818*** | 0.716*** | 1.348*** | 1.358*** | 0.800*** | 1.046*** | 1.126*** | 0.573*** | 0.612*** | 0.715*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.154] | [0.257] | [0.285] | [0.125] | [0.195] | [0.148] | [0.153] | [0.112] | [0.206] |
| Preferred is Corrupt (Strong) | -1.144*** | -1.098*** | -1.377*** | -1.228*** | -1.103*** | -1.031*** | -1.024*** | -1.162*** | -1.159*** | -1.209*** |
| | [0.059] | [0.147] | [0.211] | [0.212] | [0.130] | [0.170] | [0.128] | [0.176] | [0.118] | [0.206] |
| Non-Preferred is Corrupt (Strong) | 0.954*** | 1.163*** | 1.376*** | 1.406*** | 1.006*** | 0.762*** | 0.935*** | 0.912*** | 0.660*** | 1.076*** |
| | [0.063] | [0.168] | [0.233] | [0.338] | [0.136] | [0.178] | [0.136] | [0.178] | [0.119] | [0.248] |
| Preferred Also Shares Caste in Name | 0.066** | 0.077 | -0.056 | 0.018 | 0.06 | 0.095 | -0.005 | 0.208** | 0.028 | 0.203** |
| | [0.031] | [0.079] | [0.105] | [0.115] | [0.068] | [0.093] | [0.070] | [0.086] | [0.064] | [0.103] |
| Non-Preferred Also Shares Caste in Name | 0 | 0.004 | 0 | -0.001 | -0.008* | -0.001 | -0.005 | -0.006 | 0.006* | -0.003 |
| | [0.002] | [0.005] | [0.006] | [0.007] | [0.004] | [0.005] | [0.004] | [0.005] | [0.004] | [0.006] |
| Constant | 0.223*** | 0.101 | 0.192 | 0.301* | 0.372*** | 0.19 | 0.288*** | 0.339*** | 0.150* | 0.290** |
| | [0.044] | [0.112] | [0.142] | [0.163] | [0.095] | [0.128] | [0.098] | [0.122] | [0.087] | [0.144] |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Observations | 8,960 | 1,386 | 860 | 708 | 1,918 | 1,037 | 1,803 | 1,152 | 2,232 | 819 |
| Control Mean | 0.597 | 0.585 | 0.572 | 0.616 | 0.595 | 0.581 | 0.574 | 0.616 | 0.61 | 0.612 |

NOTES

1) All regressions are maximum-likelihood probit models with standard errors clustered at the individual level.

4) Regressions with village conditions only include village-level vignettes. Similarly with state and national conditions.

**Appendix 6: Regression Specifications for Table 6 and Appendices 4 and 5**

Table 6 is a probit regression that shows how rates of affiliation with respondents' caste-preferred party change depending on which vignettes they earlier encountered.

The Stata syntax corresponding to this model is:

```
probit pref_chose pref_corr pref_not_corr pref_crim pref_not_crim if
inlist(caste,10,20,30) & hindu==1
margins, dydx(*) post
```

Appendices 4 and 5 are probit regressions that show how support for the caste-preferred party's nominee change depending on the treatment conditions.

The Stata syntax corresponding to this model is:

```
local conditions1 "party_ind_pref_vig==1 & hindu==1, vce(cluster survey_code)"
local vig_cats_corrcrim "pref_crim_w non_pref_crim_w pref_crim_s non_pref_crim_s
pref_corr_w non_pref_corr_w pref_corr_s non_pref_corr_s"
local vig_cats_caste "share_pref_cand_caste non_pref_cand_caste"

probit votes_pref `vig_cats_corrcrim' `vig_cats_caste' if `conditions1'
```

Additional conditions are applied in columns 2-9 as given in the column headings.