

Reform, Representation, and Resistance: The Politics of Property Rights' Enforcement

Rachel E. Brulé, Boston University

When do quotas for women's political representation promote economic gender equality? Legislative reforms equalizing economic rights are common globally, with mixed results. I consider the impact of quotas on women's rights in a crucial domain: property. I leverage exogenously set electoral quotas—reservations—for women as heads of local government in India. Reservations enable clean identification of the impact of representation on enforcing gender-equalizing land inheritance reforms. I find that political representation enables women to secure property rights and ensures that they are upheld. However, backlash occurs when reservations guaranteeing female representation make enforcement of reform credible. Women can reduce this backlash by using female representation to trade traditional monetary dowry for property inheritance and familial responsibilities. This, in turn, reduces the “cost” of reform to men. These findings confirm the power of political representation to not only claim economic rights but broaden their acceptance by changing perceptions of parity.

When do quotas for female political representation advance economic gender equality? This question, fundamental to debates about democratic institutions' ability to further social and economic equity, remains contested (Bush 2011; O'Brien and Rickne 2016). A broad body of literature contends that female political representatives boost women's ability to voice policy preferences and demand political rights (see, e.g., Beaman et al. 2010; Bhavnani 2009; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Chauchard 2014; Iyer et al. 2012; Mansbridge 1999; Reingold and Harrell 2010). Yet, a competing body of research finds evidence of backlash against female representation, which in turn diminishes women's political engagement (Clayton 2015) and increases discrimination and violence against women (Mayaram 2002).

I contribute to this debate by considering the impact of political representation on enforcement of women's rights in a crucial economic domain: property. State-secured property rights are widely agreed to be crucial for reducing poverty and promoting growth (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson

2001; De Soto 2000; Herring 1983; North and Thomas 1973). However, they are notoriously difficult to enforce, particularly for socially marginalized groups (Albertus 2015; Helmke and Levitsky 2004). I argue that quotas mandating women's political representation can increase enforcement of their property rights by changing the gender of pivotal local officials: “gatekeepers.” Male gatekeepers typically lack incentives to shift property rights from traditional, male holders to females. Female gatekeepers may increase women's capacity to demand property rights and secure their enforcement. Yet quotas can be a double-edged sword. Female representation can spark resistance when quotas occur alongside legislative reforms that materially reduce men's long-standing property rights.

I test this gatekeeper theory within one institutional context—India, the world's largest democracy. This enables an effective causal identification. I exploit exogenously applied electoral quotas for women in local government, known as “reservations” and mandated as of 1993. I examine the impact of these reservations on landmark reforms that granted Hindu

Rachel Brulé (rebrule@bu.edu) is an assistant professor of global development policy at the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University.

Studies were conducted in compliance with relevant laws and approved by Stanford University institutional review board (IRB) protocol 18558 and New York University Abu Dhabi IRB protocol 114-2016. Support for this research was provided by India's National Council of Applied Economic Research, Canada's International Development Research Center, the Truman Foundation, and the Stanford University Center for the Study of South Asia. Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results in the article are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>). An online appendix with supplementary material is available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/708645>.

women equal rights to inherit ancestral property. These reforms, amendments to the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 (hereafter the HSAA or “reforms”), were enacted state by state, beginning in 1976 and culminating in a national legislative mandate in 2005. They equalized the rights upon birth of roughly 400 million daughters to inherit a share of joint family property (Agarwal 1994). They are significant because the majority of land in rural India remains jointly owned and because, prereform, sons were the only children entitled by birth to inherit independent shares in jointly owned property (Desai 2010).¹ Existing work provides mixed evidence of property rights reforms’ effectiveness in India: while Deininger, Goyal, and Nagarajan (2013) find supportive evidence, Roy (2015) shows that reform failed to increase the likelihood of property inheritance by women. This suggests that the impact of reform is at best heterogeneous, with reasons for its variance poorly understood.

For my analysis, I use panel survey data for over 8,500 households collected by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in the 2006/9 round of REDS. I also compile what is to my knowledge the most comprehensive summary of reservations’ timing, selection, and rotation mechanisms (table A.5; tables A.1–A.24 available online). In addition, I draw on new qualitative evidence to uncover mechanisms through which gatekeepers influence the impact of gender-equalizing property inheritance reforms. Original data include interviews with landholders, politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers, and social activists across eight districts in a state that pioneered property rights reforms: Andhra Pradesh. Over several years of field research, I conducted focus group discussions in 48 villages (fig. A.1; figs. A.1–A.12 available online). To broaden the scope of my argument, I also interviewed a number of influential lawyers, bureaucrats, and politicians across North and South India.

I find that quotas for female, elected heads of local government enable women to wield political authority to secure property rights while bringing to power a class of individuals who are willing and able to ensure that these rights are subsequently upheld. As a result, women are more likely to inherit land, and those who do inherit larger plots. I identify public and private channels through which quotas function: increasing women’s political participation and female representatives’ success at mediating private disputes over land and marriage.

However, once gender-equal inheritance rights become law, backlash occurs where quotas for females in positions of power render enforcement of reform real and credible. To explore alternative economic distributions that might mitigate or offset this adverse effect, I consider whether women’s ability to renegotiate traditional resource entitlements, including both property inheritance and dowry (monetary transfers to a groom’s family), can alter resistance. Although dowries are illegal, they are widely accepted and employed as substitutes for property inheritance. Once a dowry is paid, it is assumed that a woman has received her fair share of her natal family’s resources. Yet if women can turn to female representatives for help at the time of marriage negotiations, I find that they are less likely to accept a dowry, preferring to wait for the deferred entitlement of property inheritance. These women are able to strike agreements with parents and brothers that benefit everyone in terms of financial conservation and other mutually advantageous exchanges. Indeed, I find evidence of lower dowry and higher inheritance among women who enter marriage markets with equal inheritance rights and access to female representatives.

This study contributes to resolving the debate over whether and when changing political and economic rights are sufficient to alter patterns of exclusion. Optimistic scholars in political economy and law contend that strategically designed legal reform significantly affects social, economic, and political incentives for cooperation (Becker 1981; Posner 2000). If they are correct, property rights reforms should uniformly improve beneficiaries’ welfare, for example, as Deininger et al. (2013) find. In contrast, skeptics argue that legal reform alone is insufficient to change behavior, highlighting the role of political institutions in driving effective reform (Dasgupta, Gawande, and Kapur 2017; North and Weingast 1989). Widespread evidence of the ineffectiveness of property reform alone suggests that we require a theory to predict when political representation can make property rights reforms stick (Ban and Rao 2008; Besley and Burgess 2002). Popular opinion holds that enforcement is difficult and uneven, particularly in the face of widespread resistance. However, the nature of this resistance is rarely studied directly or in depth. I show that where support from political institutions is present, egalitarian property rights are more likely to be enforced. This, in turn mobilizes resistance when enforcement is costly.

This analysis is relevant not only to India but also across 100-plus nations currently implementing quotas to benefit women and other marginalized groups through political representation and social integration (Bush 2011; Clayton 2015; Fox and Lawless 2014). My research suggests that mandating descriptive representation promotes enforcement of economic property rights for the represented groups. However,

1. Roy (2015) calculates 84% of household property to be ancestral, using the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey’s (REDS) 1999 round; Sircar and Pal (2014) estimate that 73% of plots households own or access are inherited.

where conflicting social norms exist, representation may also catalyze resistance to economic empowerment. Thus, state-sponsored reforms advancing social equality ignore contrary social norms at their own peril (Anderson and Genicot 2015; Fouka 2016).

Yet, where new economic rights are introduced at moments when changes in social organization are being negotiated (such as around the time of marriage), female representation may enable women to renegotiate integral norms—dowry in India—to redistribute entitlements more equitably. In sum, political representation can be a powerful tool when represented groups have leverage to strike bargains across multiple domains that make economic equality beneficial to all.

REFORM AND INDIAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

One line of research finds that providing greater descriptive representation for women increases female citizens' political engagement (globally: Barnes and Burchard 2013; Norris and Krook 2009; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007; in America: Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Burns et al. 2001). In India, a number of studies yield evidence of women's greater participation in local politics following village-level adoption of reservations for female heads of government (see, esp., Beaman et al. 2009, 2010; Bhavnani 2009; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). If so, the state's capacity to hear and respond to women's policy interests and demands should be substantially enlarged in the presence of female political representation.

However, a second line of research finds that increasing women's descriptive political representation without simultaneous changes in other institutional constraints may at best create "token" representatives who prove unable to exert influence independent of male representatives (Lawless 2004; Mansbridge 1983; Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Goedert 2014). In India, a widespread view is that elected women's spouses wield the real political power. There is even a title for such men: *sarpanchpati* or *pradhanpati*, literally "spouse of the female council head" (Buch 2010). This belief remains prevalent despite the ubiquitous presence of an unofficial political "godfather" who helps all new entrants navigate political power (John 2007, 3988). Overall, political reform that ignores the social implications of female economic advancement may mobilize resistance against those who reform aims to empower (Mayaram 2002). Indeed, growing global evidence suggests that backlash may explicitly be tied to increased visibility of those representing vulnerable groups, the strength of their motivation, and their subsequent effectiveness (Clayton 2015; Fouka 2016; Okimoto and Brescoll 2010).

This raises a related question: Does the state's responsibility in promoting greater social and economic parity extend beyond passing progressive legislation? Optimists contend that legislation is sufficient to alter social norms, making enforcement self-actuating by reweighting individual bargaining power (Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Posner 2000; Sachs 2005). Pessimists caution that those who historically and traditionally benefit from the status quo are unlikely to acquiesce to laws challenging their control over resources unless the government applies enforcement sufficient to constrain their behavior (North and Weingast 1989). Indeed, Helmke and Levitsky (2004) argue that social norms provide many of the most important, enduring incentives that shape political behavior.

In India, much debate has focused on one institutional shift to increase descriptive representation: quotas that change the identity of elected local government heads. Since 1993—when the Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth Amendments to the Indian constitution were adopted—a three-tiered system of local governance with reservations for women as heads (*pradhans*) of local councils (*gram panchayats*) has been mandated. This replaced traditional, appointed councils, which were completely male run. The new system is supported by fiscal resources, regular elections, and quotas for women and members of scheduled castes and tribes. I focus on the most decentralized and local of the three tiers, the *gram panchayat*.

The constitutional amendments mandated that not less than one-third of *gram panchayat* heads be women.² I call *pradhans* political gatekeepers because, in India, they are the most influential local politicians in a given village. *Pradhans* preside over the *gram panchayat*, including at least two annual public meetings (*gram sabhas*). More importantly, they oversee implementation of public works, social justice projects, and land allocation. Given this authority, reservations are game changing. Ensuring the presence of women in a position to control the enforcement of all legislation within a given locale is indeed revolutionary, particularly in light of what Chandra (2004) calls India's "patronage democracy."

Yet, the impact of reservations remains disputed. One body of research finds that they fail to increase support for marginalized groups (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2010; Dunning and Nilekani 2013; Jensenius 2015), instead creating leaders who are "tokens of powerful interests in the village" (Ban and Rao 2008, 502; Sharma 2004). Additionally, female

2. Titles of *gram panchayat* heads vary, including *adhyakhsa*, *sarpanch*, or president. Council-based rule is ancient, but an effective *panchayat* system did not exist before 1993 (Ghatak and Ghatak 2002).

leaders face many forms of bias and resistance that can inhibit their effectiveness (Mayaram 2002).

In contrast, evidence exists that reservations can and do shift government expenditures and policy toward women's preferences, particularly when lower caste women are in power (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Clots-Figueras 2011). Reporting of crimes against women and police response improves (Iyer et al. 2012), and women are more likely to run in future elections (Bhavnani 2009). In West Bengal, reservations diminish male perceptions of elected officials' ineffectiveness (Beaman et al. 2009) and increase familial aspirations for daughters (Beaman et al. 2012). In Rajasthan, reservations for scheduled castes improve political participation by the represented groups while building trust in political institutions, self-respect, solidarity, and access to legal resources (Chauchard 2014). This evidence notwithstanding, studies of reservations have yet to test whether they help actualize other gender-equalizing reforms.

I study the impact of reservations on the enforcement of reforms expanding the rights of daughters to inherit property from a tiny ("notional") fragment to full equality, conditional on paternal death after reform.³ Mabsout and Van Staveren (2010) posit that increasing women's resources in the face of discriminatory social institutions causes a "resource paradox," which actually reduces women's bargaining power. I contend that the ability of beneficiaries to access the state at the right time and in the right way is a necessary precursor for effective enforcement and lasting change.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I construct a theory linking women's political representation to their economic empowerment. My first supposition is that women's ability to successfully secure property rights depends on representation in local political institutions. These representatives—gatekeepers—can pressure bureaucrats to enforce women's property rights. My second supposition is that benefits to women from representation are contingent on the anticipated "cost" of enforcement to those required to cede traditional claims. This cost varies with a given woman's ability to negotiate intrahousehold distribution of resources across multiple domains (inheritance, dowry, and related familial responsibilities).

The ability to negotiate property rights has global significance, given that "patriarchal tradition and ancient social beliefs threaten women's land rights" in over half of all countries (Villa 2017). Reluctance to enforce women's land

rights is often the crux of the problem (World Bank 2009, 150). Decentralization, apropos of India's *panchayat raj* reforms, is now a near-universal strategy to "improve the responsiveness and accountability of the state" (Channa and Faguet 2016, 200).

I propose that political representation fundamentally alters women's relationship to local bureaucracy. Where quotas for female local political representatives—gatekeepers—exist, a virtuous cycle is created: more women participate and engage the state as it becomes more accessible and responsive.

In India, the role of gatekeeper is assumed by the *pradhan*, the elected head of local government. Absent female *pradhans*, male local bureaucrats responsible for enforcing property rights (village revenue officials; VROs) typically argue that claiming rights is women's responsibility alone, and male *pradhans* concur, adding that they cannot guarantee protection for those women who do so (Sircar and Pal 2014, 15–16).⁴

VRO enforcement of women's rights is further limited because supporting brothers—by not registering sisters as legal heirs—facilitates local tax collection and minimizes conflict. According to one property lawyer, VROs "are only looking at putting down the name of the head of the family, who will pay the taxes."⁵ The reluctance to formally enforce women's inheritance is rampant: out of 1,192 individuals—predominantly women—I interviewed across rural Andhra Pradesh, not a single female reported receiving ancestral land via a VRO-initiated land transfer. Officials familiar with women's rights are unwilling to formalize their inheritance for fear of "causing discord within the village or trouble within the family," unless the entire family unanimously requests it.⁶ This reluctance is striking, given that all women I study have at least limited rights to inherit their father's land.⁷

Official bias affects citizen behavior. Women frequently express uncertainty about how to approach public officials to secure their rights as well as concern about the consequences of doing so, given the widespread harassment and social censure they usually receive upon entering public and political spaces (Mayaram 2002).

Where reservations for female *pradhans* exist, women's relationship to local government is entirely different. All *pradhans* "wield influence over revenue officers"—thanks to their ability

3. On inheritance before and after gender-equalizing reform, see fig. A.9 and its note.

4. VROs (also known as *patwaris* or *karmacharis*) maintain records of land ownership and cultivation and prepare the list of legal heirs that superiors—*tehsildars*—implement.

5. Author's interview at AV College, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, January 7, 2017.

6. Author's interview with VROs in a district office, Andhra Pradesh, March 25, 2010.

7. See note accompanying fig. A.9 on rights before gender-equalizing reform.

to support or block VRO career advancement in the highly politicized land revenue system. However, female gatekeepers are more likely to “bring about a large scale change in action” toward women (Vasavada and Rajgor 2015, 6). They use the gram sabha’s public forum to prioritize and resolve land disputes and take “a lead role in convincing those families who are denying land rights to women” (16). According to a trainer for the Tamil Nadu Women Panchayat Presidents’ Federation, they have to fight to force the VROs to release “information on land records and deals” because the VRO “and the [male] *Panchayat* president often collude . . . by fudging land records” (Rao 2018). Backlash against female gatekeepers who unsettle these alliances has been so severe as to include murder (Rao 2018).

Female gatekeeper influence extends even to states like Bihar that are inegalitarian to the extreme. There, one female pradhan used her position to settle 52 civil and 30 criminal cases during her first year in office (including a 60-year inheritance dispute that resulted in the contested land being conveyed to an original defendant’s granddaughter), by unearthing and verifying VRO land records and resolving disputes in the village court by convincing all parties to accept the distribution of property selected by a random draw of lots (Ojha 2017).

In addition to examining the role of female pradhans in facilitating title transfers and settling land disputes, I consider the obstacles to challenging traditional inheritance rights when female representatives are involved. I suggest that the impact of quotas will vary on the basis of the perceived “cost” to status quo beneficiaries of the rights that female representatives are seeking to enforce. Prereform, when these rights are procedural and nonthreatening enough for the cost to be only symbolic, I expect female gatekeepers to improve women’s inheritance of notional fragments of land. Unlike procedural rights, however, gender-equalizing property inheritance reforms require the relinquishment of tangible benefits, and therefore, I expect quotas leading to amplified enforcement of these rights to generate a more intractable resistance. Furthermore, social norms about property inheritance are frequently intertwined with institutions that dictate familial obligation. This leads to two observable implications.

First, I propose that when female gatekeepers effectively enforce new land inheritance laws, a resulting backlash occurs, which mitigates female empowerment or nullifies it altogether. This prediction is in line with a growing body of research finding resistance to India’s gender-equalizing inheritance reforms across multiple domains: parents’ increased premortem land transfers to sons (Roy 2015), relative increases of male suicide rates (Anderson and Genicot 2015), and greater sex selection against daughters (Rosenblum 2015).

An Odisha-based woman’s case exemplifies the magnitude of the conflict when a female pradhan is present: in 2016 Sunanda, 36, demanded her share of her recently deceased father’s nine-acre farmland. With the female-led panchayat in the background, she made a straightforward claim to inheritance: “Land had been sold to finance the marriages of my two sisters. Since I had not married, I had an equal claim to a portion of the remaining land.” Her brothers disagreed. “Die or run away—they would say every day.” Two months later they chased her out, battering a wooden rod against her head until she lost consciousness. The panchayat intervened, negotiating a portion of the ancestral home for Sunanda and her mother. They procured a state pension and subsidized food and made space for Sunanda’s tailoring shop in the community center. “Life would have been so different if I had known my options [i.e., pradhan-led negotiation of rights] earlier,” said Sunanda (Awasthi 2017).

Fear of backlash by brothers to a sister’s demand for inheritance was a common theme over my two years of field research. In one woman’s words: “As a boy [inheritance] is his right. So if [my parents] give [inheritance] to me, others will tell the boy he got less [than he should], so he will quarrel, litigate, fight. So they [parents] won’t give and we won’t ask.”⁸ Recent survey work confirms the strength of the opposition: 53% of 1,440 female respondents to a Landesa survey in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh report that brothers will not accept a sister’s claims to land (Sircar and Pal 2014, 12). Typically, pressure is brought on sisters to renounce rights. This can range from “encouragement” to sign away inheritance to explicit challenges: court cases or possession of land by force (Gowen 2016). Chowdhry (1997, 1026) suggests that fears of “the property insecurity that results from women’s new property inheritance rights” have led “rural patriarchal forces” to “pose the inheritance right of a daughter and a sister to be against that of the brother.”

How do women surmount these hurdles? Female pradhans are changing how women conceive of their rights. In the words of one lawyer: “Formally, no one educates women about their [legal inheritance] rights, [except] these [female political] leaders and the [local] women’s groups [they support].” In contrast, where women are not the political gatekeepers “it is all about being proactive and coming forward to contest their rights” alone.⁹

How do female gatekeepers effectively apply this new political power? They revolutionize how women occupy the

8. Author’s interview no. 13, November 14, 2010, Chompi Village, Araku, Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

9. Author’s interview with R. B., January 7, 2017, at AV College, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

public sphere, create *new* public spaces for women's benefit, and repurpose private spaces. In Maharashtra, female pradhans explicitly encourage "women's attendance at public *Gram Sabha* meetings. As . . . women began participating . . . their views and opinions got reflected in the decision-making process. Gradually the resistance by opponents declined" (Birvaykar and Yadav 2012, 4). Another common strategy is the creation of new space where young and old women gather to learn their legal rights and the procedures for securing them. Finally, we see a shift in the private sphere, where women meet female elected "representatives at their homes and [confide] their problems" (Brown, Ananthpur, and Giovarelli 2002, 45). Women clearly benefit: sisters and daughters claim rights to parental property without any "visible value judgment or social censure attached" (45).

Accounts from across India confirm that reservations simultaneously alter women's public and private identities. In Banswara District, Rajasthan, "women's representation had generated self-confidence among women, changed their thinking and countered their fears. There was a perceived sense of unity among women on gender issues. This had increased women's participation and identification with the *Panchayat*" (Buch 2010, 171). As gatekeepers, women also alter parental attitudes about marriage, such as in Haryana where a mother notes that she "not only gave up the *ghunghat* [veil] but also married off her two sons without taking dowry [from brides]" because of her female pradhan's influence (JaagoRe 2014).

Pasupathi, a female gatekeeper based in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, "a region infamous for its girl-child killing," obtained government approval and funding for a women's community center on the village's common land. With Pasupathi at the helm, young and old women from Pullaneri village meet together to be educated about their legal prerogatives and how to fight for social change "from cradle [against female infanticide, which as a result is no longer common] to the classrooms (where there still are pressures)" and marriage, by countering expectations for expensive dowries (Girls Count 2016). Such public promotion of women's rights changes family dynamics. As another woman in the same district explains: "After the meetings, women have demanded their rightful share of property. In fact, brothers have given [shares] to their sisters. This happened because they know we're aware of our rights." The combination of legal acumen and opportunities to farm agricultural land has leveled the prior hierarchy in her family: "When we were young, father used to eat first at home. Now, all of us sit around and eat together" (Girls Count 2016).

My field research showed that the loss men expect and fear from reform deviates dramatically across individuals. I found that resistance by brothers diminishes as sisters pro-

pose ways to moderate their loss. Specifically, women entering marriage markets at or after receiving equal rights have agency to strike mutually beneficial bargains with family members, precluding resistance by exchanging their traditional share of inheritance—monetary dowry—for land inheritance. In contrast, women who have already exited marriage negotiations by the time a female gatekeeper is elected are at the mercy of their brothers.

A group of fathers confirmed the importance of marriage negotiations as the ideal time to distribute a daughter's share of land inheritance in lieu of dowry if that were to occur: "We will spend more money on daughters' marriage [i.e., monetary dowry] via our land incomes and loans [from property]—this is why we are not in a position to give land to daughters. It would be an injustice to sons."¹⁰ In other words, marriage negotiations are crucial to determining the balance of family resources that sons and daughters receive. As one VRO explained: "At the time of marriage, parents [may] consider giving daughters land [in place of monetary dowry]."¹¹ Such trades free up more ancestral resources for brothers.

Female pradhans are particularly attuned to young women's need for support during this critical juncture. The greatest challenges occur when women are too young to marry legally (18 is both the legal marriage age and the mean for REDS 2006/9 round): one female gatekeeper elected in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, temporarily sheltered a 14-year-old girl whose parents tried to force her out of school and into marriage—negotiating a return of her monetary dowry to fund future land inheritance.¹² Female gatekeepers also use their physical presence to ensure that land titles for plots divided equally between brothers and sisters at the time of a sister's marriage are properly documented and recorded by the VRO.¹³ In one village run by a female pradhan, half of the 48 women I interviewed have land in their names, many via an inheritance their parents gave equally to daughters and sons.¹⁴

As gatekeepers, women also alter broader parental attitudes about marriage. These negotiations are radically different when a female gatekeeper is not involved. Days before K. Bina Devi was married in Rajasthan, the typically all-male cadre of village elders assembled in her house as witnesses.

10. Author's focus group discussion no. 3, November 29, 2011, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh.

11. Author's interview with a tehsildar, March 25, 2010, Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh.

12. Author's interview, Y. W. and class, January 18, 2016, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh.

13. Author's interview with N., April 11, 2010, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh.

14. Author's interview, April 7, 2010, Village B., Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh.

They watched as she and her sister signed away their land inheritance shares to four brothers in exchange for receiving dowry. The ceremony is so common it has a (tragic) name: *haq tyag*, meaning “sacrifice of right.” Ms. Devi explains that noncompliance with this “voluntary” ritual has a cost: “If we don’t do it, our family will boycott us. Our relationship with the family will break, and people will speak ill of us” (Chandran 2016).

In sum, marriage negotiations are decisive moments for formalizing or waiving women’s property rights and the time when pradhans have the opportunity to play a life-changing supporting role. In the next section, I test the hypotheses presented here: the importance of female gatekeepers—and the timing of women’s access to them—for inheritance and two mechanisms central to their impact (their ability to mobilize female public participation in gram sabha meetings and to mediate private, intrahousehold disputes).

DATA AND IDENTIFICATION STRATEGY

Data

My primary data set is NCAER’s REDS. I rely on the most recent 2006/9 round, which covers 8,659 households from 240 rural villages across 17 Indian states. In addition to standard demographic questions, the nationally representative survey records all land transfers between the household heads and their siblings, parents, spouse, and children, plus adult household residents’ political participation and perceptions of local governance. These data provide detailed accounts of individual property inheritance in contemporary India.

I study all female respondents born between 1956, when women gained symbolic property rights, and the year their state equalized their property rights, culminating in the national mandate of 2005 (1976–2005).¹⁵ In total, the sample comprises 31,729 women with a mean age of 31 years, 48% of whom (15,230) have fathers whose death occurs after their village pradhan seat is reserved for women. On average, 4% of women inherit land (tables A.6 and A.7).

Identification strategy

I use India’s quasi-random implementation of reservations for women as elected heads of village councils—constitutionally mandated as of 1993—to identify representation’s impact on enforcement of women’s property inheritance rights. These rights were legislated at different times by the various Indian states. Thus, the year of reform varies from state to state. All culminated in the 2005 passage of a national mandate equal-

izing property inheritance rights for men and women (details in fig. A.9 note). I compare daughters with fathers who die at or after the year their village pradhan seat was reserved for a woman with those whose fathers died prior. If the father’s revenue village (hereafter village; the division where ancestral property is typically located) has been reserved for a woman in any election occurring up to the year of his death, I code his daughter as “treated” by reservations. I focus on the time of paternal death as the relevant point for reform enforcement, as it determines a daughter’s eligibility for gender-equal inheritance. She is eligible if her father dies postreform. Reform timing varies by state, from 1976 to 2005 (fig. A.9). I estimate

$$y_{isk} = \alpha_s + \beta_k + \gamma_{sk} + \delta'R_{is} + \delta''D_{isk} + \delta'''D_{isk} \times R_{is} + \theta X_{isk} + \varepsilon_{isk}. \quad (1)$$

The dependent variable of interest, y_{isk} , is a binary indicator of whether a daughter i , born in state s , in year k , inherits any land. It takes the value 1 if a given woman inherits any land and 0 otherwise. This outcome is the most parsimonious measure of impact. The independent variables of interest identify whether individuals are treated by reservations and eligible for gender-equal inheritance. Variable D_{isk} is a binary indicator of treatment: whether a given daughter i , born in state s -specific cohort k , has a father who died at or after the first year his village’s pradhan seat was reserved for a woman. Variable R_{is} is a binary indicator of eligibility: whether daughter i ’s father dies after his state s legislates gender-equal inheritance rights. Here, δ''' ’s coefficient indicates representation’s impact on daughters eligible for reform. Women whose fathers die before village-level reservation and state-level reform are the control group. I include α_s as a placeholder for state fixed effects, to account for state characteristics that are invariant across birth cohorts. Further, β_k represents birth year fixed effects, to capture changes in the economy, policy, or society that occur at the macrolevel, affecting particular birth cohorts; γ_{sk} represents state-year of birth fixed effects; and X_{isk} is a vector of predominantly household-level control variables: number of female and male siblings, caste status, total number of children, region, and wealth status. Standard errors are clustered at the village level to address concerns about geographic correlation and heteroscedasticity. I present ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis for ease of interpretation.¹⁶

The identifying assumption is quasi-random rollout for reservations. To test this, I confirm balance across villages with and without reservations for female pradhans (table A.1) and

15. Roy (2015) finds parental investment changes post-HSAA, so I exclude these births.

16. See tables A.15, A.19, A.23, and A.24 for logit analysis; see tables A.12 and A.13 for replications.

individuals whose fathers die pre- versus postimplementation of reservations (table A.2), check that REDS records of reservation status consistently predict the pradhan’s gender for each village’s elections (table A.3) and at paternal death (table A.4), map spatial variation in reservation implementation (figs. A.2, A.3, and A.4), compile the first comprehensive summary of their implementation mechanisms (table A.5), exclude states without as-if-random or timely implementation of reservations and villages not genetically matched, and confirm this results in a balanced sample of villages (tables A.8, A.9, and A.10; fig. A.8).

Next, I test whether female gatekeepers are more effective at enforcing inheritance reform when female constituents have the greatest intrahousehold bargaining power. To investigate this hypothesis, I exploit the leverage women gain over resource distribution at the time they enter marriage negotiations, that is, the point at which a daughter is typically given monetary dowry. If female pradhans are effective advocates for women who enter marriage markets eligible for gender-equal inheritance—when they can assist women in securing land titles in their names rather than dowries, which are typically given to in-laws—access to female representatives should be particularly valuable.

Here, I analyze the differential effect of reservations and reform for daughters less than age 20 at the time of reform (the treatment group) versus 20 or more (the control group). I choose a cutoff point of age 20 because this is the time by which three-quarters of daughters have begun marriage negotiations (fig. A.7). I use the following equation to estimate the impact of reservations and reform, conditional on women’s age at reform:

$$\begin{aligned}
 y_{isk} = & \alpha_s + \beta_k + \gamma_{sk} + \delta' R_{is} + \delta'' D_{isk} + \theta' B_{is(k-20 \leq k \leq k-1)} \\
 & + \delta''' R_{is} \times D_{isk} + \theta'' B_{is(k-20 \leq k \leq k-1)} \times R_{is} \\
 & + \theta''' B_{is(k-20 \leq k \leq k-1)} \times D_{isk} + \delta'''' B_{is(k-20 \leq k \leq k-1)} \\
 & \times R_{is} \times D_{isk} + \lambda X_{isk} + \varepsilon_{isk}.
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{2}$$

The main coefficient of interest (δ'''') measures the impact of reservations for women entering marriage markets as they become eligible for reform ($B_{is(k-20 \leq k \leq k-1)} = 1$). If reservations enable female pradhans to catalyze negotiations for a daughter’s inheritance rights in a manner benefiting all members—by renouncing monetary dowry in favor of land inheritance—I expect to see behavior change most dramatically among women entering marriage markets.

ANALYSIS

Figure 1 uses the raw data to map variation in women’s land inheritance alongside treatment by reservations and eligibility

for reform, respectively. There is a sharp, discontinuous jump in the likelihood of inheritance for women whose fathers die after reservations are implemented in their villages before inheritance reform (fig. 1A). The nonoverlapping confidence intervals for treated and untreated women indicate that treatment by reservations significantly increases the likelihood of female inheritance (as my gatekeeper theory predicts). However, postreform, reservations may cause resistance (fig. 1B). This suggests that female gatekeepers are relevant for enforcement of women’s inherited property rights.

Reservations and women’s inheritance

I begin by testing the impact of reservations on the likelihood of female inheritance in the presence versus the absence of gender-equal rights for three samples of target women whom reform was intended to benefit (those with landowning parents who are subject to Hindu law): the full sample, the sample excluding the subset of states with biased mechanisms to implement reservations, and this subset also excluding late implementers. Table 1 presents the regression results using equation (1). The effect of reservations prereform, δ'' , is positive and significant at the 90% confidence level across all specifications (cols. 1–4, p -values = .058–.087). Absent reform, women with fathers who die after reservations inherit 6 percentage points more land—increasing the frequency of female inheritance from 10.3% to 16.3%. The magnitude is small, but an increase of 6 percentage points in a population of 1.34 billion, where 92.4% of the rural population—67% of India—live in landholding families, implies 23.6 million more women would inherit land. Absent reservations, daughters whose fathers die after gender-equalizing reform do not inherit more land than others after controlling for family characteristics (cols. 2–4). Political representation is thus a powerful tool motivating women to claim inheritance prereform.

In contrast, the impact of reservations postreform, δ''' , is significant and less than zero for all specifications. Among women eligible for reform, treatment by reservations significantly decreases the likelihood of inheritance by 8–9 percentage points (table 1, cols. 1–4, p -values = .006–.009), potentially indicating male resistance where enforcement of gender-equal inheritance rights is credible. These results are robust to excluding sisters without brothers (table A.14); logistic regression analysis of the full, target, and genetically matched samples following Sekhon and Titiunik’s (2012) replication study (table A.15); OLS analysis of the full and genetically matched samples (table A.16); and placebo tests (table A.17).¹⁷

17. All logit regression analysis results are robust to use of residential village-level fixed effects; the same holds for OLS analysis except for the

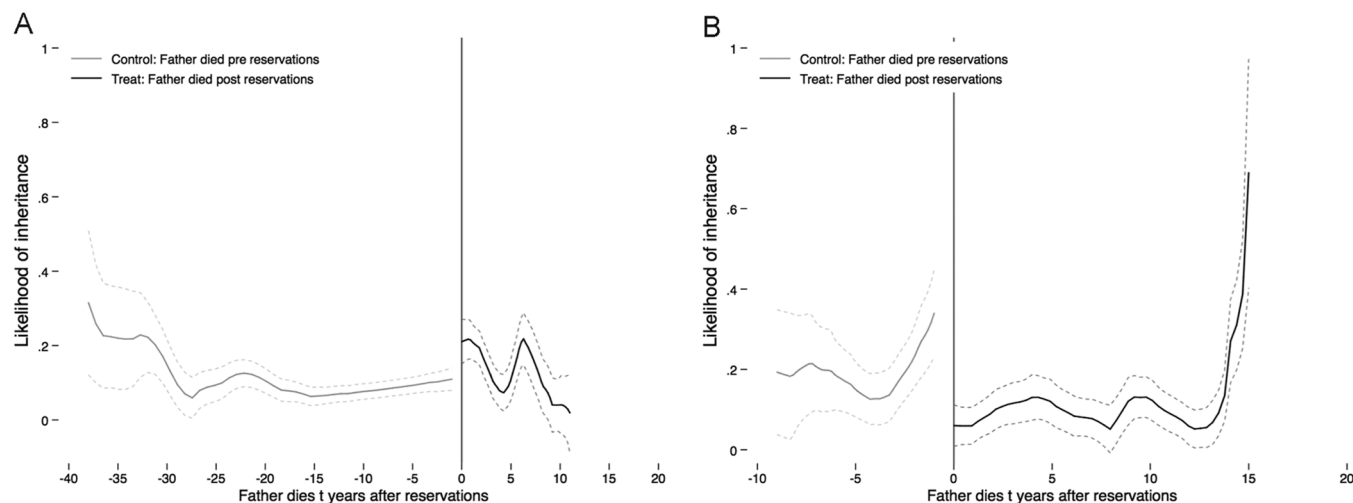


Figure 1. Reservation's impact on women's inheritance: A, women whose fathers died prereform; B, women whose fathers died postreform. Sample includes Hindu women from landowning families who were born post-1956 Hindu Succession Act but before their state-specific HSAA's passage. Excludes women whose fathers reside in states that do not assign reservations randomly (Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu). X-axis represents the time (t) when a father passed away relative to the introduction of reservations in his village. Y-axis represents the probability of inheritance. Points represent the average probability of inheritance for individuals whose fathers passed away t years after the first reservation for an elected female head of their village. (Source: NCAER REDS, 2006/9.)

To understand how successful reservations are at facilitating women's demands for substantial inheritance, I examine whether reservations change the amount of land women actually inherit rather than simply their probability of inheriting. Postreform, if female gatekeepers are successful, this share of inheritance should grow. However, if resistance by brothers dominates, representation should not increase the acreage women inherit. Regressions using equation (1)'s format with area inherited as the dependent variable indicate paternal death post- versus prereform increases women's inheritance by 0.08–0.09 acres (table A.18, cols. 2–4, p -values = .038–.060; fig. A.5). In landholding Hindu families, women's mean ownership is 0.03 acres; reservations prereform quadruple this amount. In contrast, postreform, women do not inherit larger shares. These results suggest backlash by brothers when they anticipate female gatekeepers will enforce equal inheritance rights.

Reform, reservations, and marriage markets

If backlash by brothers to the enforcement of property rights is responsive to the anticipated cost, we should see resistance and its impact on inheritance by sisters change alongside variation in their demands. To test this hypothesis, I exploit women's influence over intrahousehold resource distribution at the time they enter marriage negotiations. If women trade monetary dowry (an indirect benefit) for land inheritance in their

own names (a direct benefit), this should lower the net cost of gender-equalizing reform to brothers' subsequent inheritance. Results (table 1) are robust to excluding sisters without brothers (table A.14); logistic regression analysis of the target, full, and matched samples (table A.19); OLS analysis of the full and matched samples (table A.20); and placebo tests (table A.21).¹⁸

Considering δ''' , reservations continue to have a significant, negative impact on women's likelihood of inheritance for those who have exited marriage markets by the time they receive gender-equal inheritance rights. Paternal death post-reservations and reform decreases women's inheritance by 9–10 percentage points, significant at the 99% confidence level across all specifications (table 1, cols. 5–8, p -values = .004–.007). This confirms female representation spurs resistance to gender-equalizing inheritance reform, particularly among women whose demands are perceived as costly because they have already received a dowry.

Second, I calculate the additional effect of reservations on enforcement of reform among women who are entering marriage markets when they gain gender-equal inheritance rights, that is, women less than age 20 at reform with fathers who die postreform (δ''''). Treatment by reservations increases these women's probability of inheriting land by 15–19 percentage points, significant at the 99% confidence level for all specifications (table 1, cols. 5–8, p -values = .002–.007; fig. A.10). Paternal death post- versus prereform makes these women

interaction term, for which standard errors increase in some specifications, reducing its statistical significance. Results available on request.

18. Results are robust to use of residential village-level fixed effects and are available on request.

Table 1. Reservation's Impact on Women's Inheritance

	Target (1)	Target (2)	Target-NR (3)	Target-NR- Late (4)	Target (5)	Target (6)	Target-NR (7)	Target-NR- Late (8)
Father died postreservations	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)	.06 ⁺ (.03)
Father died postreform	-.05*** (.01)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	-.04** (.02)	.02 (.02)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)
Father died postreform and postreservations	-.09** (.03)	-.08** (.03)	-.09** (.03)	-.09** (.03)	-.10** (.03)	-.09** (.03)	-.09** (.03)	-.09** (.03)
Age <20 at reform					.00 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreform					-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.05)	-.02 (.05)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreservations					-.13** (.05)	-.17** (.06)	-.17* (.07)	-.17* (.07)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreform and postreservations					.15** (.05)	.18** (.06)	.19** (.07)	.19** (.07)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted R ²	.05	.07	.08	.08	.05	.07	.08	.08
N	11,826	11,826	10,698	10,259	11,826	11,826	10,698	10,259

Source. REDS 2006/9, NCAER.

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the village level in parentheses. Dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether women inherit. "Target" includes only landed, Hindu women who were born post-1956 Hindu Succession Act but before their state-specific HSAA's passage. "Target-NR" excludes states that do not assign reservations for female pradhans randomly (Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu). "Target-NR-late" excludes nonrandom implementers of reservations and the two states to implement women's reservations over 10 years after constitutional amendments: Bihar (2006) and Jharkhand (2010). Controls include caste status, total number of children, number of female and male siblings, region, and wealth status.

+ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

with access to female gatekeepers 10.3 percentage points more likely to inherit land (fig. A.6). This lends support to the hypothesis that where women can use the bargaining power of female representatives while their marriages are being brokered and lower the cost to brothers of equal land inheritance rights, they experience a lasting gain: property in their name.

Overall, table 1 provides evidence that quotas are a powerful inducement for women to claim equal property rights. In contrast, placebo tests that measure the simple or complex impact of reservations find no significant effect (tables A.17 and A.21). Prereform, reservations increase the frequency and magnitude

of female inheritance. Postreform, reservations result in fewer women inheriting land but only where reform is costly to brothers. I next investigate the mechanisms through which women's local political representation may alter enforcement of female inheritance rights and subsequent behavior through two channels: political (participation in and responsiveness of the local government) and economic (the dynamics of dowry exchange).

Reservations and political participation

How does exogenously imposing local political representation for women catalyze enforcement of gender-equalizing

inheritance reform? I first explore the political impact of female representation, asking: Do reservations encourage women to more easily voice demands, including those for the enforcement of legal rights, by increasing their willingness to engage with local government? Prior research finds conflicting evidence based on studies of distinct regions of India (Ban and Rao 2008; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). NCAER's REDS 2006/9 round enables me to identify the effect of reservations across 17 major Indian states.

Here, I examine the impact of current reservations for the gatekeeper on women's current participation in local governance, to ensure maximum accuracy of recall on participation (prior treatment—tied to paternal death—captured gatekeeper impact on inheritance):

$$y_{ivsk} = \alpha_v + \beta_k + \gamma F_{ivsk} + \delta r_{vs} + \gamma' F_{ivsk} \times r_{vs} + \mu X_{ivsk} + \varepsilon_{ivsk}. \quad (3)$$

The dependent variable of interest, y_{ivsk} , is a binary indicator of whether a given adult citizen, i , residing in revenue village v , located in state s , born in year k , acknowledges participating in the most recent meeting of the gram sabha, convened by the gatekeeper (pradhan). I study the influence of gender, where F_{ivsk} equals 1 when an individual is female; a revenue village's treatment by the latest reservations, r_{vs} , which equals 1 when the pradhan is currently reserved for women; and their interaction. Given the importance of local institutions for implementing reservations, tables use fixed effects for residential (clusters of revenue) village, the finest-grained data available for individuals (α_v), birth year (β_k), and the vector of household-level control variables in equations (1) and (2).

If reservations improve women's engagement with the state, I expect to observe heightened attendance by women at gram sabha meetings where villages are currently reserved for a female pradhan. Table 2 presents the results of OLS regression analysis.

The impact of gender, γ , is negative and significant across all specifications, confirming that men dominate local governance (Chhibber 2002). Indeed, women are 17–29 percentage points less likely than men to report participating in the most recent village gram sabha meeting (table 2, cols. 1–4, p -values = .000). Reservations (δ) significantly reduce overall participation by about 23 percentage points (table 2, cols. 3 and 4, p -values = .000). The additional effect of reservations on women, γ' , increases participation by 7–9 percentage points, significant at the 95%–99% confidence levels for all samples (table 2, cols. 1–4, p -values = .002–.017; see also table A.22). Female gatekeepers nearly halve the gender gap in participation in all specifications with controls. However, this gain for women comes at the cost of men's engagement,

given the significant negative coefficient on reservations (δ). This supports the consistent finding of increased intrafamily distributional conflict over scarce property resources where reservations are in place (tables 1 and A.18; fig. A.11).

These findings provide preliminary support for my proposed political mechanism: reservations differentially increase women's participation in local government, exposing gatekeepers to greater contact with female constituents. This increases women's capacity to exert public pressure on gatekeepers to be responsive.¹⁹ Indeed, citizen demands in political forums frequently center around rights' enforcement (Kruks-Wisner 2011). According to a State Women's Commission head: "After 1993 [reservations], there was a lot of change. . . . Before, men just sat in *Panchayat* meetings, but now women participate, speak up. Because of the *Panchayat Raj* Amendments, there is a shift in political leadership. . . . [But] social empowerment must occur within the household—husbands must accept wives' power and independence and not interfere with politics. . . . This takes time."²⁰

Reservations and dispute resolution

Next, I consider the ability of reservations to alter private, intrahousehold negotiations over land rights. I propose that female gatekeepers empower women entering marriage markets to claim inheritance rights without encountering backlash explicitly because they are effective mediators. In one woman pradhan's words: "Our people should not knock at the court doors. They should not set foot inside the police station. They would feel humiliated by compromising issues elsewhere. This should be settled in the *Panchayat* itself" (Peraje 2011, 3). If this holds more generally, I expect to see more males and females evaluating their elected representative as highly effective at mediating social disputes—including over land and marriage—where the pradhan seat is reserved for a woman. If female gatekeepers are effective but biased, I anticipate women will differentially assess them as highly effective. OLS regression analysis follows equation (3), with the main dependent variable being a three-tier measure of the current gatekeeper's success at resolving social conflicts: from high efficacy (3) to medium (2) and low (1). Table 2 presents results (cols. 5–8).

Analysis finds significant improvements of 54–56 percentage points in assessments of gatekeeper efficacy where reservations are in place (table 2, cols. 5–8, p -values = .000). Reservations have no additional benefit for women. This suggests that reservations provide an effective mediator for

19. Table A.11 finds that women's political participation is positively correlated with inheritance (additional analysis in Brulé 2020).

20. Author's personal interview, January 24, 2014, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Table 2. Reservation's Impact on Women's Participation in Gram Sabha and Pradhan's Effectiveness

	Attendance				Effectiveness			
	All (1)	All (2)	All-NR (3)	All-NR- Late (4)	All (5)	All-NR (6)	All-NR (7)	All-NR- Late (8)
Female	-.29*** (.02)	-.19*** (.02)	-.17*** (.02)	-.17*** (.02)	-.05*** (.01)	-.00 (.01)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Latest pradhan seat reserved for woman	-.59*** (.02)	.03 (.02)	-.23*** (.02)	-.23*** (.02)	.56*** (.02)	.56*** (.02)	.54*** (.02)	.54*** (.02)
Female × reservations	.09** (.03)	.09** (.03)	.07* (.03)	.07* (.03)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.00 (.02)	-.00 (.02)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted R ²	.43	.45	.41	.41	.24	.24	.20	.20
N	23,570	23,570	18,765	18,300	22,343	22,343	18,013	17,571

Source. REDS 2006/9, NCAER.

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the village level in parentheses. For cols. 1–4, the dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether a respondent attended the latest gram sabha. In the control group, 41% of men and 11% of women participate on average. For cols. 5–8, the dependent variable is a three-tier scale representing respondents' evaluation of the pradhan's "ability to solve social problems, such as disputes over land, marriage, etc." Ranking varies from high (3) to medium (2) or low (1). For maximum accuracy of recall, analysis is restricted to the current pradhan. In the control group, mean effectiveness rankings are 2.02 for men and 1.97 for women. "All" includes all adult (age 18 years or more) women residing in surveyed households born post-1956 Hindu Succession Act and prestate HSAA. "All-NR" excludes states that do not assign reservations for female pradhans randomly (Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu). "All-NR-late" excludes nonrandom implementers and the two states to implement women's reservations over 10 years after constitutional amendments: Bihar (2006) and Jharkhand (2010). Controls include caste status, total number of children, number of female and male siblings, region, and wealth status.

+ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

all household members willing to engage the state on private, social disputes—the bulk of which are likely to be over the related issues of land and marriage. As a State Women's Commission head noted: "Women . . . move differently, as elected officials they will be talking [directly] to women and families. Women, as opposed to men, will try to get these problems sorted out."²¹ Results support the hypothesis that female gatekeepers enable women to collaboratively renegotiate contested familial resources.

Reservations and dowry

For female gatekeepers to be significant sources of support for women, they should alter private, economic transactions within families as well as public, political behavior. In particular, we should see women who enter marriage markets

with equal inheritance rights and access to female pradhans negotiating a broader set of entitlements, trading monetary dowries for personally receiving titles to ancestral property. I test this hypothesis with help from NCAER's 2006/9 REDS question about the amount of monetary dowry each female respondent received at marriage.

I analyze monetary dowries using OLS regression analysis in the form of equation (2). Table 3 presents the results. If female gatekeepers increase women's ability to demand land inheritance rights at the time of marriage negotiations, I expect to see fewer monetary dowries for the subset of women who enter marriage markets with gender-equal inheritance rights when reservations exist (δ'''). Indeed, these women are 10–28 percentage points less likely to receive dowry than women who enter marriage markets without gender-equal inheritance rights and a potent political voice (table 3; fig. A.12). Results are significant at the 95%–99.9% confidence levels and robust to OLS and logit analysis of the full and genetically matched

21. Author's personal interview, January 24, 2014, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Table 3. Reservations' Impact on Women's Dowry

	Target (1)	Target (2)	Target-NR (3)	Target-NR-Late (4)
Age <20 at reform	-.01 (.04)	.03 (.02)	.05** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Father died postreservations	.03 (.02)	-.00 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Father died postreform	-.65*** (.03)	-.18*** (.02)	-.19*** (.02)	-.18*** (.02)
Father died postreform and postreservations	-.11** (.04)	.00 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreform	.05 (.05)	.03 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreservations	.27*** (.04)	.11** (.04)	.09* (.04)	.09* (.04)
Age <20 at reform × father died postreform and postreservations	-.28*** (.06)	-.14** (.04)	-.10* (.04)	-.10* (.04)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cohort fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted R ²	.55	.78	.80	.80
N	11,826	11,826	10,698	10,259

Source. REDS 2006/9, NCAER.

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the village level in parentheses. Dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether women receive dowry from their natal families. "Target" includes only landed, Hindu women born post-1956 Hindu Succession Act but before state-specific HSAA. "Target-NR" excludes states that do not assign reservations for female pradhans randomly (Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu). "Target-NR-late" excludes nonrandom implementers of reservations and the two states to implement women's reservations over 10 years after constitutional amendments: Bihar (2006) and Jharkhand (2010). Controls include caste status, total number of children, number of female and male siblings, region, and wealth status.

+ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

samples (tables A.20 and A.24) and logit analysis of the target sample (table A.24).

Overall, analysis presents a nuanced picture of the ability of female representatives to enforce gender-equalizing land inheritance reform in India. When women's property rights are limited, reservations that exogenously impose female gatekeepers enable women to demand and receive effective enforcement of land inheritance rights (tables 1 and A.18). Reservations increase women's ability to demand effective enforcement of economic rights via political participation and improve all evaluations of local officials' efficacy at resolving social disputes including those involving land rights (table 2).

However, representation-enabled enforcement of gender-equal inheritance rights bears a higher cost for men, potentially decreasing their access to scarce ancestral resources and their political engagement (table 2). Reservations may thus catalyze intrafamily conflict leading brothers to resist gender-

equal inheritance rights (table 1). Indeed, the act of claiming such rights is viewed as inherently destabilizing traditional norms. As a senior researcher on North India explains, "In the past, in order to return a brother's love, one would never claim land. Now girls are willing to put their foot down and demand [equal] rights."²²

The enforcement of gender-equal land rights does present one source of optimism about the ability of female representatives to foster broader economic equality: when women enter traditional inheritance negotiations—marriage markets—with female representation and equal inheritance rights, they can negotiate mutually beneficial economic exchanges with brothers. This diminishes the cost of reform to brothers, reducing backlash while increasing the realization of women's economic rights (tables 1 and 3).

22. Author's personal interview, January 29, 2014, Delhi, India.

CONCLUSION

Quotas that increase women's local political representation provide an effective channel for them to demand enforcement of the property inheritance rights that have been theirs since 2005 nationally. Representation enables women to lobby pivotal local officials—gatekeepers—for such enforcement while simultaneously seeking resolution to multiple land-related disputes. Across India, where reservations are in place, women are more likely to inherit property. However, political representation coupled with enforcement of gender-equalizing property inheritance rights has an unintended consequence—male resistance—which decreases women's inheritance. Backlash is strongest against women unable to negotiate acceptable trade-offs.

In contrast, women entering marriage markets around or after reform (those less than age 20 at reform) can leverage reservations to effectively demand rights, while at the same time reducing the “cost” to brothers by renegotiating entitlements to household wealth across multiple domains. This represents a net gain for women, who part with dowry in favor of land titled in their own names.

In sum, women's descriptive representation can improve local access to property rights in democracies with limited enforcement capacity such as India. Yet, resistance accompanies these changes when representation occurs alongside meaningful expansion of women's economic entitlements. In the case of India's inheritance reforms, legislators expected that gender-equal inheritance rights would increase the value and position of daughters.²³ Instead, growing evidence of increased dowry costs, male suicide rates, and female infanticide suggests inheritance reform is costly for females and their families (Anderson and Genicot 2015; Rosenblum 2015; Roy 2015). This places a burden on policy makers to identify and mobilize appropriate support for vulnerable groups, so that reform becomes a catalyst for mutually beneficial shifts in resource distribution.

This study is relevant for scholars and policy makers interested in reducing gender inequities as well as other forms of social, economic, and political imbalance around the globe. My findings underline the necessity of further research into the consequences of reforms aiming to simultaneously reshape economic rights and social conventions. Globally, such reforms span the gamut from more inclusive regulation of labor markets to broader refugee rights. Reform often has contradictory effects, generating backlash alongside improving equality—from the American civil rights movement to India's

abolition of “untouchability” with subsequent political and economic quotas. Overall, this article's analysis suggests that quotas for women's representation will be successful at incentivizing economic gender equality only to the extent that they also provide women with resources to pursue enforcement of these rights in ways that open space for all parties to benefit.

At the end of the day, how do women advance? Connecting economic rights to political voice is not a new concept. Historically, women's suffrage in the West has been tied to property inheritance. In other regions of the world, women have gained the right to political participation without the ability to inherit and control property. The promise of my gatekeeper theory is that quotas for female representatives open doors for women to claim what may be tiny plots of land but with transformational power.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Bina Agarwal, Jim Alt, Swetha Ballakrishnen, Neal Beck, Jonathan Bendor, Sonia Bhalotra, Rikhil Bhavnani, Lisa Blaydes, Teddy Brett, Maria Carreri, Kanchan Chandra, Pradeep Chhibber, Klaus Deininger, Jim Fearon, Aparajita Goyal, Avner Greif, Michael Harsch, Francesca R. Jensenius, Saumitra Jha, Dorothy Kronick, Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner, Beatriz Magaloni, Christopher Paik, Arturas Rosenas, Sanchari Roy, and Hannah Simpson for invaluable feedback. I would like to thank Andrew Foster for kindly providing access to the REDS 2006 data set and Hari Nagarajan and everyone at the National Council of Applied Economic Research, in particular Jai Pal Singh, for help in navigating the data set. Aruna, Anupam Chatterjee, D. Gopi, Jamuna Pachuri, and the rest of Andhra Pradesh's Society for the Elimination of Rural Poverty made this research possible. Components of this research were carried out on the High Performance Computing resources at New York University Abu Dhabi. Ankita Banerjee, Clarissa Lehne, Mai Mahmoud, Norbert Monti, Rajiv Naresh, and Aliz Toth provided essential research assistance. I also thank three anonymous reviewers for their constructive advice. Previous versions of this manuscript were presented at the University of California, Berkeley; the London School of Economics; the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies; and Stanford University workshops and at the American Political Science Association's annual conference and the annual conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. All errors are my own fault.

REFERENCES

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. 2001. “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation.” *American Economic Review* 91 (5): 1369–401.

23. Author's interview with a member of Parliament, Hyderabad, January 24, 2014.

- Agarwal, Bina. 1994. *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Albertus, Michael. 2015. *Autocracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, Siwan, and Garance Genicot. 2015. "Suicide and Property Rights in India." *Journal of Development Economics* 114:64–78.
- Atkeson, Lonna Rae, and Nancy Carrillo. 2007. "More Is Better: The Influence of Collective Female Descriptive Representation on External Efficacy." *Politics and Gender* 3 (1): 79–101.
- Awasthi, Puja. 2017. "Beaten but Unbowed—Sunanda Sahoo's Silent Struggle." People's Archive of Rural India, July 5. <https://bit.ly/2wAEWtm> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Ban, Radu, and Vijayendra Rao. 2008. "Tokenism or Agency? The Impact of Women's Reservations on Village Democracies in South India." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 56 (3): 501–30.
- Banerjee, Abhijit, and Esther Duflo. 2011. *Poor Economics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Bardhan, Pranab, and Dilip Mookherjee. 2010. "Determinants of Redistributive Politics: An Empirical Analysis of Land Reforms in West Bengal, India." *American Economic Review* 100 (4): 1572–600.
- Barnes, Tiffany D., and Stephanie M. Burchard. 2013. "Engendering Politics: The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Women's Political Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (7): 767–90.
- Beaman, Lori, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2009. "Powerful Women: Female Leadership and Gender Bias." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124 (4): 1497–540.
- Beaman, Lori, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2010. "Political Reservation and Substantive Representation: Evidence from Indian Village Councils." In *India Policy Forum*, vol. 7. New Delhi: National Council of Applied Economic Research, 159–201.
- Beaman, Lori, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2012. "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India." *Science* 335 (6068): 582–86.
- Becker, Gary. 1981. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Besley, Timothy, and Robin Burgess. 2002. "The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117 (4): 1415–51.
- Bhavnani, Rikhil R. 2009. "Do Electoral Quotas Work after They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India." *American Political Science Review* 103 (1): 23–35.
- Birvaykar, Santosh, and Lakshmi Yadav. 2012. "Women in Governance." In Sriparna G. Chaudhuri and Sourabh Ghosh, eds., *Thus Spoke the Press*, vol. 7. New Delhi: Hunger Project, 1–8.
- Brown, Jennifer, Kripa Ananthpur, and Renee Giovarelli. 2002. "Women's Access and Rights to Land in Karnataka." Research Report, Rural Development Institute, Seattle.
- Brulé, Rachel. 2020. *Women, Power, and Property: The Paradox of Gender Equality Laws in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buch, Nirmala. 2010. *From Oppression to Assertion: Women and Panchayats in India*. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Burns, Nancy, Kay L. Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. *The Private Roots of Public Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bush, Sarah S. 2011. "International Politics and the Spread of Quotas for Women in Legislatures." *International Organization* 65 (1): 103–37.
- Chandra, Kanchan. 2004. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chandran, Rina. 2016. "Forced by Tradition to Give Up Inheritance, Indian Women Embrace Property Ownership." Reuters, November 2. <https://reut.rs/2IErLft> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Channa, Anila, and Jean-Paul Faguet. 2016. "Decentralization of Health and Education in Developing Countries: A Quality-Adjusted Review of the Empirical Literature." *World Bank Research Observer* 31 (2): 199–241.
- Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra, and Esther Duflo. 2004. "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India." *Econometrica* 72 (5): 1409–43.
- Chauchard, Simon. 2014. "Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs about a Stigmatized Group? Evidence from Rural India." *American Political Science Review* 108 (2): 403–22.
- Chhibber, Pradeep. 2002. "Why are Some Women Politically Active? The Household, Public Space, and Political Participation in India." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 43 (3–5): 409–29.
- Chowdhry, Prem. 1997. "Enforcing Cultural Codes: Gender and Violence in Northern India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (19): 1019–28.
- Clayton, Amanda. 2015. "Women's Political Engagement under Quota-Mandated Female Representation: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment." *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (3): 333–69.
- Clots-Figueras, Irma. 2011. "Women in Politics: Evidence from the Indian States." *Journal of Public Economics* 95 (7): 664–90.
- Dasgupta, Aditya, Kishore Gawande, and Devesh Kapur. 2017. "(When) Do Anti-poverty Programs Reduce Violence? India's Rural Employment Guarantee and Maoist Conflict." *International Organization* 71:605–32.
- Deininger, Klaus, Aparajita Goyal, and Hari Nagarajan. 2013. "Women's Inheritance Rights and Intergenerational Transmission of Resources in India." *Journal of Human Resources* 48 (1): 114–41.
- Desai, Satyajee A. 2010. *Mulla: Hindu Law*. 21st ed. Nagpur: Lexis Nexis.
- Dunning, Thad, and Janhavi Nilekani. 2013. "Ethnic Quotas and Political Mobilization: Caste, Parties, and Distribution in Indian Village Councils." *American Political Science Review* 107 (1): 35–56.
- De Soto, Hernando. 2000. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic.
- Fouka, Vasiliki. 2016. "Backlash: The Unintended Effects of Language Prohibition in US Schools after World War I." Working paper no. 591, Stanford Center for International Development.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2014. "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition." *American Political Science Review* 108 (3): 499–519.
- Ghatak, Maitreesh, and Maitreya Ghatak. 2002. "Recent Reforms in the Panchayat System in West Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37 (1): 45–58.
- Girls Count. 2016. "Case Study 6: Pasupathi's Efforts in Pullaneri Village; Campaign in Tamil Nadu." Girls Count. <https://bit.ly/2KWecSy> (accessed April 26, 2018).
- Gowen, Annie. 2016. "It's Not Easy for Women to Own Land in India: One Woman Died Fighting for Hers." *Washington Post*, September 29. <https://wapo.st/2K6fVYU> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. 2004. "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (4): 725–40.
- Herring, Ronald. 1983. *Land to the Tiller: The Political Economy of Land Reform in South Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Iyer, Lakshmi, Anandi Mani, Prachi Mishra, and Petia Topalova. 2012. "The Power of Political Voice: Women's Political Representation and Crime in India." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 4 (4): 165–93.
- JaagoRe. 2014. "5 Women Sarpanch Leaders Showing India the Way Forward." JaagoRe. <https://bit.ly/2IgQ14f> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Jensenius, Francesca. 2015. "Development from Representation? A Study of Quotas for Scheduled Castes in India." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7 (3): 196–220.
- John, Mary E. 2007. "Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of Local Urban Governance." *Economic and Political Weekly* 42 (9): 3986–93.

- Kruks-Wisner, Gabrielle. 2011. "Making Claims: Citizenship and Service Delivery in Rural India." MIT Political Science Department Working paper no. 16.
- Lawless, Jennifer L. 2004. "Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation." *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (1): 81–99.
- Mabsout, Ramzi, and Irene Van Staveren. 2010. "Disentangling Bargaining Power from Individual and Household Level to Institutions: Evidence on Women's Position in Ethiopia." *World Development* 38 (5): 783–96.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1983. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "On the Idea That Participation Makes Better Citizens." In Stephen L. Elkin and Karen E. Soltan, eds., *Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 291–325.
- Mayaram, Shail. 2002. "New Modes of Violence: The Backlash against Women in the Panchayat System." In Karin Kapadia, ed., *The Violence of Development*. London: Zed, 393–424.
- Mendelberg, Tali, Christopher Karpowitz, and Nicholas Goedert. 2014. "Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women's Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 291–306.
- Norris, Pippa, and Mona Lena Krook. 2009. "One of Us: Multilevel Models Examining the Impact of Descriptive Representation on Civic Engagement." APSA 2009 Meeting paper.
- North, Douglass, and Robert Thomas. 1973. *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- North, Douglass, and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *Journal of Economic History* 49 (4): 803–32.
- O'Brien, Diana Z., and Johanna Rickne. 2016. "Gender Quotas and Women's Political Leadership." *American Political Science Review* 110 (1): 112–26.
- Ojha, Anil K. 2017. "Woman Sarpanch in Bihar Settles 20-Year-Old Land Dispute in 6 Days." *Hindustan Times*, June 16. <https://bit.ly/2ImKMjQ> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Okimoto, Tyler G., and Victoria L. Brescoll. 2010. "The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash against Female Politicians." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37 (2): 923–36.
- Peraje, N. Karanta. 2011. "A Bold Leadership for the Panchayat Court." In Sriparna G. Chaudhuri and Sourabh Ghosh, eds., *Thus Spoke the Press*, vol. 6. New Delhi: Hunger Project, 1–6.
- Posner, Eric. 2000. *Law and Social Norms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rao, Bhanupriya. 2018. "Tamil Nadu's Women Leaders Live, Work in the Shadow of Violence." *India Spend*, April 21. <https://bit.ly/2qNdsvk> (accessed April 26, 2018).
- Reingold, Beth, and Jessica Harrell. 2010. "The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Women's Political Engagement: Does Party Matter?" *Political Research Quarterly* 63 (2): 280–94.
- Rosenblum, Daniel. 2015. "Unintended Consequences of Women's Inheritance Rights on Female Mortality in India." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 63 (2): 223–48.
- Roy, Sanchari. 2015. "Empowering Women? Inheritance Rights, Female Education and Dowry Payments in India." *Journal of Development Economics* 114:233–51.
- Sachs, Jeffrey. 2005. *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. New York: Penguin.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet, and Rocio Titunik. 2012. "When Natural Experiments Are neither Natural nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 106 (1): 35–57.
- Sharma, Kumud. 2004. "From Representation to Presence: The Paradox of Power and Powerlessness." In D. Bandyopadhyay and Amitava Mukherjee, eds., *New Issues in Panchayati Raj*. New Delhi: Concept, 48–66.
- Sircar, Ashok, and Sohini Pal. 2014. "The Formal and Informal Barriers in the Implementation of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005." Technical report, Landesa.
- Vasavada, Shilpa, and Meena Rajgor. 2015. "Role of PRIs in Asserting Women's Inheritance Rights to Land: Experience and Learning of Working Group of Women and Land Ownership, Gujarat." Working Group for Women and Land Ownership, Gujarat.
- Villa, Monique. 2017. "Women Own Less than 20% of the World's Land." *World Economic Forum*, January 11. <https://bit.ly/2kcqIKn> (accessed March 26, 2018).
- Wolbrecht, Christina, and David E. Campbell. 2007. "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (4): 921–39.
- World Bank. 2009. "Gender Issues in Land Policy and Administration." Research Report, World Bank, Washington, DC.