

# Women Who Only Serve Chai: Gender Reservations and Autonomy in India

By  
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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the experiences of women city councilors in Jaipur, in the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan. These women, brought into office through a gender quota instituted over two decades ago, have overcome significant barriers in an enduringly patriarchal environment. Even in office, women continue to face stigma and normative restrictions imposed by a society not entirely willing to accept them in such a public and independent position. This standard enables men, technically blocked by the gender quota from holding office themselves, to continue to exert control and influence over women office-holders, even sidelining them in many cases. The narratives of these women demonstrate the persisting power of patriarchal norms, and the inability of corrective democratic institutions to completely exclude their influence. However, their stories also force reconsideration of democratic ideals and requirements, most of which have been conceptualized from a firm Western mooring in individualism, with little regard for the alternatives posed by developing democracies rooted in more communal societies. These findings are based on 41 semi-structured elite interviews with elected members of the Jaipur Municipal Corporation, and eight additional semi-structured interviews with journalists, women's rights activists, and student political leaders in Jaipur.

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**Abbreviations**

JMC	Jaipur Municipal Corporation
GBM	General Board Meeting
MP	Member of Parliament
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
INC	Congress Party
GEN	General-castes & Communities
GEN(W)	General Woman Castes & Communities
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OBC(W)	Other Backward Classes Woman
SC	Scheduled Castes
SC(W)	Scheduled Castes Woman
ST	Scheduled Tribes
ST(W)	Scheduled Tribes Woman



## **Chapter 1: Gender, Representation, and Reserved Seats**

This dissertation investigates the experiences of women city councilors in Jaipur, the “pink city” of palaces and history in the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan. These women, brought into office through a gender quota instituted over two decades ago, have overcome significant barriers in an enduringly patriarchal environment. Even in office, women continue to face stigma and normative restrictions imposed by a society not entirely willing to accept them in such a public and independent position. This standard enables men, technically blocked by the gender quota from holding office themselves, to continue to exert control and influence over women office-holders, even sidelining them in many cases. The narratives of these women demonstrate the persistent power of patriarchal norms, and the inability of corrective democratic institutions to completely exclude their influence. However, their stories also force reconsideration of democratic ideals and requirements, most of which have been conceptualized from a firm Western mooring in individualism, with little regard for the alternatives posed by developing democracies rooted in more communal societies.

This chapter begins by placing this dissertation within the existing literature on women’s representation and the use of quotas to improve representational inequalities. The research question animating both the existing literature and this dissertation is whether institutional reforms that increase female representation can be successful in the context of a strongly patriarchal society. Through the examination of gender quotas in India, this research sheds light on the societal and institutional obstacles that can restrict gender quotas from achieving real gender equality. I then discuss the primary case used for this analysis: the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), and the principal subjects: the JMC councilors who provided the narratives

used throughout this dissertation. Finally, I finish with a brief outline and summary of the dissertation.

As I will argue in this dissertation, gender quotas established in India have not comprehensively improved female representation on multiple levels. First, while these quotas have been effective at establishing and maintaining descriptive female representation, they do not incentivize women to stay and develop the experience and ability that is critical to establishing substantive representation and making in-roads into state and national levels of representation. Second, I find that significant numbers of women brought into politics by the gender reservation are proxies of ambitious husbands or fathers blocked by the gender reservation. Due to a lack of independent experience and social restrictions, these women are highly dependent on male supporters to carry out their official responsibilities. In counterpoint, I find that gender quotas have also brought in independent women who have established themselves to be as capable as any of their male colleagues. Critically, many of these independent women have made politics a career and provide societal exposure that could both encourage voters to revise stereotypes and prejudices, and inspire future female leaders. Still, all the narratives from these women, dependent and independent, demonstrate the inescapable constraining influence of their patriarchal environment, as they all rely to differing degrees on male supporters and family. Powerful patriarchal norms temper the ability of institutional quotas to improve female political participation. Parental and societal attitudes on political engagement for young women, gendered family traditions that significantly alter the accessibility of the political environment to married women, societal normative constraints on women engaging in public and political actions, and challenging institutional environments require a woman seeking political office to utilize and rely upon the support of men to be successful. Overall, these

findings illustrate the unexpected problems that can emerge when embedding an institution within a society. We cannot assume that the institution will be able to exclude or overcome normative influences.

### **Do Gender Quotas Work? State of the Literature**

Electoral quotas take various forms, as either party quotas, candidate quotas, or reserved seats (Dahlerup et al, 2013; Krook, 2010). Party quotas are internally established political party rules that require a specific percentage of its own candidates to be women. These rules are not imposed by constitutional or electoral requirements, and are adopted on a volunteer basis. Candidate quotas are mandatory requirements imposed by constitutional or electoral rules, which require all parties to field a specific percentage of women as candidates, but do not guarantee that they win. Finally, reserved seats specify a percentage of seats in an electoral body that can only be contested by women, guaranteeing a minimum number of women in office.<sup>1</sup>

Analyzing electoral results provides valuable information on the overall efficacy of instituted gender quotas, particularly if efficacy is based on an aggregate unit of measurement, such as the number of women in office. Electoral gender quotas have been shown to significantly increase the number of women elected to these political bodies when adequately enforced. Research has demonstrated that quotas have improved the number of women in national legislatures in cases such as Afghanistan, Argentina, and Rwanda (Dahlerup & Nordlund, 2004; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Longman, 2006), but less so in countries such as France (Murray, 2010). Quotas also appear to have been more effective in recent decades than in previous time

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<sup>1</sup>There are several methods of filling these seats: separate electoral districts or lists for women, best-loser systems that select unelected women with the most votes, or appointment systems for winning parties (Hughes et al, 2017).

periods (Hughes, 2009; Paxton & Kunovich, 2005; Paxton et al, 2010; Paxton & Hughes, 2015). Furthermore, gender quotas can improve the placement of women in leadership positions, which could accelerate the growth of women in public office overall (O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; Bhavnani, 2009; Darhour & Dahlerup, 2013; Kittilson, 2006). Indeed, the investigation of the historic underrepresentation of women is rooted in quantitative studies that began analyzing the discrepancies in female representation across developed democracies over three decades ago. These broad analyses generally focused on variations in institutions, culture, and social norms that affected the number of women winning legislative office.<sup>2</sup> However, these studies are limited in evaluating the effectiveness of quotas because they primarily treated the dependent variable (women's representation) as dichotomous (either a woman was in the seat or she was not). The quality of representation is essentially equated with greater numbers of female office-holders, or descriptive representation. Challenging this, a branch of scholarship has emerged that asserts increased representation leads to positive political changes only if women representatives are more than simply bodies in seats (Weldon, 2002). Specifically, this scholarship argues for the importance of substantive representation, or the notion that female representatives need to support and initiate policies of concern for their female constituents, who are typically ignored or under-prioritized by male representatives.<sup>3</sup> Critically, this scholarship brings the individual into

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<sup>2</sup> This includes the form of electoral system and rules (Caul, 1999; Costa Benavides, 2003; Darcy et al., 1994; Htun, 2002; Htun and Jones, 2002; Norris 1985; Rule, 1987; Russell, et al 2002; Tripp et al, 2006), the effectiveness of institutionalized gender quotas (Jones, 1998; Jones and Navia, 1999; Jones, 2004; Krook, 2010; Matland, 2006; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Tripp and Kang, 2008; Yoon, 2004), democratic experience (Tremblay, 2006), societal norms and political cultures (Inhetveen, 1999; Meier, 2004; Tremblay, 2007), elite compliance (Jones, 1996; Schmidt and Saunders, 2004), institutional legitimacy (Yoon, 2001), and party systems, characteristics and ideology (Araújo, 2003; Davidson-Schmich, 2006; Goetz and Hassim, 2003; Kittilson, 2006; Murray, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Within the literature, supporting women's issues is generally defined as supporting policies that improve the provision of healthcare, social support, education and economic status of women; and addressing inequalities in political and personal freedoms for women (Bratton, 2005).

the analysis, by expanding the focus to the dynamics that link descriptive representation to substantive representation: changes in preferences, policy output, legislative style, and constituent service that are brought about by expanding the number of women in office.

### **Substantive Representation and Quotas**

Bringing the individual into the analysis adds nuance to our understanding of gender and preferences. Differences in the individual preferences of female and male representatives are not inherent to gender: women do not support women's issues simply because they are women. Instead, their support is based on a lifetime of experiences unique to women, which links their priorities to the core needs of female constituents. Correspondingly, we expect male representatives, based on their own experiences, to have a better understanding of male constituents and their needs. Furthermore, women representatives are in touch with shifting contemporary issues through their connections with women's organizations and leaders on the ground (Mansbridge, 1999; Urbinati and Warren, 2008; Weldon, 2002). These experiences and connections create the crucial link between winning office and substantively representing constituents.

An interview with a *parshad* from the historically-disadvantaged Scheduled Tribes community who had experienced discrimination as a girl exemplifies how life experiences were connected to her political actions:

At university other classmates would discriminate against me and another girl from the untouchable caste, whom I used to eat lunch with together. We would sit alone, and others would sit apart from us.

In the slum area of my ward there was a section of the Valmiki community, manual scavengers, very low in the social hierarchy, untouchable. They can't use any public

areas for social gatherings, so when they contacted me, I built them a 2-story building for their functions.<sup>4</sup>

However, for women to bring their life experiences and understanding to the political process, they ultimately must win office. Women account for nearly half of the world's population, but only 23-percent of elected representatives at the national level. Recognizing the cultural stereotypes and institutional restrictions that discourage both female participation and candidate selection, gender quotas have been introduced across 130 countries (Hughes et al, 2017) to enable women to break into these positions of power that have historically been resistant to equal inclusion (Dahlerup, 2006; Geissel & Hust, 2005). While representation for women has been slowly increasing historically across democracies, quotas are designed to accelerate this growth substantially (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005).

The problem is that research has also shown the many ways of subverting quota implementation. Variation in party-list rules can allow parties to relegate women to unwinnable list positions (Jones, 1998; 2004); parties often ignore quota rules if compliance is not effectively enforced (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009); and loopholes in wording (Htun, 2002) or even a perceived lack of legitimacy (Yoon, 2001) can lead to decreased quota effectiveness (Krook, 2010). The literature has extensively investigated the many ways formal quota rules can be violated or disregarded. However, this dissertation will describe a case where formal quota rules are being thoroughly followed and enforced, yet quota effectiveness continues to be subverted by informal practices. While the quota-mandated minimum of number of women are elected each electoral cycle, the narratives I present in the upcoming chapters demonstrate that in many ways these

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<sup>4</sup>Interview on 10/14/2016 with female *parshad* in Jaipur.

women continue to be significantly constrained by patriarchal norms and have been sidelined by male family members who use them as proxy representatives.

### **The History of Gender Reserved Seats in India**

In India, parliamentary debate over a proposed “Women’s Reservation Bill”, which would expand gender reservations to the state and national levels, has drawn on empirical and anecdotal evidence on the effectiveness of already existing reservations at the local level. There is general recognition that these local reservations bring hundreds of thousands of women into local politics every election (Gochhayat, 2013), most of whom would not be able to participate otherwise. However, it is also hard to ignore that only an incredibly small percentage have been able to move up to the state legislatures (Vidhan Sabha) or to the lower house (Lok Sabha) and upper house (Rajya Sabha) of the national parliament. Despite the implementation of the gender reservation at the local level in 1992, as of 2018, the number of women in the national parliament and across state assemblies has practically remained stagnant over the past two decades, hovering around 11% at the national level and often lower across state assemblies. Parties are still not nominating many women beyond the minimum required to cover the reserved seats at the local level, and even less in state and national elections. Ideally, the gender reservation system at the local level would provide a platform for women to move into state and national politics without a reservation, but this is not happening. Several reasons have been floated for why this goal is not being achieved. Lok Sabha MP Varun Gandhi publicly claimed in 2017 that, despite the gender reservation system, historic gender inequalities have been maintained within party hierarchies, with women consistently kept out of key posts and women’s

groups “atrophying” as they are exploited for “social events and campaigning” only.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, opinion pages discuss fears of rampant tokenism within existing gender-reserved seats, as reports have spread of “*parshad-patis*” and “*sarpanch-patis*”, literally the husbands of the city councilor (*parshad*) or village head (*sarpanch*), which are joking “official titles” for husbands who control their elected wives.

Permeating the discussion, but not always clearly voiced, is a broader debate over the appropriate role of women in politics and society in general. A quote from a floor speech given against the institution of state and national gender reservation two decades ago by current male Rajya Sabha MP, Sharad Yadav, has recently resurfaced in this debate, which frames continuing concerns about women pursuing a more public life:

Do you think these women with short hair can speak for women, for our women ...?<sup>6</sup>

Contained within this statement is an implicit challenge to the “modern” women who dare to eschew traditional dress and adopt Western hairstyles. These “women with short hair”, symbolize the progressive women who are challenging a patriarchal society not entirely prepared to accept them. This statement also invokes a class-based argument as well. Women who adopt these modern modes of dress tend to come from the relatively less-conservative forward-castes, as opposed to the women from the more disadvantaged communities, who still wear their hair long in the traditional style. This controversial statement is designed to instill skepticism of the

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/The-14-years-journey-of-Womenrsquo-Reservation-Bill/article16550273.ece> {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/The-14-years-journey-of-Womenrsquo-Reservation-Bill/article16550273.ece> {Accessed 6/23/2018}.



proposed national reservation by implying that forward-caste women, given their inherent socio-political advantages, will monopolize such a reservation at the expense of the lower classes.

Current demographics support their argument to a degree, as a small number of forward-castes continue to hold a disproportionate share seats in the Lok Sabha, and disadvantaged communities have faced a declining share of seats.<sup>7</sup> However, likely more concerning for men such as MP Yadav, who come from an historically marginalized community, is their vulnerability to any political advances made by women. Based on experience, forward-caste men in the national parties generally have less to fear from women making in-roads, as their parties have traditionally protected them at the expense of men from these disadvantaged communities (Jensenius, 2016).

Lacking within this debate however, is any real clarity on the success or failure of the gender reservations already instituted at the local level, as the arguments of both sides are driven by political motivations. The primary question remains unanswered – why have so many women, hundreds of thousands, been brought into politics by the gender reservation at the local level but not pushed their way up to the state or national legislatures? Women’s representation in these state and national bodies has barely increased since the local reservations were instituted over two decades ago.

This dissertation will discuss several constraining institutional factors that could be to blame: parties unwilling to nominate more women than mandated and the exclusion of women

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<sup>7</sup> Many of these individuals come from nationally dominant Brahmin and Rajput castes, and currently hold over five times their population share in Lok Sabha seats. See: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-representation-gap-2/> {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

from positions of power within the party, institutional disincentives to make politics a career, and a lack of politically experienced women incentivized to challenge men at these higher levels. However, the existence and power of each of these obstacles raises a bigger question as to how effectively the gender reservation has empowered women to politically participate within a patriarchal society. Do reservations give women the confidence to run for office, empower them to be effective representatives, *and* give them access to the patrons and influence within critical political networks that will allow them to make inroads into politics on a national scale? As this dissertation will demonstrate, while the gender reservation has been effective at increasing the number of women in office, it does not have the intrinsic power to provide confidence, autonomy and capability, particularly in the face of powerful societal norms that work to constrain women. These findings contribute to our understanding of the interaction between electoral institutions and the society they operate within, and specifically illustrate the inability of electoral institutions to overcome the influence of powerful patriarchal norms.

### **Gender Quotas and the Jaipur Municipal Corporation**

To answer these questions, I conducted a series of interviews with councilors (*parshads*) elected to the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), the primary governing institution of Jaipur city. Established in 1994, the JMC is responsible for maintaining the civic infrastructure and essential services, such as roads, sanitation, water, education and health, for the city of 3.1 million, tenth largest in the country, as well as carrying out associated administrative duties. To accomplish these tasks, the JMC raised approximately \$165 million over the 2015-16 budget to

fund approximately \$159 million in expenditures.<sup>8</sup> The JMC is essentially split in two between separate, and often opposing, wings. The deliberative wing is composed of 91 *parshads*. The executive of the deliberative wing is composed of a *parshad* mayor selected from among themselves, and a CEO appointed by the chief minister of the state.<sup>9</sup> The administrative bureaucratic wing is generally headed by a Commissioner appointed from the Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS), the state civil service. *Parshad* elections are held in single-member districts (SMD), more commonly referred to as wards, on a first-past-the-post basis. These have been held every five years since 1994, with the fifth elected body currently serving as of 2018.

Jaipuri elections are dominated by the two national parties, Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The national decline of Congress was already in full swing by the time the JMC was created in 1992 and the two parties have traded power off and on ever since. Congress has found itself recently in the minority, particularly after the national wave in BJP support that accompanied the rise of Narendra Modi to PM in the 2014 elections, which gave the BJP 64 seats to Congress' 19, alongside eight independents. While identity politics are active, neither party aligns itself firmly along caste lines, which would risk alienating significant portions of the electorate. The most notable divisions appear more along religious lines, as most Muslim candidates align themselves with Congress, with few joining the BJP.

The *parshad* office has been assigned a variety of responsibilities. As discussed, *parshads* are responsible for the maintenance and improvement of civic infrastructure within

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<sup>8</sup> JMC Summary of Budget for the Period 2015-2016. See: [http://jaipurmc.org/PDF/Budget/Jp\\_BUDGET2015-16.pdf](http://jaipurmc.org/PDF/Budget/Jp_BUDGET2015-16.pdf) {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

<sup>9</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur.

their wards, which includes arranging, funding, and overseeing actual contractors. While their role likely differs across the rest of India, in Jaipur, *parshads* also serve as a key intermediary between the state and citizens seeking public goods, particularly in the documentation process. *Parshads* provide the signatures that verify a citizen lives in their ward and is therefore eligible for certain national and state poverty alleviation programs, such as food ration cards.<sup>10</sup> They are also a primary interlocutor in the zoning process and land transfer schemes, which is critical in rapidly developing urban areas such as Jaipur.

*Parshads* are also deeply involved with their communities. While they are formally tasked with multiple communal functions, such as developing local schools and hospitals, they are also informally expected to involve themselves in a myriad of other local issues, such as resolving land disputes between constituents, advising local law enforcement, mediating domestic disputes, assisting in job and school placements, and serving as a social leader of their own caste or community within their ward. Higher level politicians, such as state legislators (MLAs), also regularly pressure *parshads* within their constituency to ensure their agenda and pet projects are carried out on the ground. Overall, *parshads* serve as a “fixer” for their neighborhood. They provide the connection between the common people of their ward and the powerful bureaucracy and government who provide desired material benefits.

Indian political representation at all levels, but especially at the local level, is informed by communal norms. In contrast to the Western normative environment built more on individualistic mores, an Indian *parshad* is not at all surprised to be called in the middle of the

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<sup>10</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right’s activist in Jaipur.

night by constituents with a snake in the house or a father worried by a son who eloped with an unapproved girl.<sup>11</sup> *Parshads* are elected both to moderate the interaction between the citizen and government, and between citizens themselves. This responsibility, and the opportunity it presents, is the primary motivation aspiring politicians seek the *parshad* office.

On paper, the *parshad* is not very powerful. Budgetary and funding power within the JMC is largely held by the bureaucratic wing, who must approve most *parshad* funding proposals. If a bureaucrat wants to hold up a project, there is very little an individual *parshad* can do about it. Furthermore, under the Modi government, the shift to push more modernization programs from the center has created a federal government that relies more on, and provides more funding to, local bureaucracies than it does deliberative bodies.<sup>12</sup> Still, given the number of their formal and informal responsibilities, *parshads* are given authority and access across a broad number of governmental, bureaucratic, and social institutions. These connections create regular opportunities for standard patron-client relationships. Authority over the issuing of business licenses for example,<sup>13</sup> can be financially and politically leveraged. However, more strategically, *parshads* are inserted into a position of provider. As with most developing countries, economic vulnerability has been created by the inability of state institutions to deliver social welfare to

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<sup>11</sup> Interview on 3/21/2017 with male *parshad* in Jaipur.

<sup>12</sup> Additionally, in rapidly developing cities such as Jaipur, which have expanded so quickly over the past two decades by absorbing nearby villages and towns, significant jurisdiction is still held by the institutions tasked with developing rural land into urban cities, which in Jaipur is the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA). As the city expands, the JDA is expected to take land intended for rural use and improve it for urban use by installing necessary infrastructure, then hand it over to the JMC for residency and maintenance. However, the bureaucrats in the JDA are often hesitant to give up this land, and the accompanying revenue. In many cases, despite urban development, the JDA will hold onto parcels of land and transfer funds to the JMC for their maintenance. However, this leverage often puts the JMC in a fiscally dependent position, further restricting the ability of *parshads* to carry out their agenda (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur).

<sup>13</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur.

significant portions of the population. Resource scarcity and the lack of a reliable bureaucratic safety net provides ambitious politicians with the opportunity to step in as provider and protector, which can be a powerful mobilizer for aspirants looking to climb the political or social ladder (Alm, 2010; Price and Rudd, 2010).

Municipal corporations, like the rural *panchayats*, have a very important role to play, because that is the first step of politics.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, part of the incentive to pursue a *parshad* seat is the opportunity it presents as a step to higher office. Their broad base of responsibilities, and the connections required to service those responsibilities, establishes the *parshad* as the go-to person for the constituents of their ward, particularly those from their own community or caste. From my own interviews with parshads in the JMC, many listed “social work” or wanting to “serve the people” as a primary motivation. In his investigation of student politics in Uttar Pradesh, Jeffrey (2010) interprets the choice of these terms as intentional to both establish the authority of the leader as deriving from their societal contributions, as opposed to other types of authority common in India that stem from religious or lineal ties, and to reinforce their modesty and subservience to the communal good. Both aspects are common across political campaigns and candidates in India and appear to be electorally beneficial. While most *parshads* denied it during the interview, in the spirit of humility, many are likely aiming to build a foundation of political and social support that they hope to build on, whether they are aiming to rise within political or social power structures.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right’s activist in Jaipur.

## Conclusion: Re-examining Expectations

As I will discuss further in the next chapter, limiting the adoption of gender reservations to the local level stemmed both from a need to gain the support of men at the state and national levels who would have been threatened by a more extensive reservation, and carried an expectation that the reservation would still serve as a gate of entry and foundation that would support and propel larger numbers of women into higher levels of office. However, significant gains in female representation at the state and national levels have not been realized, and Indian activists and feminists have been warning for some time now of “tokens and show-pieces”, political actors that utilize the women’s movement vocabulary without putting the concepts into practice on a comprehensive scale (Ramachandran, 1995: 49). With this dynamic in mind, I approached my research on the JMC with an expectation that the reservation was not working entirely as intended. From previous experience in Jaipur, I had heard rumors of the *parshad-patis*, men who acted as proxy *parshads* through their wives to get around the gender reservation, and I expected to find a few situations where this was the case. However, I found significantly more cases than I expected, as nearly half of the women I interviewed were essentially proxies for their husbands or fathers. The prevalence of *parshad-patis* began to establish why so few women brought in by the reservation were moving from the local to higher levels of politics, as a significant number of them were *parshads* in name only. They gained little political experience, knowledge, or support structures to build on for a campaign at the state or national levels, as their husbands or fathers had sidelined them and essentially taken over the office.

The narratives from this dissertation will illustrate the ability of husbands and fathers to manipulate the reservation institution for their own benefit. The *parshad-pati* phenomenon

exposes three breakdowns in the implementation and design of the gender reservation. First, the phenomenon restricts the ability of the gender reservation to either empower women or address gender inequality. Second, it demonstrates the inability of electoral institutions to overcome powerful patriarchal norms. Finally, it displays continuing voter acceptance of severe gender power imbalances that reinforce patriarchal societal norms and discourage the development of future women leaders. Nonetheless, while the reality of the observed situation could prompt a declaration that the gender reservation has failed, instead this reality indicates how critical reserved seats are. Without them, gender equality in institutions such as the JMC would surely be worse. However, attempting to determine the overall success or failure of the gender-reservation system based on this cross-sectional analysis of one point in time is not appropriate or practical. It will take decades more to truly determine whether the reservation contributed to gender equality in the long term. Instead, this analysis should encourage a reexamination of what we expect from institutional efforts to impose gender equality. While useful, these institutions must function within the society they are implanted, and the power of electoral institutions to modulate the influence of incredibly powerful patriarchal norms is limited.

### **Structure of Dissertation**

Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides a foundation for the main analysis through a brief overview of the history of women in Indian politics since independence and the growth in demand for more equal representation in positions of power, which eventually spurred the constitutional reform that enacted gender quotas across India in local governance bodies. Chapter Two also explains the structure of the gender reservation and its complex interaction with pre-existing quotas for disadvantaged castes, which creates a system that significantly restricts who can and cannot run for office. Chapter Three then quantitatively examines how



successful the gender reservation institution has been at establishing and maintaining descriptive female representation. This analysis demonstrates that the reservation can deliver a minimum level of descriptive representation, but does not incentivize women to stay and develop the experience and ability that is critical to establishing substantive representation and making inroads into state and national levels.

Chapter Four shifts the analysis to the individual level and discusses the challenges encountered and changes made during the gathering, coding and analysis of 41 narratives from JMC *parshads*, which form the basis of this dissertation. Chapter Five then establishes a standard of representation that constitutes a “successful” gender quota institution based in the literature. For quotas to be considered effective, existing literature argues that women must be elected who are qualified, who successfully push the interests of women, who fundamentally alter the masculine political environment, and who consistently serve their constituents as their representative. These standards are then used to develop the measures used in the coding and analysis of gender reservations within the Jaipur Municipal Corporation.

The analysis of these narratives starts with the proxy representatives in Chapter Six. These women were brought into politics by ambitious husbands or fathers blocked by the gender reservation. Due to a lack of independent experience and social restrictions, these women are highly dependent on their husbands or fathers to carry out their official responsibilities. However, Chapter Seven provides a counterpoint with narratives from independent women in the JMC who were brought in by the gender reservation and have established themselves to be as capable as any of their male colleagues. Critically, many of these independent women have made politics a career and provide societal exposure that could both encourage voters to revise stereotypes and prejudices, and inspire future female leaders. Still, these narratives also

demonstrate the inescapable constraining influence of their patriarchal environment, as all of these women still rely on male supporters and family who enable them to attain that independence, which could be revoked by their enablers at any time. Chapter Eight uses the narratives from both the dependent and independent women to isolate and explain the powerful patriarchal norms that create a tension between the institutional quotas designed to improve female political participation and the social norms that continue to restrict such behavior. Parental and societal attitudes on political engagement for young women, gendered family traditions that significantly alter the accessibility of the political environment to married women, societal normative constraints on women engaging in public and political actions, and challenging institutional environments require a woman seeking political office to utilize and rely upon the support of men to be successful. Notably, reservation quotas are unable to independently prevent *parshad-patis* from gaining power through their wives and daughters, as these institutions still rely considerably on the voter themselves to screen such candidates.

Finally, Chapter Nine concludes with a discussion of the unexpected problems that emerge when embedding an institution within a society. We cannot assume either that the institution will be able to exclude or overcome normative influences, or that normative influences that we inherently rely on in other contexts to screen undesired candidates will be present across all societies and voters. However, small adjustments to the current system could provide improved outcomes. Furthermore, this dissertation raises awareness of alternate forms of legitimate representation. While the communal representation practices that illustrated in these narratives may appear incompatible with true democratic representation, it is important to focus on outcomes. The key question is whether communal support, such as that provided by a husband or family, facilitates or restricts a woman's legislative ability to act on her priorities.

Rather than declaring these gender quotas a failure, we should re-examine our standards to ensure that they are applicable across normative environments, not simply Western ones.

In sum, Chapter Two discusses the history of women politicians and demands for equal representation in India, and Chapter Three discusses the institutional design of the reservation system and its effects on representation. Chapter Four reviews the methodology used to gather and analyze the narratives used throughout this dissertation and Chapter Five places it within the existing literature on gender quota effects and expectations. Chapter Six examines the narratives from proxy representatives who are highly dependent on male family members, and Chapter Seven provides contrasting narratives from independent women representatives and illustrates how the quota system can be successful. Chapter Eight discusses the cultural and normative environment that creates and enables the proxy phenomenon and how women can break out of this environment to some degree and develop autonomy. Finally, Chapter Nine concludes with a review of the core findings of this dissertation, provides suggested adjustments to the current system that could improve outcomes, and argues for a pragmatic assessment of gender quota success considering the social reality and our own preconceived expectations.

## **Chapter 2: Gender and Politics in India**

This chapter provides a foundation for the rest of the dissertation with a brief overview of the history of women in Indian politics since independence, and the growth in demand for more equal representation in positions of power. These demands eventually spurred constitutional reform that enacted gender quotas across India in local governance bodies. Throughout this history, multiple themes emerge that still hinder the pursuit of gender equality today: resistance by male members, fearing for their own jobs, to the expansion of female political participation; parties unwilling to “risk” nominating women in anything but the safest electoral districts; social norms that restrict the ability of female candidates to engage in a full political campaigning; and dependence on male family members for economic and social support remaining critical to becoming politically competitive and independent.

The structure of these gender quotas is integral to understanding their impact on the political landscape. Gender quotas interact with pre-existing quotas for disadvantaged castes, creating a complex system that significantly restricts who can and cannot run for office. Furthermore, office-holders enter a unique system of local governance, which is tasked with regulating the rapid modernization and urbanization of both India’s economy and society. The women interviewed for this book are tasked with a broad range of responsibilities, from urban infrastructure to social mediation, and are presented with opportunities for political and private gain that enable them to use their position as a stepping stone.

### **Women Politicians in India**

India has a history of famously outspoken and powerful women at the highest levels of national politics. Former prime minister Indira Gandhi is the most notable, but several women have served as chief ministers (CM) of several of the largest states in the country. Alongside

political expertise and influence, these women are often comparable to their male colleagues in terms of charisma and public charm. Millions mourned when the notorious CM of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalithaa, died in 2017 during her 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive term. Mamata Banerjee has built a colossal career from grassroots student politics to currently leading the state of West Bengal into her 2<sup>nd</sup> term as CM. These women have challenged conservative gender stereotypes in a patriarchal society by imposing their strong personalities and political acumen in a traditionally male arena. There are many examples of women who are easily comparable to their male counterparts in all respects – politically savvy, imposing, and exploitative as well. Before her death, Jayalalithaa was accused of corruption on multiple accounts,<sup>15</sup> which were triggered by her famously luxurious tastes (Jensenius, 2018). Studies have even found that on average, women MPs are wealthier than their male counterparts (Basu, 2016).

Still, these exceptional cases cannot hide the fact that the overall number of women in Indian politics is still incredibly low. Across the two houses of federal parliament, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the percentage of women has slowly increased from 4.7 in 1952 to 11.8 in 2018.<sup>16</sup> Numbers can range even lower in the state legislative assemblies, the Vidhan Sabhas, with some assemblies having no women members at all to highs of 14 percent in others.<sup>17</sup> Conservative social norms also continue to restrict the conduct of even the most powerful women in politics (Jensenius, 2018). To preserve her reputation, former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and current cabinet minister Uma Bharati preferred to travel with her brother in

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<sup>15</sup> See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/Jayalalithaa-Sasikala-criminally-conspired-at-Poes-Garden-to-laundry-ill-gotten-wealth-SC/article17301596.ece> {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

<sup>16</sup> See: [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2145\\_A.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2145_A.htm) {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

<sup>17</sup> Election Commission of India, 2014 Electoral Statistics. See: [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/current/Electoral%20Statistics%20Pocket%20Book%202014.pdf](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/current/Electoral%20Statistics%20Pocket%20Book%202014.pdf) {Accessed 6/23/2018}.

respect of social expectations that women remain in the “protection” of male family members, which is common for most women politicians (Singer, 2007: 200). Moreover, the average female legislator still must contend with a staunchly conservative political environment, with many reporting sexual harassment, condescension, disregard and bigotry from their colleagues (Jensenius, 2018).

### **Demands for Representation**

Historical exclusion of women from political life has established a movement demanding more inclusion of women in politics dating back to at least 1917 (Guha, 1974). Early unifying issues centered on social reform, such as banning child marriage, widow protections, and education for women (Jensenius, 2018). These social issues united small groups of educated women in cities to form women’s organizations, who would eventually push their demands into the political arena (Forbes, 1999). A push for female suffrage was eventually adopted in 1918 by bigger players in the growing independence movement: the Congress Party, the India Home Rule League, and the Muslim League (Roy, 2005). These demands were initially rejected by the British colonial government, but the Government of India Act of 1919 gave the enfranchisement choice to newly established provincial assemblies (Simon, 1930).

As the independence movement grew, key leaders such as Gandhi encouraged greater female participation in resisting colonial rule (Basu, 1995). Eventually, recognition of the contribution of women to the movement provided a platform for renewed political equality demands. By 1930, every provincial assembly had granted women the right to serve as a legislator and broader suffrage to women on a selective basis (Jensenius, 2018). Women were still required to be married, educated and own property to vote, which limited real enfranchisement to an entitled few (Guha, 1974). Notably, Gandhi opposed the inclusion of any

kind of quotas (Jensenius, 2018), whether ethnic or gender-based, as he argued that the institution of quotas would only highlight and enhance social divisions (Jensenius, 2015). However, initial constitutional drafts, such as the Government of India Act of 1935, designated reserved seats for women and certain minorities at both the federal and provincial levels (GOI, 1942). However, the 1935 act continued to restrict female suffrage to educated women or women married to a tax-paying man (Singer, 2007). Moreover, the dominant Congress Party established a firm opposition to including quotas for women, and pressured the primary women's organizations into supporting this stance (Jensenius, 2018). Many of these women's organizations maintained this position, despite stagnant representation, until the 1970s (John, 2000).

As true independence approached, women were actively involved in the drafting of the national constitution (Agnihotri, 2012), but emerging party politics in independent India further sidelined demands for gender equality. Women who had been key members of the independence movement now had to compete for party nominations and appeal to voters, often against each other, which split the women's movement (Forbes, 1999). Demands for gender reservations were not supported by their male colleagues or by party leaders, and when electoral competition began, the parties primarily nominated upper-caste propertied men to run (Sarkar, 1989). As all those engaged in the movement scrambled for political power in the vacuum of independence, women were expected to compete with the rest of the party workers seeking office (Forbes, 1999).

In recognition of the important role women played in the independence movement, and to increase the party's appeal to women voters, leadership within the Congress party did try to further involve women in the party (Singer, 2007). In 1957, Congress even established an

informal 15-percent internal party nomination quota for women candidates (Katzenstein, 1978); however, compliance rates were uneven across states, and the number of women candidates was always significantly below the quota (Singer, 2007). On average, women only formed around 3-percent of parliamentary candidates until the late 1990s when rates finally increased above 4-percent, not reaching 7-percent until 2014 (Jensenius, 2018: 8). In retrospect, it appears likely that party leaders instituted the 1957 voluntary quota primarily to discourage any future demands for formal gender quotas (Jensenius, 2018).

The party nomination process itself created additional problems for women candidates. Women were generally nominated in urban constituencies, where the larger educated female population was expected to be more supportive. Campaigning in the city also removed the need for female candidates to travel publicly in the rural areas, where such outgoing behavior was perceived as inappropriate for women (Singer, 2007). However, by restricting available constituencies, the party shuffled these women into areas far from their political bases (Jensenius, 2018). Women candidates were further hampered by fiscal and social constraints, as they were usually economically dependent on male family members, and families were often not interested in providing the same level of fiscal support to the women in the family as they provided for the men (Guha, 1974). As electoral competitiveness in India became more dependent on financial backing and political “muscle” via family and party support networks (Michelutti, 2010; Vaishnav, 2017), the fiscal barrier to entry for women has remained steep (Jensenius, 2018).

Low representation and recognition of these barriers motivated a renewed push during the 1970s by the women’s movement for greater representation in political power structures. The parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women in India Report of 1974 was a key building



block. The report publicly discussed the considerable disadvantages and discrimination women faced across social, economic and political spheres, which triggered strong movements, largely urban, demanding rape and dowry-based violence protections from the government.<sup>18</sup> The discussion on gender quotas resurfaced as well. The Committee briefly considered supporting gender quotas in the state legislative assemblies, but argued that quotas were designed to ensure representation of disadvantaged communities not gender. As women were a category that intersected communities, quotas were deemed not appropriate (Guha, 1974). The Committee did recommend the adoption of voluntary internal party candidate quotas (Guha, 1974), but the number of women candidates remained low and, at the state and national levels, female representation rarely moved above 5-percent. A brief blip in 1984, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, pushed numbers temporarily higher as women candidates were unusually successful during the subsequent election, but these numbers quickly fell back to normal in the next election (Jensenius, 2018).

A key restraint on growth continues to be party nominations. Notably, the percentage of elected women MPs has been consistently higher than the percentage of women candidates, which could illustrate voter preference for women candidates, but as Jensenius (2018) argues, this phenomenon is instead a result of parties generally only fielding women in areas they are confident of winning. Other studies have found similar results – parties are risk-averse, and tend to nominate women in party strongholds (Spary, 2007). Prior to the 1990s, the nationally dominant Congress Party nominated many more women for parliamentary and state assembly seats than its primary national competitor, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (Jensenius, 2016:

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<sup>18</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur.

16). However, the BJP quickly caught up in 1990s, but primarily in districts reserved for disadvantaged minority castes and indigenous tribes. Therefore, the increase in women fielded by the BJP pushed out very few men from the forward-castes, and instead came at the expense of the least powerful male politicians, those from minority communities (Jensenius, 2016). Tellingly, interviews conducted by Singer (2007) describe party leaderships who have responded to pressures to include more women by fielding primarily minority women because they are much less likely to challenge the party hierarchy than forward-caste women.

### **Gender Quotas in India**

The initial opposition, encouraged by Congress Party leadership, to gender quotas by women's organizations largely dissipated by the 1970s. Recognizing the lack of progress, these organizations began a renewed push which led to the proposal of quotas across several states during the 1980s, and persuaded most states to institute reserved positions for women in local village councils, but these were usually nominated positions instead of elected and came with little power (Singer, 2007). Then, in 1983, the southern state of Karnataka established a 25-percent reservation for women across elected village and city councils (Jensenius, 2018), and enhanced the power of these local bodies by shifting key administrative positions to the district level.<sup>19</sup> Based on this concept, proposals to expand gender reservations at the local level to the entire country emerged in 1988 (GOI, 1988). These eventually culminated in the national parliament passing the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution in 1992, with little discussion (Tawa Lama-Rewal, 2005) and almost no political opposition (Kishwar, 1997), which Jensenius (2018) attributes to the fact that gender quotas at the local level did not affect male

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<sup>19</sup> Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur.

politicians at the national level. These amendments both instituted a 33-percent reservation of all local elected bodies for women, with a recommended level of 50-percent, and shifted a significant amount of power to these local bodies.<sup>20</sup>

Building on the rapid passage and lack of opposition to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, women's organizations quickly pushed for quotas at state and national levels (Krook, 2010). The Women's Reservation Bill proposing that 33-percent of seats across state assemblies and the national parliament also be reserved for women was introduced in 1996 (Menon, 2000). However, following the concerns discussed in Chapter One about "progressive" women monopolizing these reservations at the expense of "traditional" women, opposition quickly built across male politicians who argued that only forward-caste, upper-class women would be able to compete at the state and national levels (Jenselius, 2018). However, others have argued this claim was largely a ploy to derail the bill and protect their positions (Samujh, 2005). Ultimately, the Women's Reservation Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha (upper house), but continues to languish in the Lok Sabha (lower house) well into 2018.

### **Urban and Rural Bodies: Local Power Structures**

Aside from establishing gender quotas, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments significantly decentralized state governments across India. These amendments required each state to conduct elections at the local level and to devolve considerable powers of expenditure to local governance bodies (Bhavnani, 2009). These local bodies are divided into the urban local bodies

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<sup>20</sup>The *gram panchayats* (village councils) in particular had been considerably disempowered by previous governments more concerned with maintaining village vote banks than with local governance (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur).

(ULB), which govern urban centers, and the panchayati raj institutions (PRI), which govern rural India.

Urban local bodies, depending on the size of the city, range from the *nagar parishad* (city council) for the smallest cities to the *nagar nigam* (municipal corporation) for the largest cities. Regardless of the size, these bodies are tasked with maintaining governmental facilities and services for the city, from sanitation to roads to benefit programs. Each body is composed of both an elected deliberative wing and an unelected bureaucratic administrative civil service. Depending on the body, elected members of these bodies control a small budget of state funds that can be spent on improving their constituency, and can petition for more if needed. Broader power is given to the executive of the deliberative wing, which is elected by the deliberative members, who governs the city-wide budget creation process, of which the final product must be approved by the at-large body. However, allocated spending must be approved and carried out by the unelected bureaucratic wing, which significantly constrains and weakens the deliberative wing (Bhavnani, 2009).

The core unit of the panchayati raj institution is the village council (*gram panchayat*). *Gram panchayats* are then grouped under a block council (*panchayat samiti*).<sup>21</sup> Each council is composed of elected members and is supported by administrative bureaucracy. Like urban local bodies, *panchayats* are tasked with providing basic government services and benefits across the villages they represent; however, the bodies of the panchayati raj to a degree are more powerful than their urban counterparts. *Panchayats* have access to the National Rural Employment

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<sup>21</sup> These are the terms used to refer to both urban and rural institutions in Rajasthan, but change in other states across the country.

Guarantee (NREG) funds, which are designed to improve rural employment in the agriculture off-season by funding public works projects proposed by the *panchayats*.<sup>22</sup> Also in contrast to the ULB, constituents elect both the representatives who sit on the *panchayat* and the executive leader (*sarpanch* or *pradhan*). The *sarpanch* specifically is quite powerful. They have the final say on the investment of public funds (such as the NREG), and in the selection of beneficiaries. Furthermore, constituents are intended to participate to a degree in *panchayat* meetings, even voting on certain decisions made by their *panchayat* representatives (Beaman et al, 2010), a feature which is generally not supported in the ULBs.

Within the elected bodies of both the ULBs and PRIs, quotas in the form of reserved seats have been established for both disadvantaged communities and for women. As a note on terminology, both the terms “community” and “caste” are used throughout this dissertation, but with important distinctions. Community is a broader term referring to a group of people who share a uniting characteristic, which in India is generally location, history, religion, language, and/or caste. Caste is a more specific term referring to a group of people with a common lineage, who historically likely shared a common occupation, religion, geographical location, and relations. Critically, caste as an occupation identifier has created a binding association with social class. Castes that were historically involved in menial labor tended to be of a lower social class and thus labeled as lower castes.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the term “untouchability” is often used to refer to specific castes associated with perceived “polluted” occupations, such as the tanning of

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<sup>22</sup> Reportedly, to gain access to these considerable funds, several smaller towns have deregistered themselves from the ULB structure into *panchayats* (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right’s activist in Jaipur).

<sup>23</sup> Caste stratification is also ascribed a religious origination, which dictated a hierarchy of castes based in the Hindu *varna* system that stems from selections of Hindu literature.

animal skins, treating and disposing of the dead, and sewer and sanitation work, which created a stigma that continues today to prevent many from these communities from engaging in certain public places where “purity” is seen as important, such as temples.<sup>24</sup> Notably, not all communities in India are associated with a specific caste, and therefore I only use the more specific term “caste” when appropriate, and otherwise fall back on the term “community”.

Reservations for disadvantaged communities date back to independence. Recognizing that strong social bias against lower castes, alongside their historic economic and educational deprivation, would make candidates from these castes less politically competitive, the drafters of the Indian constitution implemented quotas for these groups in the national parliament and across state assemblies starting in 1950 (Jensenius, 2016). Specifically, this institution designated a set number of reserved seats to members from castes classified either as Scheduled Castes (SC) or indigenous tribes classified as Scheduled Tribes (ST), which were proportional to their share of total population within each state. It is important to note that for a caste to qualify for SC status (around 450 castes today), they generally must have been historically treated as “untouchable” by the rest of Hindu society, thus facing significant prejudice due to their caste origin (Chandra, 2000: 27). Qualification for ST status is similar, but requires a lineal connection to an indigenous community.

In 1979, the Mandal Commission was convened by parliament to reexamine the condition of the lower classes. The Commission recommended the expansion of reservations to a

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<sup>24</sup>Today in India, the importance of caste in assigning social class varies considerably depending on the community and location. While caste may still be a critical marker in many parts of rural Uttar Pradesh for example, in contrast, the more Westernized middle-classes of Mumbai often refer to caste only as a guide for spouse selection if its influential at all.

newly established classification, Other Backward Classes (OBC). In contrast to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, OBC communities are understood to be historically disadvantaged educationally, economically and socially, but not due to pervasive societal bias against their particular caste or community. Notably, some non-Hindu minorities, such as Muslim communities, qualify for OBC status. Given the broader qualifications, OBCs have always formed the largest block of reservations and thus a significant electoral consideration. Today, positions are reserved in elected governance institutions at the national, state and local levels, as well as for civil service positions in governmental agencies, and student slots in public education institutions for individuals from a community who qualify for either OBC, SC, or ST status (Jensenius, 2016). Only individuals from these communities can fill these positions. Numbers differ by state depending on population proportions, but on average the national distribution of reserved seats is around 27-percent for Other Backward Classes, 16-percent for Scheduled Castes, and eight-percent for Scheduled Tribes. All other communities are generally referred to as “forward-castes” or “General-castes”, and receive no reservation benefits.

As discussed, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments established a gender quota which reserves 33-percent of elected positions across urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions.<sup>25</sup> This translates to 33-percent of seats within each ULB deliberative body, but no gender requirements

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<sup>25</sup> Some states voluntarily raised this to 50-percent following the Mandal Commission recommendations. However, in some of these states, such as Rajasthan, the increase to 50-percent was struck down by state courts on the grounds that this expansion pushed the number of reserved seats too high when combined with seats reserved for disadvantaged castes. Additional justification fielded by the Rajasthan High Court was reportedly the fact that a reservation level of 50-percent was higher than the proportion of women in the population in Rajasthan (48-percent) and thus too high (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right’s activist in Jaipur). However, it appears that the reduction to 33-percent was only applied or enforced for Rajasthan urban local body elections in 2014, as panchayat elections continued with a 50-percent gender reservation.

for the executive mayoral position. In the PRIs, the quota translates into both a reservation of 33-percent of seats within each *panchayat* council, and the reservation of 33-percent across all *sarpanch* positions.<sup>26</sup> This is notable, given the significant powers and financial discretion the *sarpanch* possesses, as discussed in the beginning of this section. While each state is given latitude in the implementation of the gender reservation, most have a lottery process that randomly assigns the reservation to a constituency (Beaman et al, 2010). Overall, up to five elections have been held in ULBs and PRIs across the country since the passage of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, which entails millions of seats in more than 220,000 governmental bodies (Bhavnani, 2009: 24). As reserved seat quotas are difficult to subvert, compliance is very high. With a minimum of 33-percent representation for women across practically all local governance institutions, reservations have pushed female representation at the local level far above the national and state legislatures.

It is important to note that gender reservations also cross-cut caste reservations. Across all seats reserved for each reserved-caste or community grouping (OBC/SC/ST) and open seats that are unreserved (General), within each group, 33-percent must be reserved for a woman from that grouping (i.e. 33-percent of all Scheduled Caste seats must be reserved for SC women). This establishes a system where every constituency can hold one of eight labels, which determines

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<sup>26</sup> While technically reserved for all women, there appear to be additional requirements in some states that restrict candidacy to a degree. In Rajasthan, minimum education qualifications for candidates have been established for upcoming elections in 2019, and reportedly a requirement that the candidate possess a toilet in their home (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur), as part of a national campaign to improve access to household plumbing (approximately half of all Indians still relieve themselves outdoors, a factor which has been linked to an increased risk of rape for women). The nearby state of Haryana reportedly added the absence of loan debt and paid electricity bills to its restrictions on candidature (Interview on 5/10/2017 with human right's activist in Jaipur). However, I was unable to certify the accuracy or enforcement of these requirements.



who is able to run in a seat. The following chart lists each of these eight labels, their acronym, and who qualifies to run in a seat assigned that label.

*Table 2.1: Reservation Qualifications*

<b>Label</b>	<b>Qualified Candidates</b>
General (GEN)	Candidate from any community, of any gender
General Woman (GENW)	Female candidate from any community
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	Candidate from OBC community, of any gender
Other Backward Classes Women (OBCW)	Female candidate from an OBC community
Scheduled Caste (SC)	Candidate from an SC caste, of any gender
Scheduled Caste Woman (SCW)	Female candidate from an SC caste
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Candidate from a Scheduled Tribe, any gender
Scheduled Tribe Woman (STW)	Female candidate from a Scheduled Tribe

To determine the number of seats allocated to each label within a ULB or a PRI, reservations are essentially layered. The first layer is strictly community and caste groupings (GEN, OBC, SC, ST), which are allocated based on each group's proportion of total population across all constituencies of the ULB or PRI. This process establishes the number of labels from each grouping that will be assigned across constituencies. This number of group labels are then placed into a lottery and randomly drawn and assigned to a constituency,<sup>27</sup> which will then be assigned that label, and the accompanying group reservation, in the next election.

The second layer attaches a gender reservation randomly to 33-percent of all seats allocated to each one of the community and caste groupings, again through a lottery. An

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<sup>27</sup> Within this lottery, a process weights the reserved-caste seats more heavily in constituencies with larger populations of that respective caste, which increases the probability an OBC reservation will be assigned to a constituency with a large OBC population, etc.

important exception to the random assignment of gender reservations is the requirement that a constituency cannot be reserved for a woman in consecutive elections, likely to ensure that men from these constituencies are not permanently excluded from office (Bhavnani, 2009). Therefore, gender reservations are randomly assigned, but only to constituencies that were not gender reserved in the last election. Constituencies that were gender reserved in the last election are pulled out of the gender reservation lottery. However, this requirement is waived in delimitation (redistricting) years following the decennial census, as all constituencies are essentially new, which allows geographical areas to be reserved for a woman in consecutive years. While this complex process has likely been manipulated at some point, research has found that over multiple elections, the reservation lottery does appear to be truly random within the constitutional limits set (Bhavnani, 2009), although this likely varies by state.

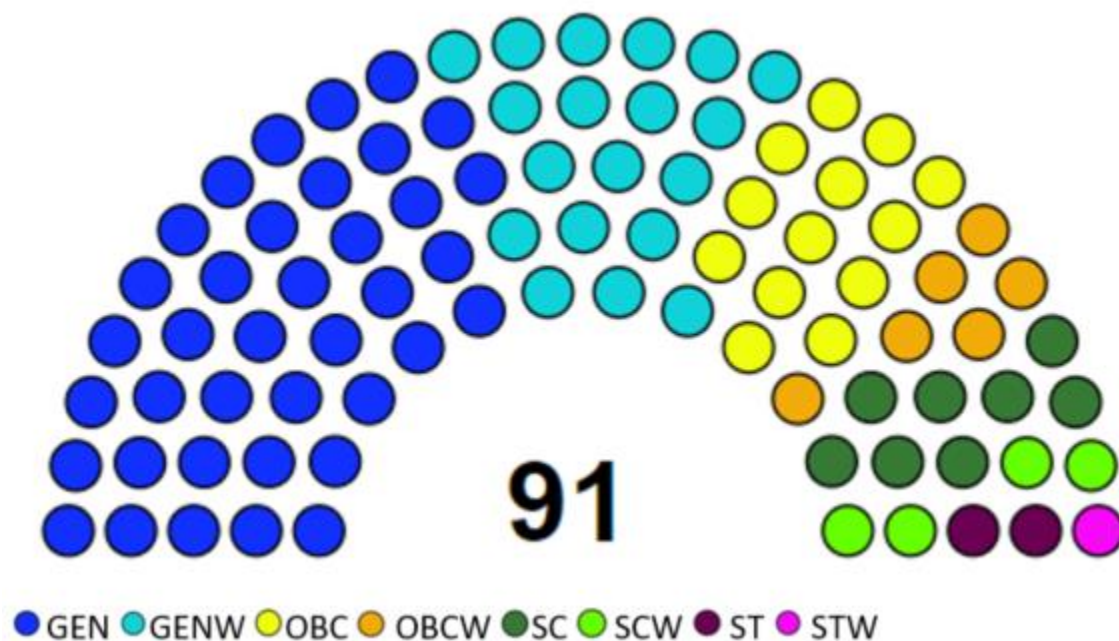
To make process of assigning reservations clearer, I will use an example. The rest of this dissertation examines the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), an urban local body in Rajasthan, so I will describe the process used to assign reservations for the 2014 JMC elections, with Table 2.2 providing reference. The JMC has 91 total seats across 91 single-member districts. Thirty-four seats were allocated as reserved for Other Backward Classes/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in Jaipur. The remaining 57 General seats were open to all candidates. Thirty-three percent of each grouping (GEN/OBC/SC/ST) were then reserved for women from that grouping (i.e. 19 of the 57 General Seats were reserved for General Women, which are open to any woman from any community). These eight community/gender reservations labels were then assigned across all 91 districts. The following table illustrates the step-by-step process that starts with 91 total seats, the assignment of group reservations, and then the assignment of gender reservations within each group.

Table 2.2: Process of Assigning Reservations in the JMC for 2014

1. Total Seats	2. Group Reservations Assigned		3. Gender Reservations Assigned	
91	<b>General</b>	57 seats (63%)	<b>General</b>	38 seats (42%)
			<b>General(W)</b>	19 seats (21%)
	<b>OBC</b>	19 seats (21%)	<b>OBC</b>	13 seats (14%)
			<b>OBC(W)</b>	6 seats (7%)
	<b>SC</b>	12 seats (13%)	<b>SC</b>	8 seats (9%)
			<b>SC(W)</b>	4 seats (4%)
	<b>ST</b>	3 seats (3%)	<b>ST</b>	2 seats (2%)
			<b>ST(W)</b>	1 seat (1%)

Ultimately, this process in 2014 created a deliberative body allocated across reservations as shown below in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The 2014 JMC by Reservation Label



Source: <https://tools.wmflabs.org/parliamentdiagram/parlitest.php> { Accessed 6/23/2018 }

## Conclusions

Spearheaded by the women's movement, the growth in demand for more equal representation for women in positions of power eventually spurred constitutional reform that enacted gender quotas across India in local governance bodies. However, these quotas have not resulted in the election of significantly higher numbers of women at the state and national levels, and expansion of the quota to these higher levels continues to face resistance by male members who fear for their own positions. Moreover, research has shown that parties continue to be unwilling to "risk" nominating women in anything but the safest electoral districts, and social norms continue to restrict the ability of female candidates to participate fully. Female candidates are also still generally dependent on male family members both for economic support for campaigning, and for social support to maintain societal approval. Overall, gender quotas have not been the panacea in India for inequality many optimists may have hoped for. The next chapter will discuss issues with institutional design that may have led to these less than optimal outcomes, before then moving into the analysis of *parshad* narratives from the JMC that reveal the inability of the quota system to overcome powerful and pervasive patriarchal norms. Throughout the dissertation, the eight reservation labels discussed in this chapter will be utilized: General and General Woman (GEN/GENW), Other Backward Class and OBC Woman (OBC/OBCW), Scheduled Caste and SC Woman (SC/SCW), and Scheduled Tribe and ST Woman (ST/STW).

### Chapter 3: Institutional Design

In his research on gender reservations in the municipal corporation of Mumbai, Bhavnani (2009) argues that quotas can establish a foundation of fairer representation that can eventually be removed once a marginalized group becomes politically established, thereby discouraging demographic appeals from becoming politically permanent. His analysis demonstrates that gender quotas make women overall more competitive in a ward, even after they are removed in subsequent elections. However, in Jaipur, *parshad* anecdotes suggest that a “stay-in-your-lane” norm may be establishing itself within the reservation system, which encourages candidates to not compete outside of their reservation. As one General-caste male *parshad* put it:

On reservations, I think that if there are reservations then each group should only compete within their reserved seats. An unreserved General Seat shouldn't have any OBC/SC/ST or women competing for it, only General men. This is because there will be no space left for General men otherwise, it's already 50% off limits.<sup>28</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, General-caste candidates are blocked from competing in any group-reserved seats. Furthermore, General-caste men are also blocked from competing in any gender-reserved seats, even those open to all communities (General Woman). Frustration over the limited number of seats available to them, and the concentration of competition within the seats they can compete for (General Seats only), has led some General-caste men to suggest General Seats should essentially be informally “reserved” for them by normatively excluding candidates who would otherwise qualify for a formal reservation.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with the husband of a woman *parshad* on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur. 6

If such a norm existed and was powerful enough, it would severely cap the ability of gender quotas to serve as a foundation for women to expand from – into open competition with men as Bhavnani (2009) suggests. Evidence that there is significant resistance to women competing outside of gender-reserved seats was provided by several female *parshads*:

It's really hard for women to get tickets without a reservation, because there is a general conception that women should only compete in the gender-reserved seats. If they are in a general seat, they are seen as taking a man's seat.<sup>29</sup>

The data discussed in this chapter does demonstrate that women are not competing in the open-gender seats against men on a broad scale; however, the causes are likely not solely with parties resistant to nominating women. As an electoral institution, gender quotas cannot force parties to nominate more than the minimum number of women, and thus do not automatically create a foundation that women politicians can build on, particularly if parties continue to view women as a nomination “risk”, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, parties may also be facing a lack of strong women candidates. Gender reserved elections are just as competitive as open gender races, but still may not be adequately preparing woman candidates to win elections without a reservation, especially given the advantage men have in political experience.

The potential shortage of competitive female candidates is likely a result of significant discrepancies between men and women in the development of political experience and support prior to entering the JMC and is compounded by low female incumbency rates. Several factors appear to be driving low incumbency rates for both men and women in the JMC: low re-nomination rates by parties, the displacement of candidates by the random assignment of a group

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<sup>29</sup>

Interview 18 11-30-2016

and/or gender reservation to their ward which blocks them from running again, and the mandated removal of gender reservations after one term.

### **Stay in Your Lane: Lack of Competition Outside of Reserved Seats**

Using electoral data from the Rajasthan Electoral Commission, this analysis examines all candidates across the 91 wards of the 2014 election. Overall, I find very low numbers of women challenging men in non-gender-reserved seats, in particular women from disadvantaged communities. While we see several reserved-group men competing with General-caste men in open seats, very few reserved-group women challenge reserved-group men in their respective reserved seats. Furthermore, parties are not nominating many women candidates to compete in races outside of the gender reservation. I will review candidate demographics from 2014 and then discuss the party nomination of women and the lack of women competing against men.

*Table 3.1: 2014 JMC Election Demographics*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Group Category</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
M	377 (71%)	General	222 (41%)
F	153 (29%)	GEN(W)	95 (18%)
<b>Total</b>	530	OBC	95 (18%)
		OBC(W)	25 (5%)
		SC	43 (8%)
		SC(W)	27 (5%)
		ST	17 (3%)
		ST(W)	6 (1%)

As Table 3.1 illustrates, men made up the majority of candidates in 2014 at 71-percent. Notably, women composed 29-percent of total candidates, roughly equal to the proportion of gender-reserved seats (33-percent). Furthermore, across group categories, the proportion of each group roughly mirrored their allocation of seats and thus corresponds to census population proportions.

*Table 3.2: Party Nomination by Gender*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Women Nominated</b>	<b>M/F Ratio</b>
BJP	31 (35%)	1.87
INC	35 (40%)	1.51
BSP	2 (11%)	8
CPI(M)	0 (0%)	0
NCP	1 (33%)	2
Independent	84 (25%)	2.95

Of the two parties with successful candidates in the 2014 elections, the BJP and Congress (INC), Congress had a slightly better ratio of male to female candidates with around 50% more male candidates, while the BJP approached nearly twice as many male candidates. Those competing outside of a party banner in the independent ranks were primarily men, by a nearly 3:1 ratio. Both Tables 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate low numbers of female candidates overall, and suggest that few women are competing outside of the gender reserved seats, as the percentage of women competing is not much higher than the percentage of reserved seats.

*Table 3.3: Women Competing Against Men*

<b>Seat Reservation</b>	<b>Women Candidates</b>	<b>Reserved-Group Women</b>
General Seats	10 (3.4%)	1 (0.03%)
OBC Seats	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
SC Seats	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
ST Seats	1 (14%)	1 (14%)

Indeed, as Table 3.3 above shows, 11 women competed in open-gender elections, which was only 7.2% of all women candidates. Nine of these women were General-caste competing in General Seats, one was a Scheduled Caste woman competing in a General Seat, and one Scheduled Tribes woman competed in a reserved-group/open-gender seat. These women all competed against men. Notable is both the lack of women competing outside of the gender



reservation in general, and specifically the lack of women from reserved groups competing outside of their reservation. Only two reserved-group women did so, one competed against General-caste men in a General Seat and lost, and one competed against ST men in an open-gender ST seat and won. Even though reserved-group women can compete in both the reserved-group/open-gender seats of their respective community and the General Seats, very few do so, likely because they would have to challenge men in these seats. Furthermore, while 25% of the total seats in the JMC are reserved-group/open-gender (OBC/SC/ST), meaning that only men or women from the respective reserved community can compete in these seats, only one out of the 99 candidates competing in these seats was a woman. No woman from an OBC community challenged OBC men in the 13 OBC-reserved/open-gender seats, no woman from a SC caste challenged SC men in the eight SC seats, and, as mentioned, only one woman from a ST community challenged an ST man in the two ST seats. Overall, women rarely challenge men in open-gender seats, particularly not women from reserved-groups. Comparatively, 57 men from reserved groups, 37-percent of male candidates from reserved groups, challenged outside of their group-reservation for a General Seat. While reserved-group men regularly venture outside of seats reserved specifically for them, women in general rarely do, especially women from reserved-groups.

Certainly, low numbers of women competing in open-gender wards is problematic for a gender reservation system that has been in place for five election cycles over two decades. As discussed, the ultimate goal of gender reservations is to establish a foundation of political representation that will make women candidates more competitive against men over time. However, this would entail women competing against men in open elections. As this data shows, at least in Jaipur, women are not moving beyond gender-reserved seats in large numbers. More

importantly for quota effectiveness in the long-term, this means women are not gaining experience competing against men and not demonstrating that women can beat men in open elections on a broad scale. Notably, Bhavnani's (2009) analysis of Mumbai Municipal Corporation elections found that in open-gender wards, seats without a gender reservation, higher numbers of female candidates increased the odds that a woman would win. Therefore, the shortage of female candidates in open-gender elections is likely the primary reason why over the past three Jaipur Municipal Corporation elections, only one woman in 2004, one in 2009, and three in 2014 have won a seat without a gender reservation, competing against men.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the fact that gender exclusion appears to be even stronger from women from reserved-groups is concerning. While women overall are not competing against men across the board, the highest levels of exclusion appear to be happening to the most disadvantaged women – those from reserved communities.

### **Party Restrictions**

The primary mover in restricting or encouraging women to run outside the gender reservation would be the political parties. Party nomination is key to winning elections in Jaipur. Out of 91 winners in 2014, only eight candidates won as an independent without a party nomination.

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that there were only 70 seats in the 2004 JMC elections, 77 in 2009, and 91 in 2014. Furthermore, while in 2004 and 2014 only 33-percent of seats were gender-reserved, in 2009 gender reservations were temporarily boosted to 50-percent, which likely reduced the number of women candidates competing outside of gender reservations in 2009.

Table 3.4: Female Candidates Nominated in Open-Gender Wards

Party	Female Candidates	% of Total Nominations
BJP	1	1.1%
INC	5	5.7%
BSP	0	0%
CPI(M)	0	0%
NCP	0	0%
IND	5	1.5%
Total Candidates	11	8.3%

Table 3.4 demonstrates that few women were nominated by any party to compete against men in open-gender wards. The vast majority of women are nominated only to compete in gender-reserved wards. In fact, of the few women competing against men in open elections, little more than half were nominated by a party. Furthermore, only the two national parties nominated women to compete outside of a gender reservation, but both nominated less than six percent. Notably, the BJP nominated only one female candidate in an open-gender seat, which corresponds with the overall unwillingness of the BJP to nominate women that Jensenius (2016: 16) observed prior to the 1990s. However, Congress is not much better at only six percent. These numbers indicate a probable gender bias within the party hierarchy that controls the candidate selection process. One female *parshad*, who received a nomination to compete in an open-gender seat and won, said that she encountered resistance within the BJP to nominating candidates such as her:

I ran in the next election, in 2014, when the seat was... not gender reserved. There were objections within the party to me running in this seat, as women should only run in the gender reserved seats.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with a female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

Still, the source of this bias is likely much more nuanced, and several additional factors must be considered.

The first is that a small number of key party members, usually men, control the nomination process for local level positions with the national parties.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the perceptions of a small number of people can exert disproportionate influence over the entire process. These men grant nominations on candidate electability, which is generally focused on ethnicity, caste, funding, and “muscle power” or workers on the ground who can contribute to the campaign (M.P. Singh, 2003). If a candidate lacks significantly in any one of these categories, they are likely to be discounted. On these terms, any perception by key members within the party that female candidates are electorally weaker than male candidates would lead to lower numbers of nominated women. While women can qualify just as easily as their male counterparts in terms of ethnic and caste-based qualifications, they are generally much weaker in terms of funding and “muscle power”. Women candidates are usually very reliant on their families and male benefactors for both funding and supporters on the ground (Guha, 1974; Jensenius, 2018).

A second consideration is supply-side. Parties may not have enough candidates willing to run outside of the gender-reservation to nominate. Table 3.5 below provides a side-by-side comparison for each community group between the men and women from that group. The total number of candidates by gender are provided in the third column, along with the number of

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with the husband of a female *parshad* on 11/23/2016 in Jaipur.

candidates by gender who are competing outside of their group and/or gender-reservation in the fourth column. This could be either men from a reserved-group (OBC/SC/ST) competing in a General Seat, women from a reserved-group competing in an open-group/gender-reserved General Woman Seat, or any woman competing against men in any reserved-group/open-gender seat. Note that no General-caste men can compete outside of a reservation, because they have no reservation. Each of these candidates are competing in a much more unrestricted field, and thus face more competition than they would if they only competed for the reserved seats they qualified for.

*Table 3.5: Candidates Competing Outside of Reservation by Group*

<b>Candidate Group</b>	<b>Candidate Gender</b>	<b>Total Candidates</b>	<b>Outside Reservation</b>
General	M	222	0 (0%)
Gen(W)	F	95	9 (9%)
OBC	M	95	34 (36%)
OBC(W)	F	25	2 (8%)
SC	M	43	12 (28%)
SC(W)	F	27	2 (7%)
ST	M	17	11 (65%)
ST(W)	F	6	1 (17%)
		530	71 (13%)

As Table 3.5 illustrates, across all groupings, significantly more men are willing or able to compete outside of a “protected” seat reserved for them (again except for General men who have no reserved seats). Within each group, there are significantly less women than men competing outside of their reservation. Again, participation is even lower for women from reserved-groups. While percentage-wise there are not considerably less women from reserved-groups than General-caste women competing in open-gender seats, it is notable that reserved-group women qualify for more open-gender seats than General-caste women. While General women only qualify for 38 open-gender seats in the 91 seat JMC, women from the Other

Backward Classes qualify for 51 open-gender seats, given the large size of the OBC reservation and their ability to run in both OBC and General Seats. However, again only two OBC women challenged these seats. Scheduled Caste women and Scheduled Tribes women qualify for the second and third most potential seats at 46 and 40 respectively, but only two SC and one ST challenged these seats. While women from these communities have the widest access within the reservation system, very few take advantage of it.

Overall, this indicates that factors outside of the reservation itself are restricting the incentive or ability for these women to compete for seats outside of a reservation. While Table 3.4 demonstrated that parties are nominating very few women to run against men, there appears to be a lack of competitive candidates as well. First, parties do not appear to be ignoring competitive female candidates. Of the 11 women competing against men across all elections, six were nominated by a party. Three of these women won and three came in as runner up. Of the five remaining women who did not receive a nomination, none achieved more than one-percent of the vote total. Therefore, parties may be willing to nominate strong women candidates to compete against men, but are not going to take a risk on weaker women candidates. The bigger problem may be a lack of strong women candidates for parties to nominate. Additionally, in Mumbai, Bhavnani (2009) found that women received only seven-percent of party nominations in open-gender wards in the 1997 and 2002 Mumbai elections, which is comparable to the 2014 elections in Jaipur, where, out of 136 total nominations handed out by parties for open-gender wards, only four-percent were given to women.

While part of the explanation for low nomination numbers is likely a lack of strong female candidates for parties to nominate, it is also important to note that parties themselves are primarily responsible for finding and developing candidates. Ideally, gender reservations should

encourage both party leaders and voters to learn about the ability of women candidates to win elections and make both groups more comfortable nominating and voting for women, even when they are competing against men (Bhavnani, 2009). Promisingly, Bhavnani found that parties in Mumbai were more willing to grant women tickets in open-gender wards when that ward had previously reserved for a woman. In Jaipur, the effect appears to be similar. Out of the six women nominated by a party to compete against men in an open-gender ward in 2014, five were nominated to ward areas that were at least partially gender-reserved in 2009.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the one exception was a woman nominated to a ward area that was previously an open-group/open-gender General Seat, but was won by an OBC woman in 2009. Therefore, every woman nominated by a party to compete against men in an open-gender ward in 2014 did so in a ward area at least partially represented by a woman in 2009.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, three women challenged men and won in an open-gender ward in 2014, but all did so in a ward area that was at least partially gender-reserved in 2009. These results indicate that parties are primarily willing to “risk” nominating a woman in an open-gender wards only if that ward has had recent previous experience with a female representative. While these results suggest that the gender reservation system has been partially successful in persuading parties and voters that women can compete with men in specific cases, it is important to remember that this learning period began over two decades ago. Moreover, proportionally, the number of women nominated for open seats in Jaipur in 2014 is still worse than it was in Mumbai in 2002. Shifting gender biases within conservative party structures is a very gradual process.

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<sup>33</sup> Ward lines between 2009 and 2014 do not line up perfectly due to the redrawing of lines after the 2010 census.

<sup>34</sup> Across the five women competing independent of a party, three did so in a ward area previously reserved for a woman, while two did not.

Additional evidence is provided by a broad analysis across Rajasthan. Essentially, the national parties appear to be only nominating the minimum required number of women to compete in nearly every gender-reserved seat, but are rarely going beyond that into open-gender seats.

*Table 3.6: 2014-15 Percentage of Female Candidates by Party Across Rajasthan*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Urban Municipalities (2014)</b>	<b>Panchayats (2015)</b>
BJP	37%	52%
Congress	37%	52%
BSP	28%	36%
CPI	0%	33%
CPI(M)	20%	41%
NCP	26%	0%
Independents	31%	40%
<b>State-wide Average</b>	33%	49%

In 2014, the average percentage of female candidates across all urban municipalities in Rajasthan was 33-percent, which is equal to the percentage of gender-reserved seats. Only the national parties pushed above the minimum number of female candidates, and only slightly. Across rural panchayati raj elections of the following year, 2015, where Rajasthan voluntarily kept the gender reservation at 50-percent, 49-percent of candidates were women.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the proportion of female candidates is practically equal to reservation percentages in rural elections as well. However, a distinguishing point is that the gender reservation has mandated proportional

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<sup>35</sup> Rajasthan initially expanded the gender reservation to 50-percent for all elections, but was forced to roll this back to 33-percent after the Rajasthan High Court ruled that 50-percent was too high. It is not clear why PRI elections maintained the 50-percent reservation even after ULBs dropped it. See footnote 24 in Chapter Two for additional information.



gender equality across panchayats at 50-percent, and therefore fewer female candidates are available to compete outside the reserved seats.

These observations create additional concerns regarding the effectiveness of the gender reservation as a foundation for female candidate growth. If female candidates are unable to consistently use the reservation to become competitive for party nominations in *parshad* elections without a gender reservation, then it is difficult to foresee how they could progress into state and national-level elections where no gender reservation exists. The causality dilemma inherent in these conclusions is present in the political gender equality discussions across political systems. Parties will not nominate women if they are seen as weaker than their male counterparts; however, candidates competing in political environments where the party is strong need party support to become competitive candidates. Therefore, without parties taking political risks on female candidates, it is difficult for women to become politically strong enough to receive a nomination. Gender quota systems essentially force parties to take political risks on female candidates by requiring them to nominate women. However, in the Indian quota reservation system, they are only forced to nominate women in gender-reserved seats, and are never required to nominate women to compete against men. Proposed solutions to this dilemma in other political systems have been candidate quotas, which require parties to nominate a percentage of women across all seats. This system encourages parties to develop strong female candidates who can win against both male and female candidates, as they could potentially face both. However, this system does not create a minimum level of women in parliament, as possibly every woman nominated could lose to a man, particularly if the party protects its male candidates by shunting all its female candidates into uncompetitive districts where it expects to lose anyway.

### Competitiveness and Continuity

As discussed, part of the reason parties nominate so few women in open-gender elections is likely a lack of competitive female candidates. As gender reservations significantly restrict the pool of qualified candidates per seat, a possible negative side effect is decreased competitiveness. A strong female candidate in a gender-reserved seat may not be as competitive in an open-gender seat if the quality of her previous competition was considerably lower.

*Table 3.7: Level of Competition in 2014 JMC Elections*

<b>Seat Reservation</b>	<b># of Seats</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Margin of Victory</b>	<b>Competitive*</b>	<b>Share</b>
Gen	38	7.6	17%	17 (45%)	47%
Gen(W)	19	4.7	19%	6 (32%)	52%
OBC	13	4.7	30%	2 (15%)	57%
OBC(W)	6	3.7	15%	3 (50%)	50%
SC	8	3.9	13%	3 (38%)	48%
SC(W)	4	6.3	17%	1 (25%)	44%
ST	2	3.5	12%	1 (50%)	45%
ST(W)	1	5.0	12%	0 (0%)	49%
Gen-Reserved	30	4.7	18%	10 (33%)	50%
All	91	5.8	19%	33 (36%)	50%

\*All values are weighted averages, and a competitive seat is defined as having a MOV < 10%

The analysis of competitiveness across JMC seats in 2014 in Table 3.7 illustrates, unsurprisingly, that General elections had by far the highest number of candidates competing in 2014, as anyone can compete for these seats. Interestingly, these were followed by SC Woman seats, which are much more restrictive, as only women from an SC caste can compete. It is also notable that while OBC open-gender races had more candidates than OBC Woman gender-reserved, both SC(W) and ST(W) gender-reserved races had more candidates than the SC and ST open-gender races. This observation is notable given the previously discussed lack of SC and ST women competing against men in open-gender seats. While few female candidates from the reserved-castes competed in the open-gender races, there were plenty interested in contesting

gender-reserved seats. Overall, gender-reserved seats do not have considerably fewer candidates on average than seats overall, particularly when considering how restrictive they are.

There is also little difference in the average margin-of-victory (MOV) or in the number of competitive seats when comparing gender-reserved seats to seats overall. What does stand out are OBC-reserved/open-gender seats, which have a much higher than average MOV and a much lower number of competitive seats. Notably, this is not driven by an outlier, as eight out of the 13 Other Backward Class seats had a higher than average MOV. The lack of competitiveness in OBC open-gender seats could raise the barrier-to-entry for OBC women candidates looking to make the jump from gender-reserved to open-gender seats. The presence of dominant male candidates in these races both makes competing for a party nomination more difficult and disincentivizes female candidates from investing time and resources. This could partially explain the previously discussed complete lack of OBC women competing against OBC men in open-gender OBC seats.

This analysis demonstrates that gender-reserved elections are nearly as competitive as the open-gender elections. However, despite considerable numbers of women candidates in the gender-reserved seats, few female candidates from the reserved-groups competed in the open-gender races. In the case of OBC women, the greater competitiveness of open-gender OBC elections may be a deterrent. An additional deterrent may be drastically different electoral environments when shifting from a gender-reserved to an open-gender election. When gender reservations are instituted within a political and social system that discourage widespread political engagement by women, the reservation allows women to enter politics at a higher level of competitiveness than men. Despite their relative lack of political experience when compared to their male colleagues, many women still receive a *parshad* nomination from the party because

only a woman can be nominated for gender-reserved seats. Despite their lack of experience, these same women are competitive because their challengers in these reserved seats are women who are often just as inexperienced. In contrast, across castes and communities, men on average have much more political experience and generally must compete against similarly experienced challengers. The high level of competition requires most men to work their way up from lower-level party positions to gain enough favor and public support for a nomination and electoral win. This creates separate environments of competition that are perpetuated by the lack of competition between men and women, as women rarely enter the open-gender contests. The result could be a system that does not select for the politically experienced women who would be more competitive against men. Further research is needed, but as discussed further in Chapter Eight, men have significantly more political experience than women *parshads*. Therefore, two separate “leagues” may be forming, with divergent requirements to be competitive – one in the open-gender seats with primarily male contestants, the other in the gender-reserved seats with only women. Both leagues are intra-competitive, but there is no arrangement within the gender-reserved league that encourages the development of women who can compete in the open-gender league.

The key factor to the male advantage in political experience is time. Most male *parshads* have engaged extensively in some form of politics for several years, often decades, prior to entering the JMC, whereas for most women, competing for *parshad* was one of their first political experiences. By allowing women to enter without significant political experience, the gender reservation provides a leg-up to these women. However, to truly level out the playing field, these novice women need to spend considerable time catching up to their male counterparts in terms of political experience. In Mumbai, Bhavnani (2009) found that six out of the eight

women who won in open-gender wards were incumbents brought into politics through a past gender reservation, possibly demonstrating that the reservation can help ameliorate to a degree the initial gender discrepancy in political experience through incumbency. Comparably, in Jaipur, across all 91 *parshad* seats in the JMC, out of the 31 women who won in 2014, five were incumbents from either 2004 or 2009. All of these female incumbents started their *parshad* careers in gender-reserved seats. In turn, of the three women who contested and won open-gender seats, two were incumbents from gender-reserved seats. For the women contesting open-gender seats, incumbency certainly appears to help. Still, returning to the previous section, the levels of both women challenging open-gender seats and female incumbency are still alarmingly low in both Jaipur and Mumbai. While gender reservations do bring in women who make politics a career, it is not many.

Five structural factors likely discourage first-time female *parshads* from pursuing a political career: institutional disincentives, incumbency disadvantages, re-nomination restrictions, reservation displacement, and mandated gender discontinuity. First, several male and female *parshads* I spoke with claimed that they were not running again in the 2019 elections, citing low pay, too much work, and frustration with intransigent bureaucracy. *Parshads* reported only receiving an expense allowance of around 3000 rupees a month, which is far below a middle-class salary. Reports of corruption opportunities posit that this allowance can be padded, but first-time *parshads*, particularly inexperienced women, likely face difficulties gaining access to these revenue streams. For many *parshads*, neither source of income compensates for the long hours, as *parshads* must respond to constituent issues day and night.

Incumbency may pose a disadvantage to re-election as well. Most *parshads* do not serve more than one term in the JMC. Out of 91 *parshads* elected in 2014, only 11-percent were

incumbents from either 2009 or 2004, five men and five women, and 17-percent of the 2009 JMC had served in 2004, eight men and five women. A primary reason for this low rate is a lack of returning candidates, as *parshads* usually decide not to run for a second term. From the 2009 cohort, only approximately 23-percent returned as a candidate for the 2014 election,<sup>36</sup> which could indicate that re-election is extremely competitive and further disincentivize *parshads* from attempting to return. Across the country, previous research has found that incumbency can confer a disadvantage on candidates in India.<sup>37</sup> Bhavnani (2009) found an incumbency disadvantage for both men and women in Mumbai Municipal Corporation elections, and larger cross-state studies have found similar disadvantages across national and state elections (Linden, 2004; Uppal, 2009).

An additional deciding factor is the party nomination. Recognizing the low success rates of independent candidates, few *parshads* attempt to run again as an independent if they are not renominated. Out of the 72 *parshads* who won in 2009 under a party banner, only approximately 14 were re-nominated by their party in 2014, and only seven of these *parshads* from 2009 who did not receive a nomination ran as independents. Either most *parshads* did not seek a re-nomination or parties recognize an incumbency disadvantage and generally choose new candidates. Interestingly, two *parshads* I spoke with suggested that key members in the party, especially the BJP, often discouraged renomination as they feared supporting a future challenger.

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<sup>36</sup> Comparing candidate names across elections is hampered by names changes and a tendency for only the first names of women *parshads* to be recorded in 2004 and 2009. Several women from 2009 share first names with 2014 candidates, but were not counted as I was unable to certify they were the same person.

<sup>37</sup> Chhibber (2001) attributes low rates of incumbency and greater political competition in India to the lack of secondary associations to assist in mobilizing voters. Such associations in the United States boost incumbency by mobilizing the vote in support of incumbents.

The nomination process is often controlled by local MLAs, who reportedly are afraid of *parshads* gaining enough support to pose a future electoral challenge to themselves:

Sometimes the party will not give you a ticket if you've served two to three terms because you will become a potential challenger for the MLA seat. They will say we need fresh faces... and they won't give you a ticket (nomination). So that's why you see so few people reelected from the same area. When you become a *parshad* for two to three times from a single area, you cover it very well, you do some work, your name becomes well known and this becomes a problem for the higher-ups.<sup>38</sup>

It is very difficult to get a ticket the next time. Usually just two times (two consecutive nominations max).<sup>39</sup>

But when asked if both national parties do this:

No, not in Congress, it is a BJP policy. In Congress we have Gulab Nabi ji, he is a *parshad* for the seventh time.<sup>40</sup>

Detailed data on JMC elections prior to 2014 is not currently available to determine if parties are re-nominating strong candidates, which would demonstrate whether party leaders are more interested in warding off future challengers than in fielding competitive candidates, but this area would benefit from future research as more data becomes available, or from a larger analysis across other municipal corporations.

Perhaps the most important consideration for any *parshad* considering running again in the next election is the reservation lottery. Of the 77 *parshads* who won in 2009, approximately 61 (79-percent) faced a reservation change in their area for the 2014 elections.<sup>41</sup> Notably,

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 3/21/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 4/20/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 4/20/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>41</sup> Ward lines were redrawn following the 2010 census, so 2014 ward lines were compared to 2009 ward lines to determine which old wards largely corresponded geographically with which new wards.

approximately 26 (34-percent) faced a ward change that essentially blocked them from running again in that ward.

*Table 3.8: 2009 Parshad Displaced by Reservation*

<b>Candidate Caste</b>	<b># Displaced</b>
General	11 (44%)
Gen(W)	8 (33%)
OBC	2 (25%)
OBC(W)	0 (0%)
SC	2 (33%)
SC(W)	1 (20%)
ST	2 (100%)
ST(W)	1 (50%)
Men	17
Women	10

Unsurprisingly, as Table 3.8 shows, the majority of these were male, as they face the possibility of either a group and/or a gender reservation blocking them from running again. However, it is important to note that the group reservation lines are rigid, regardless of gender reservation, just as men cannot compete across community or caste lines, neither can women. In 2014, reservation changes also blocked ten women who had won in 2009 from the possibility of running again in their ward. All were women who did not fit the group criteria for the new 2014 ward reservation because they were either General-caste women who could not run in a reserved-group ward, or OBC, SC or ST women whose wards had been reserved for a grouping other than their own. This is a notable downside to gender-reservations cross-cutting caste-reservations, as 33-percent of General women, 20-percent of Scheduled Caste women, and 50-percent of Scheduled Tribe women were unable to run again in their ward due to reservation blocks. JMC electoral rules do allow candidates to run in wards they do not reside in, so even with a reservation change in their home ward a candidate can run on the ballot of another ward open to



them. However, this does not appear to be common, as only three *parshads* interviewed reported doing so in 2014.

Delving deeper into the various reservation possibilities, the probability of being blocked by a reservation differs significantly across community groupings. At current ratios (until they are adjusted with the next census in 2020), Table 3.9 below demonstrates in Rajasthan how many seats are available and how many seats are blocked for each category of candidate in any given election at the local level. If a candidate's ward is reserved for any of the reservations off-limits to them, they cannot compete in that ward. Given the fact that 58-percent of all seats are reserved for somebody, several community groupings are blocked from competing in a majority of seats.

*Table 3.9: Blocked by Reservation*

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>Blocked</b>	<b>Can Compete In</b>	<b>Cannot Compete In</b>
General	42%	58%	GEN	Any Reserved Seat
Gen(W)	63%	37%	GEN, GEN(W)	OBC, OBC(W), SC, SC(W), ST, ST(W)
OBC	56%	44%	GEN, OBC	GEN(W), OBC(W), SC, SC(W), ST, ST(W)
OBC(W)	84%	16%	GEN, GEN(W), OBC, OBC(W)	SC, SC(W), ST, ST(W)
SC	51%	49%	GEN, SC	GEN(W), OBC, OBC(W), SC(W), ST, ST(W)
SC(W)	76%	24%	GEN, GEN(W), SC, SC(W)	OBC, OBC(W), ST, ST(W)
ST	44%	56%	GEN, ST	GEN(W), OBC, OBC(W), SC, SC(W), ST(W)
ST(W)	66%	34%	GEN, GEN(W), ST, ST(W)	OBC, OBC(W), SC, SC(W)

As expected, General-caste men face the highest number of blocked seats at 58-percent, but it is notable that ST men, a disadvantaged class specifically for whom reservations were designed to increase political representation, are comparable at 56-percent off-limits.

Furthermore, as discussed previously, the candidate with the most options by far are OBC women. OBC candidates overall have the largest reserved block of seats at 21-percent, of which a third are reserved for OBC women. On top of that, OBC women can compete in both the General Woman and General elections. Due to a smaller number of seats reserved for both SC and ST candidates, SC and ST women both can compete in a supermajority of seats, but not as many as OBC women. A problematic side effect of caste-exclusive reservations established in proportion to the population is that the least populous groups (Scheduled Tribes) are blocked from the large number of seats reserved for the more populous groups (Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes). While General-caste men face the greatest chance of being blocked, the reservation system is still likely to block the disadvantaged groups it is designed to support. SC and ST communities tend to be significantly more economically and socially disadvantaged compared to OBC communities, but under this system have fewer electoral options. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this again demonstrates that while reservations create a foundation of representation, to a degree they also can create an artificial ceiling that actually favors the more populous, more advantaged communities and constrains the smaller. This is particularly problematic given the likelihood smaller minorities are already more likely to be excluded from key decision-making and resource-allocation processes, especially if they are poorer as well.

For female *parshads* specifically, the reservation system institutes an additional consideration. Reservation rules mandate that a ward cannot be gender-reserved in consecutive elections. As designed, it could be argued that this rule encourages women to develop the expertise and political support to compete without the gender reservation. However, this requirement is likely pushing out many female *parshads* after their first year in a gender-reserved

seat. Gender-reserved seats must be open-gender the following election and, as discussed, few women compete in open-gender elections. The only exception is following a census and subsequent ward redistricting, which resets the lottery and allows any ward to be reserved for a woman. This exception benefited several female *parshads* from 2009 who were re-elected in 2014, as this election followed the 2010 census, allowing 17 gender-reserved wards to maintain their reservation. Moreover, this exception allows us to compare outcomes for *parshads* who lost their gender reservation to those who maintained theirs.

*Table 3.10: Gender Reservation Changes by Ward, 2009 to 2014 JMC Elections*

<b>Original Seat Reservation</b>	<b>Gender Reservation Assigned</b>	<b>Gender Reservation Lost</b>	<b>Gender Reservation Maintained</b>
General	7	0	0
Gen(W)	0	13	10
OBC	1	0	0
OBC(W)	0	3	5
SC	1	0	0
SC(W)	0	3	2
ST	1	0	0
ST(W)	0	0	1
Male <i>Parshad</i> Affected	10	0	0
Female <i>Parshad</i> Affected	0	19	18

While the assignment of gender reservations was completely random for the 2014 elections, Table 3.10 shows that this transition was accompanied by an overall loss of nine gender-reserved seats after the Rajasthan High Court mandated the reduction in gender reservations from 50-percent in 2009 to 33-percent in 2014 for municipal corporations.<sup>42</sup> Of the

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<sup>42</sup> In a normal transition from one electoral year to the next, without an intervening delimitation or expansion of the number of wards, the number of gender reservations lost should be equal to the number assigned. From 2009 to 2014 there are more reservations lost than assigned because nearly 50% of all seats were reserved for women

remaining 30 gender-reservations, ten were assigned to ward areas which were previously represented by male *parshads* in 2009 and thus blocked them from running for the same ward in 2014. One of these men was nominated by Congress to run in another ward in 2014 and won. The rest were apparently unable or uninterested in shifting wards. 19 female *parshads*, or 50-percent, who represented a 2009 ward with a gender reservation lost their reservation. Of these women, only two were nominated to run again in 2014, one in an open-gender ward, and one in a gender-reserved. One more ran as an independent. Only the woman nominated for the open-gender ward went on to win again in 2014.

*Table 3.11: Results of Gender Reservation Changes for Occupying Parshad, 2009 to 2014*

<b>Type of Change</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ran Again</b>	<b>Won Again</b>
Assigned Reservation	10 (26%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
Lost Reservation	19 (50%)	5 (26%)	1 (5%)
Maintained Reservation	18 (47%)	7 (39%)	3 (17%)

In comparison, the women whose wards maintained their gender reservation fared much better. Table 3.11 describes outcomes for all the candidates in 2009 who faced a change in gender reservation for their ward. Of the 18 women in gender-reserved wards from 2009 that maintained their gender reservation into 2014, six were nominated to run again in 2014 and one ran as an independent. Six did so in the same ward area they served previously, while one moved to another gender-reserved ward. Notably, three out of the five went on to win again. When compared to only one woman who won again after losing a gender reservation, this demonstrates that when gender reservations are maintained over subsequent election cycles, it is much more

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in 2009, following the voluntary expansion of the suggested 50% quota to Rajasthan. However, this was reduced to 33% in 2014 after the Rajasthan HC struck down the expansion. Therefore, we see a shift from 39 out of 77 seats being gender-reserved in 2009 to 30 out of 91 reserved in 2014.

likely that female *parshads* will both be renominated by their parties and go on to win a second election, which is critical to developing individual political expertise. These results also demonstrate how comparatively less likely that women will be either re-nominated or return for a second term when their gender reservation is removed after only one term. While arguably the gender reservation should only serve as a temporary foundation for women to start their political careers, removing it too soon appears to minimize the positive effect. Considering the previous findings that two out of the three women who contested and won open-gender seats against men were incumbents from gender-reserved seats, bringing women back for a second term is a key way to make women more competitive. Limiting a gender-reservation to only one term is likely too short a period for a woman to gain enough political experience and support to compete on an equal footing with men.

These findings should be considered alongside Bhavnani's (2009) determination that women are more likely to win in open-gender wards that were previously reserved for a woman. While a single term of gender reservation may influence party leaders and voters enough in an individual ward that a woman can be successful there in the future, this chapter has demonstrated that a single term does not appear to be enough to ensure an incumbent female *parshad* will return for a second term. How we judge this distinction depends on what the core goal of the gender-reservation system is. If the primary goal is to acclimate voters and parties to female candidates competing alongside men, then Bhavnani's results and my own findings that all women who received a nomination were nominated in previously gender-reserved wards indicate that this goal is being achieved, albeit very slowly and in small numbers. However, if the goal of the reservation is to develop a cohort of women who can gain significant political expertise and support (Deininger et al, 2011), and then use that to make inroads at the state and national level,

then the very low numbers of incumbent women overall, and particularly the low number of women returning to compete against men, indicate that this goal is not being achieved.

Furthermore, one reason this goal is not being achieved is inherent in the gender-reservation rules. The mandated removal of gender-reservations from a ward after one term, as will happen to the women currently in office in the upcoming 2019 elections, reduces the number of women who will return.<sup>43</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Gender quotas as an institution work both as a set of rules that structure who voters can and cannot select as their representative, and as an incentive mechanism that encourages the participation of women, who are otherwise disinclined by constraining social norms and lack of experience to involve themselves politically, by providing a route into office that excludes male competition. However, this analysis has demonstrated that as an electoral institution, gender quotas cannot force parties to nominate more than the minimum number of women, and thus do not automatically create a foundation that women politicians can build on. If parties continue to view women as a nomination “risk” or are otherwise uninterested in nominating women to compete outside of gender reservations, then the quota can become both a floor and a ceiling.

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<sup>43</sup> Gender-reservation changes always happen alongside caste-reservation changes, which add additional obstacles to incumbency. Six women (16-percent of all women) from 2009 both lost the gender reservation in their ward and were blocked by a caste reservation that they did not qualify for. One was nominated by the BJP to compete in a different, open-gender ward and won, and another competed as an independent in another gender-reserved ward but lost. The rest were apparently unable or uninterested in shifting wards. Comparably, four women (11-percent) from 2009 whose ward maintained its gender reservation were blocked by a caste reservation. One was nominated by Congress to compete in another ward, but lost to the BJP candidate. The rest did not reappear.

Parties nominate the minimum number of women but favor men in the remainder of the open-gender seats.

This analysis of the Jaipur Municipal Corporation 2014 elections demonstrates that women do not appear able or ready to compete in the open-gender seats against men on a broad scale, particularly women from the reserved-groups. A key factor to this shortage is party nominations, which are crucial to winning elections in Jaipur. Parties are not nominating many candidates to compete in races outside of a gender reservation. Furthermore, corresponding with the literature, despite over two decades of experience with gender reservations, parties are primarily willing to nominate a woman to compete in an open-gender ward, to compete against men, only if that ward has had recent previous experience with a female representative. Either the party considers women less competitive in wards that have not experienced a woman representative recently, and/or constituent polls indicate something similar. This indicates that shifting gender biases within conservative party structures and/or society itself via electoral quotas is a very gradual process. Parties may be facing a lack of strong women candidates; however, this analysis also indicated that gender-reserved elections are just as competitive as open gender races. Still, the possibility remains that two separate “leagues” are forming, one in the open-gender seats with primarily male contestants, the other in the gender-reserved seats with only women. Competition within gender-reserved seats may not be preparing female candidates to compete against men in open-gender seats, with their advantage in political experience.

Underlying any shortage of competitive female candidates is a significant discrepancy in lifetime political experience and support development prior to entering the JMC. By giving women a leg-up, the gender reservation may partially rectify this discrepancy; however, low incumbency rates result in most female *parshads* leaving after only one term. Without individual

women pursuing politics as a career, it is difficult to foresee how they bridge the experience gap with men.

Five structural factors likely discourage first-time female *parshads* from pursuing a political career: institutional disincentives, incumbency disadvantages, re-nomination restrictions, reservation displacement, and mandated gender discontinuity. *Parshad* positions are low-paid and often require long hours. Parties also rarely re-nominate *parshads* for a second term, possibly due to an inherent incumbency disadvantage that has been observed across Indian elections. Furthermore, many *parshads* every electoral cycle are displaced by the random assignment of a group and/or gender reservation to their ward which blocks them from running again. Notably, through this process, the reservation system can block the disadvantaged groups it was designed to support. While reservations create a foundation of representation, to a degree they also can create an artificial ceiling that significantly restricts where a candidate can compete, even for women and reserved-castes. Finally, the mandated removal of gender reservations after one term may be doing more harm than good. While there is a theoretical argument for encouraging women to become competitive outside of gender-reserved wards by removing reservations early, the analysis of JMC results of subsequent elections after a gender reservation is removed show that women are much less likely to return for a second term if gender reservations are removed rather than maintained. This indicates that one term is generally not enough time for women to establish themselves politically enough to be competitive with men in open-gender elections. Returning to the discussion of gender-reservation goals, if the objective is to develop an experienced cohort of women who can compete with men at higher political levels, the current institutional design is not conducive to achieving this goal. The lack



of such a cohort is further demonstrated by the lack of female representatives in higher levels of government. Across the 18 Jaipur-area MLA seats alone, there is only one woman.

These obstacles are added to an already strained rational calculation for women considering entering politics. As the narratives in the rest of this dissertation will describe, there are considerable costs for a woman considering entering politics: societal censure, family censure, family responsibilities, electoral disadvantages, long hours and low pay. The gender reservation adds additional disincentives – reservation blocks and disappearing gender reservations. When compared to the minimal benefits a *parshad* position provides – reduced political competition in gender-reserved wards, hyperlocal political power, some individual independence, and minimal opportunities for personal gain, it is not surprising that few women decide to pursue a political career. Furthermore, problematically for democratic accountability, low *parshad* incumbency can disincentivize *parshad* commitment for both men and women. If there is little likelihood or desire to return for a second term, then there is little need to please the voters. Multiple *parshads* admitted that the JMC had a poor reputation in terms of *parshad* dedication and achievement. Constituent surveys would be needed to determine how accurate that is; however, as the *parshad* below discusses, the reservation system can discourage motivation:

Initially I fought from ward..., but now that ward is an OBC seat. I had to move, and that is the major reason that these parshads don't work, because they know that after 5 years they have to move. They know whether they work or don't work, we are not going to fight again from this locality. That's a major problem for why these parshads don't work.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 4/20/2017 in Jaipur.

Given the number of obstacles discussed to winning a second term, most *parshads* must expect to only serve one term and thus have little to gain electorally to motivate service to their constituents.

Still, these conclusions are based on a limited analysis of only one municipal corporation. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the effect reservation institutional design has on electoral outcomes for women requires an analysis of multiple electoral years from several municipal corporations across India. Given the importance of party nomination to electoral success, future research should also look deeper into the nomination process. A qualitative investigation of nomination practices and the role of gatekeepers such as regional MLAs could provide insight into why parties nominate so few women to compete in open-gender seats. Finally, a broad data collection effort that tracks the career pathways of successful women in state and national politics to determine how many started in a gender-reserved *parshad* ward is needed to determine if the gender reservation system is serving its intended function as a pipeline to develop female political talent to serve at the highest levels. Finally, following the concerns outlined in this chapter and described in the forthcoming narratives, the possibility remains that the gender reservation was instituted and is maintained primarily as a release valve to discourage future demands for expanded quotas, possibly at higher levels, particularly as it does not threaten the most powerful male politicians at the state and national levels. If the *parshad* position is essentially a dead-end, with very few women progressing to higher levels of government, then it is not serving its purpose.

This chapter has described how women enter and leave the JMC via the gender reservation; however, we know very little about what goes on in-between, during her term. The next chapter begins the transition from an institutional analysis to the individual *parshads*

themselves. Chapter Four begins the methodological discussion by reviewing the challenges encountered and changes made during the data collection process, before moving into Chapter Five which reviews the theoretical link between descriptive and substantive representation that forms the core of this research and describes the coding process used to apply this theory to the JMC case. Following these two chapters of methodology, the analysis of the narratives themselves begins in Chapter Six.

## Chapter 4: An Evolving Methodology

Scholars often lament that “researchers rarely share their beginning tales; there are no false starts, no confusion, quandary, infatuation, or terror, only a coherent, well-planned research strategy, or at least that’s the story we tell about our research” (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997, cited in Shope, 2006). As Maxwell (2005) points out, the ideal sequential research model that progresses in a straight line from research question to data gathering to analysis is “not a good fit for qualitative research”. Many components must be reassessed or adapted throughout a project due to unforeseen developments. In this chapter, I will discuss the challenges encountered and changes made through an ongoing reflexive process. This transparency is important to maintaining replicability and encouraging criticism, supports the interpretation of the narratives I present, and aids in the judgement of my findings. First, I discuss the evolution of this project from investigating *how* a woman was representing her constituents, to *was* she representing them independently or simply as a placeholder for someone else. I then describe the research design and data collection process, with a focus on the limits of using a single case study. Finally, I go through the various methodological and ethical challenges I faced throughout the data gathering and analysis.

This research project initially proposed to examine how variation across gender demographics can influence substantive representation for women. Specifically, I expected to find significant variation in legislative priorities depending on the caste of female representatives in gender-reserved seats, based on a hypothesis that women from higher castes would have significantly different priorities than women from lower castes based on different life experiences. I planned a series of interviews with both female and male *parshads* within the JMC, using a methodology based on measuring substantive representation through pre-

determined policy categories. Likely unsurprising to other qualitative researchers, the formal rigidity of my quantitative measures did not survive first contact.

Upon arrival in Jaipur, the process officially began with a discussion with a hotel clerk at the front desk, who in response to my question about his *parshad*, informed me in English that “they are all worthless people” who only want to make money. After I described my proposed project to him, my research assistant Varun, someone who had spent his whole life in Rajasthan and would prove crucial in providing local context, pointed out that the JMC is primarily tasked with municipal civic duties. Therefore, *parshads* are unlikely to prioritize legislative issues in the way I envisioned. Furthermore, women’s issues in general are unlikely to be prioritized, as laws and enforcement for these issues operate primarily at the state level. Furthermore, he was skeptical of the value in interviewing many of the women *parshads* and warned me many would only speak with us in the presence of men from their family. He also claimed many of these women have simply replaced their husbands as *parshad* after his seat was reserved for a woman, and are holding it until the reservation is removed and their husbands can run again. The following day he reported a conversation with a local *chaiwalla* (tea vendor), who described his *parshad* as “some lady”, he knew her name but “it was not important” because “her husband does all the work”.

These discussions introduced a critical challenge to my system of measurement and my conception of representation. It became obvious early on that policy priorities were likely useless as a dependent variable, as everyone essentially prioritized the same issues. Furthermore, if women *parshads* did provide their priorities, using them was problematic if some were simply serving as a proxy for their husbands. Additionally, accessing women *parshads* in a manner that was safe for them while still enabling them to speak openly would be difficult. As I will discuss

in this chapter, these challenges shifted the target of the research project from policy priorities to the women themselves and their ability to substantively represent their constituents.

Theoretically, in the causal chain that links descriptive to substantive representation, this project moved from investigating *how* a woman was representing her constituents, to *was* she representing them independently or simply as a placeholder for someone else.

### Defining Concepts

I was no longer attempting to objectively track policy priorities, but I still wanted to gauge the ability of *parshads* to address local women's issues. However, from the first interview, how to define "women's issues" within this project became an obvious sticking point. In response to a question on the ability of *parshads* to address women's issues and rights, our interviewee emphasized that the JMC does not deal with women's issues, only the state legislature has the power to do so. In subsequent interviews, questions containing the phrase "women's issues" were often met with confusion.<sup>45</sup> Confused himself, after the first interview Varun asked me what I meant by women's issues. I listed issues from the literature such as access to drinking water, accessible toilets, and protections from sexual violence. He pointed out that "Jaipur does not live in the 15<sup>th</sup> century anymore" and that access to water and toilets are not big issues in the city. This point forced me to grapple with how to define women's issues within the Indian context. In the Western context, women's issues are centered on women's rights (anti-discrimination, anti-violence, reproductive rights) and women's traditional societal roles (children, education, healthcare) (Wolbrecht, 2010; Osborn, 2014). These are generally considered applicable across societies. However, within the Indian context, it is important to

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<sup>45</sup>When referring to women's issues, we generally used the Hindi term *mahilaon se sambandhit mudde*

consider the issues unique to a developing society, and to incorporate the enormous gulf between developed and less-developed spheres. Most of the literature on India examines the rural panchayati raj institutions, and hence rural concerns for women dominate the idea of women's issues in India, such as accessible drinking water, household toilets, access to equal education and nourishment for daughters, equal property rights, preventing rape and violence against women, and marriage equality and protections. However, while these issues do not disappear in the urban municipal sphere, they are less problematic, particularly in the more developed and affluent areas. Access to drinking water is an issue more limited to the *kacchi bastis* (undeveloped housing areas), household toilets are much more common (the bigger issue is public infrastructure such as sewers), and girls have better access to education and nourishment. The rest of the social and legal issues appear to be just as prominent in the cities as in the villages, but they fall under the purview of the state government, not the municipal. Still, gender reservations had been instituted to improve the representation of women in the municipal corporation, but I struggled to determine how to measure their impact on women in the city.

I decided to push forward with the interviews and see what turned up. During the first few interviews, I began to see the promise of the more qualitative aspects of our questionnaire, particularly regarding *parshad* background, political journey, campaign, aspirations, perceptions of women's role in politics, and ethnographic observations taken from the interviews themselves. To leverage these strengths, I began to shift the project away from the quantitative measure of policy priorities and towards a more qualitative measure of the ability of women *parshads* to successfully represent their constituents. I moved from imposing external categories on what is and isn't a women's issue, and instead shifted my focus to the generative processes that brought the *parshad* to their current position. I wanted to follow the path from the home to political

office, the struggle for women to assert independence throughout this process, and determine the many obstacles hindering this journey. Following substantive representation theory, if women enter politics with the shared experiences of their constituents, then they will organically understand the interests of their women constituents. I was more concerned with locating and measuring the constraints and obstacles that prevent them from fully supporting these interests, especially the ability of women *parshads* to act independently of the men around them. However, the shift to a more qualitative approach required me to adjust my research design to accommodate new constraints and maintain rigor.

### **Research Design and Data Collection**

The use of a single case study, and the selection of Jaipur as the case to investigate this question pathway created opportunities and constraints. I gathered comprehensive information on a large portion of the entire unit (41 of the 91 total *parshads*), which creates extensive within-case variation along gender, community/caste, education, and class lines. This variation strengthens the ability of the case to follow the primary purpose of a case study – to understand a larger class of similar units (Gerring, 2004). In my case, these findings outline the capacity of a reservation quota system to assist women in overcoming the societal and political restrictions of patriarchal societies that hinder their ability to participate. Furthermore, this case helps us begin to answer two core questions put forth by the literature: do reserved seats enable women to win unreserved seats (Yoon, 2016)? Can reserved seats become a floor to increase representation for women, rather than a ceiling (Paxton & Hughes, 2016)?

I chose to study the Indian municipal corporation for several reasons: it offers a directly observable and quantifiable improvement in the representation (at least descriptively) of women in a political body with the institution of gender reservations; a significant amount of time has



passed since institutional change was enacted to allow for the intended effect, 24 years and 5 electoral cycles; and *parshads* are politically relevant enough to be identifiable and thus accessible, but not high enough on the political ladder to make access impossible without connections. Geographically, I chose Jaipur's municipal corporation because I was familiar with the city and had prior contacts from previous study, it offered the opportunity to study change in a state (Rajasthan) that is one of the more conservative, traditional, and patriarchal within the country. Finally, Jaipur, as with most Indian cities, has become incredibly diverse in terms of ethnicity, community/caste, class, and urban/rural origins due to massive migration over the past two decades from the rural to the urban, and across regions from the poorer to the wealthier. These factors affect the ability of institutions to deliver change, and Jaipur provided the opportunity to observe many of them in action.

The study of local government also provides the best opportunity to study the interaction of elected representatives with their constituents. As with bureaucracy (Gupta, 2012), the higher one goes in the political hierarchy, the less contact representatives have with the average person, and the more focused communication becomes with elites. A connection between representatives and their constituents has been labeled a key aspect of substantive representation theory. For representation to qualify as substantive, the elected must fully understand and remain responsive to the group they are purported to represent (Mansbridge, 1999; Weldon, 2002; Urbinati and Warren, 2008). In the personalized politics of India, in-person interaction and communication are key to getting officials to take notice of your concerns (Gupta, 2012), and for most urban Indians, the *parshad* is the only personal connection they will make with an elected official. Therefore, while my focus on the local level prevents me from establishing findings easily generalizable to the levels of state and federal power, it does allow me to develop conclusions on

the role of institutions in the development of substantive representation at political levels where it should be the most apparent.

The JMC resides within a relatively conservative region of India that serves as a difficult case to institutionally establish substantive representation. This reality varies across the state, between communities, between the city and the village, and between classes; however, in general, patriarchal norms still dominate Rajasthani and Jaipuri society and most women who live and act within it. Therefore, the challenges that restrict substantive representation in Jaipur should not be taken as universally applicable across India, as patriarchal norms vary significantly across the country. Future research will hopefully provide a comparison with less patriarchal environments where women may have more opportunities to gain, maintain, and exert political power.

As a case study, the primary intent of this research is descriptive. I discuss the possible causes of what I have observed, but these are always presented as heuristic rather than conclusive. The main goal is to thoroughly describe and develop the correlations I observed across narratives. Providing an authoritative answer as to why requires a broader systematic comparison. In the tradeoff between breadth and depth, I have focused on going deeper through extensive interviewing within a single case. Following Gerring (2004), depth allows me to investigate and determine several of the causal mechanisms that restrict women from developing political power, even with institutional supports provided by reserved seats. Ideally, breadth can be added to this work by future examination of additional cases to allow us to begin to determine actual causal effects.

Data collection began with a purposeful sample, drawing on a specific panel of women *parshads* who had a unique life experience (Maxwell, 2012), with an equal number of men

alongside to provide a control. This purposeful sample slowly evolved by necessity into a convenience sample by the end as the pool of accessible subjects diminished. As my research assistant Varun and I approached 20 completed interviews of the 33 total women *parshads*, getting access to the remaining 13 became very difficult. We had picked the low hanging fruit and the rest continued to not answer their phones or were unable to set up meetings. Landing successful interviews with men was generally much easier, as there was a larger sample and they are more accessible. Ultimately, my interview count was limited to 23 women and 18 men.

The shift to convenience sampling by the end of my project makes the risk of selection bias higher. It may limit the amount of variation within the dependent variable, which can result in the over-estimation of the explanations (Collier and Mahoney, 1996) by over-relying on informants whose views may be atypical (Maxwell, 2012). However, as the figures below demonstrate, we developed a diverse sample largely proportional to the JMC as a whole along community, caste and partisan lines. Women are over-represented across all group reservation categories (OBC(W), SC(W) and ST(W)), but suited the focus of my project on women *parshads* specifically, and control is provided with a nearly equal representation of men.

*Figure 4.1: Demographics of Full JMC and Interviewed*

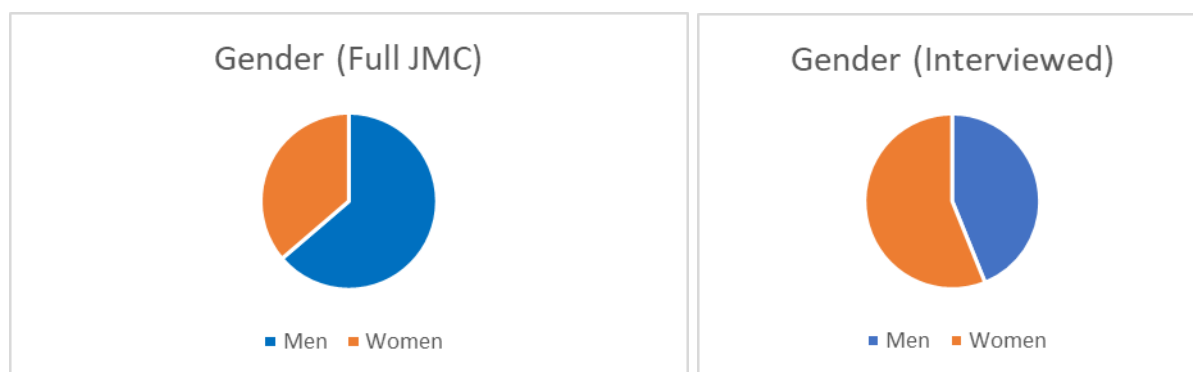


Figure 4.2: Proportional Group Reservation Category of Full JMC and Interviewed

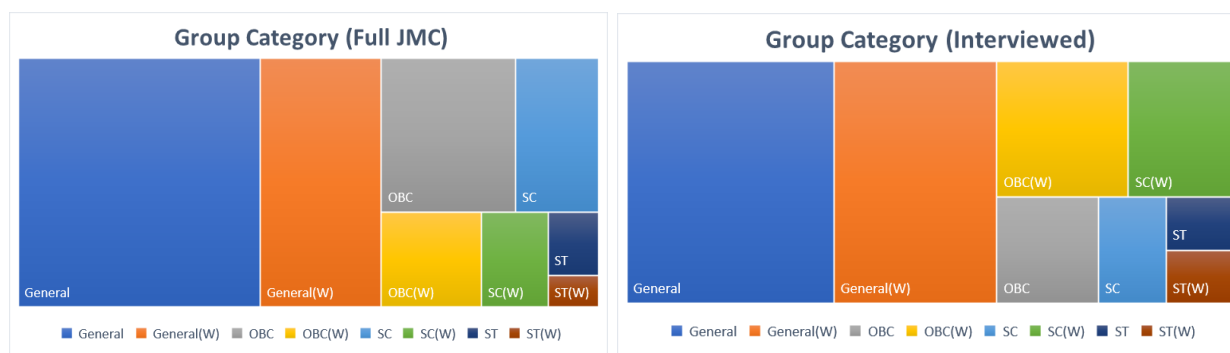


Figure 4.3: Party Association of Full JMC and Interviewed



To further diminish the impact of sample bias, I triangulate across methods: participant-observations, ethnographic interviews, and quantitative analysis are all incorporated into this project (Berg, 1998; Creswell and Miller, 2000; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Moreover, by focusing on one unit with relatively homogenous causal patterns within it, as all *parshads* are acting within the same institution of the JMC with patriarchal norms influential throughout, I restrict the broad generalizability of this study, but strengthen support for the reliability of my explanations within the JMC itself (Collier and Mahoney, 1996).

### Methodological and Ethical Challenges

The core challenge of this project was the double-bind of gaining access to the narratives of the *parshads* while both protecting and promoting their rights as women and individuals. As

the following passage from my fieldnotes attest, seeking a balance is extremely important for researchers, and very difficult to do.

It was quite difficult to land this interview, my research assistant called multiple times, and no one answered. Finally, the *parshad*'s husband answered and told us to come the following Tuesday in the morning. However, when we arrived no one answered the phone, and when we rang the doorbell the *parshad* herself answered the door, but did not appear to have any knowledge of the interview. Furthermore, she was obviously uncomfortable with two men at her doorstep and her husband out of the house. She told us to come back the next morning when her husband would be there. We returned the following day and again no one answered the phone. This time her father-in-law answered the door, brought us in for water and *ghewar*, then called his son who said he would call us back in an hour, but never did so we left. We decided to wait a couple weeks to try again. This time she answered and told us to come the next morning. We arrived, no one answered the door or the phone, but we waited several minutes and eventually she came out and invited us in for the interview. She appeared totally exhausted, as her 7-month old son had been running a fever and she had no household help. We carried out the interview with her holding him while he slept. She seemed quite nervous and uncomfortable, although she did smile when talking about how much work the campaign was. She had agreed to the interview, but didn't appear eager and didn't allow us to record. My assistant attributes this to her husband being out of the house. Her answers were short and the interview quick, around 20 minutes.<sup>46</sup>

The core of this research project centers on the ability of women *parshads* to assert their independence as representatives. However, as the above quote illustrates, we were outsiders entering their homes, often for interviews set up solely through their husbands who regulated household comings-and-goings. Varun and I became agents for a period in the power dynamics that restrict that independence. I was continually troubled by the trade-off I felt we had to make between abiding by existing norms to complete the interview, versus challenging these norms as part of an empowering feminist research agenda (Fonow and Cook, 2005; Harding and Norberg,

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<sup>46</sup> Fieldnotes from interview conducted with female *parshad* on 10/20/2016 in Jaipur.

2005). Traditionally, as visitors we should address the husband first and step lightly when trying to focus the interview on his wife or daughter to avoid any implication that their opinion was valued over his. When both the *parshad* and her husband were present, we tended to address questions to him first to show respect, before turning to get her opinion. Ideally, they would both respond; however, even when a question was initially directed to her, the husband would often step in and answer for her. We generally did not press her for an answer to avoid rudeness. Furthermore, particularly for the more dependent women, they often did not know the answer, or would only give a short yes/no, and their husband would complete the answer for her. These interviews often shifted to a relatively isolated conversation between us and her husband. We would try to get her more involved, but walked a fine line between trying to include her and avoiding public humiliation by revealing her lack of knowledge.

Several ethical and empirical issues also arise out of the experience narrated above. First, in the pursuit of data, I put this woman in an uncomfortable and potentially socially compromising position. In a traditional Indian household, it is generally inappropriate for a woman, particularly a young woman, married or unmarried, to spend time alone with men who are not family members. Our persistence eventually persuaded her to allow us to interview her, but that did not prevent possible social ramifications and censure in the future from neighbors, friends and family. Additionally, we reinforced the inherent power hierarchies these women have been struggling with their whole lives (Wolf, 1996). As two privileged, persistent males, we essentially invaded her private space both physically and socially. Although she gave us permission, we gained access because I was white and my research assistant could persuade her, because we were educated, and because her husband had granted us access. I realize now that she had very little ability to say no. Reflecting on this experience, we should have waited for an

opportunity to interview her when her husband was present. Still, given the difficulties of landing this interview, there was always a tradeoff between gaining access and these ethical issues. Overall, if I had not been persistent in trying to land interviews with women *parshads*, my sample would be largely composed of men. We did not request to interview her alone and had expected her husband to be there, but this experience led us to accept that it would be preferable to interview women in the presence of male family members or acquaintances.

Contacting and physically finding the *parshads* proved the most challenging aspect of the data-gathering process. Through trial and error, Varun and I settled on cold-calling from a public JMC contact list, introducing ourselves as Ph.D. students, one from America and one from Rajasthan University, and asking for an interview to contribute to my research on local political experiences in Jaipur. As we discovered throughout the process, emphasizing “Ph.D.” “American”, and “Rajasthan University” quickly established a rapport, given the societal levels of respect held for higher institutions of learning (particularly foreign), and the alumni networks that my research assistant could tap into via his association with Rajasthan University. For example, Varun was aware that our first interviewee had also attended Rajasthan University, so he brought up this shared connection during our cold-call to convince him to take our interview request seriously. Nearly every *parshad* who answered our calls was receptive to an interview and would either give us a place and time to come or would tell us to call back. However, patience and persistence became critical as at least half of our appointments were cancelled the day of the scheduled interview, particularly with women *parshads*, and we had to start the process over.

Although this strenuous process ultimately limited the number of interviews I could complete, it also provided an important means of measuring *parshad* independence and spousal

involvement. Who answered the official phone number and set up the interview indicated how involved husbands were in the official duties of their *parshad* wives. The difficulties in completing interviews with women also revealed the societal expectations, responsibilities, and restrictions that limited their ability to spend time representing their constituents. For example, during holidays and the wedding season, an interview with a woman *parshad* became nearly impossible, as women are primarily responsible for preparing and providing hospitality to visiting family during holidays. Only male *parshads* were accessible during these times. Furthermore, domestic issues such as a sick child, spouse or in-law often forced the female head-of-household to stay home or travel to care for the sick individual, particularly if it was a father-in-law or husband. Finally, deaths and funerals require the attendance of the women in a family to support the grieving, prepare the body, and perform the last rites. While men do have responsibilities in these areas as well, they are fewer and much easier to ignore. As Pinsky (2013) argues, valuable qualitative data exists in the interactions between interviewer and interviewee, even outside of the interview itself.

Our first interview exemplifies several of the challenges we faced during the interview process. First, is a lack of privacy. Nearly all of the *parshads* asked us to come to their home for the interview. Some had private side offices, but many did not. Therefore, there was almost always someone else present, whether party workers, assistants, fellow *parshads*, family, spouses, children, elders, in-laws, or constituents:

We called the *parshad* the day before. He agreed to an interview and said to come to his house. We arrived a quarter after eight to a large house with a privacy wall and a gate. Varun says it is one of the nicer neighborhoods in the city. We were greeted by his wife, and even though we were already 20 minutes late, as we were unable to find his house, she told us to return in an hour as he was sleeping. We went down the street to drink *chai*, read the newspaper, and then we return. He is now awake and waves us in to a large sitting room in a very open house. I give him my business card, which he glances at and sets on the table. He lives in a joint family, with his brother and his family, and everyone



is around the room at various points in their breakfast routine. We sit down on the couch, his wife is lounging nearby, and it feels like a strange beginning. Varun takes the lead and begins to discuss with him the signed consent form, which he views with skepticism. He is not comfortable with us recording him, as he is a politician he says, and is not comfortable with how it might be used. To encourage him to feel more at ease, Varun hands over the interview questions to show we're not trying to trap him. During this discussion, an assistant comes in with paperwork needing his signature regarding widow benefits. He then returns to our question list and still declines the recording, so we begin. We start with the first question, but as we move on the *parshad* glances down at the question list in his hand and moves immediately to the next, rattling answers off like test questions. We frantically write down what we can. The interview takes about half-an-hour, and he seems to warm to us by the end. We ask him if there is anything else he'd like to tell us about the JMC and how it works. He tells me to come back in three years after he is out of office and he will tell me so many things.<sup>47</sup>

The lack of privacy illustrated in this narrative was common across nearly every interview. This consideration is particularly relevant for the interviews with women. Women across much of South Asia are expected to be deferential in the presence of male family members, particularly elders, regardless of political or social standing. This created a problem as I attempted to determine how independent these women *parshads* were of the men around them, as they were less likely to assert themselves when these men were present. However, other research has characterized the home as a safe, non-threatening space where women interviewees have more control (Sanderson et al, 2013). This is likely even more the case with many of the women we interviewed, who were mainly housewives prior to entering politics, and would have rarely interacted unaccompanied with strangers outside of the house. I ultimately concluded that while the presence of men likely circumscribed the interviewee, these women had to act within these environments daily, and would rarely conduct their office in the absence of men, who dominate all aspects of the government, the party system, and public life itself. The interview environment

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<sup>47</sup> Fieldnotes from interview conducted with male *parshad* on 10/04/2016 in Jaipur.

likely reflected the *parshad*'s reality better than an artificially private environment that excluded men.

This first interview also demonstrated the importance of language and establishing trust. We translated both the questions and signed consent form into Hindi, and always presented the Hindi instead of the English versions. This insured both that the *parshads* understood what they were signing, and avoided the embarrassing situation of forcing them to admit they couldn't read or understand English.<sup>48</sup> During the interview itself, Varun would lead the questioning along my protocol, and I would follow the conversation and ask clarifying questions. While allowing the interpreter to lead the interview requires giving up a significant amount of control on behalf of the researcher, it also allows the interview to become a more free-flowing conversation and less formal (Sanderson et al, 2013). My research assistant's native Hindi and knowledge of local dialects put *parshads* more at ease and improved understanding, and allowed me to think about what questions needed to be asked and gave additional time for fieldnote jottings. I would improvise questions in Hindi myself, particularly to clarify points or pursue a new line of questioning, but could always turn to Varun to explain any confusion in translation.

Many *parshads* were initially skeptical of our intent. One *parshad* acknowledged that they were hesitant to set up an interview with us because they had dealt with people before who were "only looking for juicy stories and then take things out of context or change the story completely." We attempted to build the trust needed for a candid recorded conversation throughout our introduction. Through the signed consent and verbally we emphasized that we were Ph.D. students, the interviews would only be used for my dissertation, their names would

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<sup>48</sup>The ability to speak and read English is a strong class marker in India, and readily indicates higher social standing (or lack of).

never be mentioned, and the recordings would be stored in a safe place and never shared.

Furthermore, when asking to record we would share the question protocol to reassure them that there were no “gotcha” questions (after the experience of the first interview, we would take the protocol back before starting the interview to allow us to create a more conversational exchange).<sup>49</sup> This approach worked for the most part, as out of the final 41 interviewees, all but three allowed us to record. Still, some of the best conversations came after the recorder was turned off and conversation became freer.

There are always inherent power imbalances between the interviewer and interviewee that vary across research settings (Kvale, 2006; Tanggaard, 2007; Vähäsantanen and Saarinen, 2013). From the beginning, I knew that managing both gendered power imbalances and racial hierarchies within the interview process would be critical to this project. As a white male, I was not the ideal principal investigator from a demographic perspective. Women interviewees are generally more open with women interviewers (Oakley, 2016). Furthermore, gender imbalances and racial privilege could create a deep gulf between myself and the interviewees that would significantly limit the narrative. Following Oakley, I sought to lessen the power imbalance to a degree by relying on a local assistant to both “reduce social distance” during the interview (198) and provide more accurate translations. My assistant was still male, but provided knowledge of local cultural norms and understanding to both help bridge the gap with the interviewee, and ensure that these norms were respected during the project (Higginbottom and Serrant-Green, 2005; Sanderson et al, 2013).<sup>3</sup> For example, my research assistant could enter a *parshad’s*

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<sup>49</sup>We made it a point to visibly turn off the recorder during phone calls or other official business (I also avoided writing at these times as well to avoid suspicion). Additionally, it became apparent that some liked having their journey and accomplishments recorded, and would even remind us to turn the recorder back on after phone calls.

household and quickly identify the head of the family, to whom we would then pay our respects before proceeding to the interview, avoiding any unintended affront, particularly if we were interviewing a woman of the family.

Reviewing my fieldnotes, I am struck by how quickly we gained access to so many *parshads* with just one phone call. We were given license to enter their private homes and interact with their families. This demonstrated the value of being a white American male involved in Ph.D. research, all of which provided immediate respect and to some degree, trust. The opportunity for these *parshads* to be associated with a white person was valuable, it is a sign of foreign connections and worldliness that demands social respect and generates the prestige that is critical to remaining relevant within Indian politics. Multiple times we were photographed with the *parshad* by their assistants, and even videotaped on occasion. Following Warren's (1988) experiences – through race, class and Western culture (and in my case, gender) I “acquired authority and privilege” (cited in Wolf, 1996: 8). Varun agreed that an Indian, a foreigner with darker skin, or a woman engaging in the same research project would face considerably greater obstacles due to the additional normative expectations and suspicions placed on individuals with these demographic characteristics, which white foreigners generally are exempt from.

In one of our early interviews set up with a woman *parshad*, her husband answered the phone, arranged the interview, met us at their house and ended up giving the interview. We never saw or interacted with her, she stayed inside while we spoke with her husband out on the patio with other male family members present.<sup>50</sup> This happened several more times to varying degrees.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with husband of *female* parshad on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur.

Often, we would arrive at the house and sit down with the husband. His wife, the *parshad*, would come in and serve us *chai*, water, and snacks, then either retire and check on us periodically throughout the interview, or sit quietly to the side and answer few if any questions. At other times, we would know she was in the house, but we would never see her – she would make us *chai* but a male assistant would serve it, or we would ask for her signature on the signed consent and an assistant would go back into the house, get it, and return with the form. One time, all we ever saw of the *parshad* was her arm as she handed her business card for us to her husband through a partially closed door.

These situations were problematic, both ethically and methodologically. Was she truly giving consent for us to use her story, but as told by her husband? Were we simply reifying the patriarchal hierarchy by not demanding to talk to her? Did I abdicate my duty as a feminist researcher to uncover “subjugated knowledge” (Hesse-Biber, 2012)? Ultimately, I decided that as men not of her family, we had no other means of obtaining consent. We were reinforcing the status quo and not digging for knowledge that only she could give, but I considered this justified considering the likely consequences. If we were to persistently request to talk to her, we would have risked insulting the husband (and her by proxy), putting her in an awkward position with possible future ramifications, and likely gained little data useful for my research question. I needed to know who was the primary agent, and these arrangements suggested that her husband handled all *parshad* interactions with men outside of her family at the least.

In a society where men conduct much of public business, this raised serious questions about autonomy. Often husbands made the dependence of their spouses unabashedly clear: several baldly told us that the only reason their wives ran for the office instead of them was

because this ward was reserved for a woman.<sup>51</sup> If he ran the campaign, made the decisions, and dealt with constituents, then I needed that narrative for this research project based on its objectives. To address these inherent shortcomings, I incorporated several methods of inquiry to determine the multiple ways women can engage in the political process – primary interviews with the *parshads* themselves, participant observations of JMC meetings, interviews with outside journalists and activists, and interviews with student politicians – using triangulation to create a more complete picture (Hesse-Biber, 2012). The narratives from the interviews as provided by the *parshads* or their spouses and my observations of their actions and behavior during JMC meetings provided insight into their independence or dependence as they carried out their office. The primary interviews with *parshads* generally provided individual insight into the personal constraints and supports that influenced the development of independence or dependence, while the interviews with journalists and activists provided a more systemic perspective on the structural influences. While not from the *parshads* themselves, the interviews with student politicians give a unique perspective into the politically formative years of the average politician in India.

Despite these considerations, given the shortcomings I find in the gender reservation system, I also fear actors with political agendas may use these findings to push the rollback of the current system or to further discourage a future expansion of the system to the state and national levels. Conservative Indian politicians in recent years have voiced a desire to re-assess the gender reservation system to ensure that “women who are active in politics and public life ...

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with husband of *female* parshad on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur.

may not lose their importance and role as mothers, daughters and sisters”. Instead, “women power does not require freedom, but protection and channelization”.<sup>52</sup> Similar to Khan (2001, 2005) and the concerns she expressed on her own work, I also wonder how these findings will be “read” in the West. Criticism of cultures in the developing world often serves to “further demonize and stereotype”, and reinforce the common view that the West is the benchmark of political progress (Khan, 2001: 268). Given these considerations, while the exploitation of the reservation system by men is the core finding, I also emphasize the presence of supremely qualified and capable women *parshads* who were also brought up through reserved seats. Furthermore, the most important lesson we may take from these findings is the inability of detached institutional fixes designed by Western academics and pushed by Western policy-makers, such as gender quotas, to reliably serve as a universal fix for female under-representation across cultural contexts without taking the strength and resiliency of contextual cultural norms into account.

### **Conclusions**

Before setting out on fieldwork abroad, particularly when relying on interviews, researchers must take into consideration the unique social dynamics and norms that will govern the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. At its best, interviewing is a conversation, and local norms will influence that conversation, and thus the findings, considerably. Challenges to gaining access to interviewees while maintaining their rights as individuals will be significant. For this reason, I continually emphasize the importance of finding

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<sup>52</sup> See: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/nda-states-stall-50-per-cent-quotas-for-women-in-panchayat-elections-4856903/> {Accessed 01/03/2018}

a local, trusted facilitator to help and to advise in this delicate process, both to improve fieldwork outcomes, and more importantly, to protect the interviewees from the negative repercussions that can last long after the researcher has left. Furthermore, scholars will have to conduct interviews in less than ideal social environments and will be forced to alter their methodology to accommodate the eventual narrative. Recognizing this beforehand and designing a project that is flexible, remaining adaptable in the field, and being honest afterwards with the resultant shortcomings is crucial.

With a goal of maintaining transparency, supporting the interpretation of the forthcoming narratives, and to aid in the judgement of my findings, this chapter discussed the challenges encountered and changes made during the data collection phase of this project. I discussed the evolution of this project from investigating *how* a woman was representing her constituents, to *was* she representing them independently or simply as a placeholder for someone else. I then described the research design and data collection process, with a focus on the limits of using a single case study. Finally, I reviewed the various methodological and ethical challenges I faced throughout the data gathering and analysis. The following chapter will review the theoretical link between descriptive and substantive representation that forms the core of this research and then move into the coding process used to apply this theory to the JMC case. After these two chapters of methodology the dissertation moves into the analysis of the narratives themselves in Chapter Six.



## Chapter 5: Delivering Substantive Representation through Quotas

All quotas are intended to accelerate the growth of women in political power; however, variation in design and implementation has led to significant discrepancies in efficacy and the delivery of substantive representation.<sup>53</sup> This chapter discusses the crucial theoretical link between improving descriptive representation via quotas and achieving substantive representation – women wielding true political power. For quotas to be considered effective, the literature argues that women must be elected who are qualified, who successfully push the interests of women, who fundamentally alter the masculine political environment, and who consistently serve their constituents as their representative. I then use these standards to develop the measures used in my own analysis of gender quota reservations within the Jaipur Municipal Corporation. However, while scholars have conducted research globally, their analyses generally do not go below the national level, and are primarily focused on the developed world.<sup>54</sup> As I discuss in this chapter, the literature has developed standards that are not always readily applicable to local level politics in the developing world.

This chapter begins with a methodological distinction between the two primary ways of measuring substantive representation: process and outcomes. As this chapter will discuss, the JMC is not an effective case to measure substantive representation as an outcome, as there is little measurable legislative output. However, the JMC is an effective case to measure process, given the semi-legislative *parshad* responsibilities. Then the chapter identifies the dependent variable for this analysis – individual *parshad* independence. As the rest of this dissertation will

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<sup>53</sup> For a complete review see Hughes et al (2017).

<sup>54</sup> Extensive research has been done at the state level, but is focused on the United States. For a complete review see Reingold (2008).

demonstrate, *parshads* do not enter the JMC with intrinsic autonomy, many are quite dependent on others to carry out office responsibilities, which creates a disconnect between descriptive and substantive representation. I define the three categories of independence relied upon for the analysis: *independent*, *moderately-dependent*, or *highly-dependent*, and discuss the categorization process. Finally, I shift to the five independent variables: *campaigns and elections*, *access to political networks*, *constituent activity*, *institutional environment*, and *qualifications*, which explain the causal processes that lead to independence and dependence. I define each and discuss their use in the coding of the *parshad* narratives.

### **Process versus Outcomes**

First a conceptual distinction should be made. As Franceschet & Piscopo (2008: 393) argue, the concept of substantive representation must be disaggregated into two distinct concepts: “substantive representation as process, where women change the legislative agenda, and substantive representation as outcome, where female legislators succeed in passing women’s rights laws.” Substantive representation consists of changing both legislative outcomes and the process of legislating itself. Examples of outcomes are straightforward – bills are passed that support women’s rights or public goods needed by women constituents are delivered. Examples of process include introducing or sponsoring bills that support women’s issues, providing previously excluded perspectives and legislative approaches within debates, and connecting women in power to women in society. As this chapter will discuss, the JMC is not an effective case to measure substantive representation as an outcome, given the lack of measurable legislative output. However, the JMC is an effective case to measure process, given the extensive legislative and semi-legislative activities *parshads* must engage in.

Scholarship measuring substantive representation as an outcome relies predominantly on the number of women's interest bills that pass and become policy.<sup>55</sup> Additional work tracks the delivery of public goods by women leaders that specifically support women constituents.<sup>56</sup> However, as discussed in the first chapter, the JMC is not primarily a legislature that debates and passes social policy bills. It is a municipal corporation tasked with running the city of Jaipur, and thus the only real debate and votes are to pass an annual budget and select an executive. Furthermore, there is little variation in official budgetary allocations across *parshads*, as they are each allocated an equal amount. The real amount does vary significantly based on the *parshad's* ability to solicit additional funds from the JMC executive and from members of the state legislature (MLA), but this process and amounts are opaque, and data is not available for a systematic comparison. Therefore, the standard measures of substantive representation as an outcome – passing bills and delivering public goods – are not readily adaptable to the JMC case.

In comparison, the concept of process is much broader. Analyzing process involves both individual actors and the environment they act within, which are readily applicable to any level of politics. Recognizing this advantage, in this chapter, I orient the standards of measure for this analysis around representation as a process. As the narratives of the next chapter will illustrate, the ability of women *parshads* to represent their constituents can be restricted by a lack of autonomy. This dynamic is the primary analytical core of this research, and I will discuss how independence and dependence is measured. Following my focus on process, I then discuss the independent variables that help explain the ability, or inability, of a *parshad* to assert their

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<sup>55</sup> Bratton, 2005; Swers, 2002; or that were introduced by women (Bratton, 2005; Thomas and Welch, 1991; Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008; Kerevel and Atkeson, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004

independence: campaigns, representative access, constituent activity, political environment, and qualifications. I review the existing literature on each and how I applied them to the JMC case. I provide examples from the interview narratives throughout to demonstrate how these measures were applied.

### **Dependent Variable: Individual Independence**

The core of this research centers on the ability of women *parshads* to assert their independence as representatives. The quality of women brought in through gender quotas, and particularly the perception of their quality, is critical to instigating the broader social and normative changes successful quota systems will ideally bring about. Exposure to effective women representatives should diminish restrictive gender stereotypes and motivate a larger cohort of future women leaders. Extensive research across Indian villages has found that exposure to female leadership through quotas alters male perceptions of female leadership ability, and weakens public and domestic stereotypes about female roles (Beaman et al, 2009).<sup>57</sup> In turn, this has been shown to encourage the participation of women, and improves their ability to win in the absence of quotas in both Mumbai (Bhavnani, 2009) and West Bengal (Beaman et al, 2009). Indian women are more likely to participate in *panchayat* meetings and to file an official request or complaint when the *panchayat* leader position is reserved for a woman (Ban and Rao, 2008; Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Beaman et al, 2010). Indian girls and their parents also have higher educational and career aspirations for their daughters under a woman sarpanch (Beaman et al, 2012). However, Beaman et al (2010) found that women *sarpanchs* are more likely than their male counterparts to say that their spouses pressured them into running

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<sup>57</sup>A similar effect in Italy (de Paola et al, 2014).

and helps them in their political responsibilities. Women *sarpanchs* in reserved seats were also reported to speak less or often not at all, and were more likely to allow the vice-sarpanch or other official to replace her as chair in *panchayat* meetings.<sup>58</sup>

These discrepancies demonstrate that quotas can, but do not necessarily lead to role models. There are several accounts of women representatives brought in through reservations who serve primarily as stand-ins for male relatives in India (Nanivadekar, 2006), with similar arguments that women in politics often serve as surrogates for fathers, husbands or sons in Pakistan (Shaheed, 1986). Media reports often mention *parshad-patis* and *sarpanch-patis* as joking “official” titles for the husbands of the elected representatives, given their involvement in the official duties of the *parshad* and *sarpanch* wives, despite being unelected. Increasing numbers of elected women are certainly positive, but we must also consider the possibility that when women are brought in by the reservation who are unprepared and dependent on their husbands or fathers, they may not demonstrate the ability of women to serve as effective politicians. As one husband claimed:

When people see her face (the I) they think of her as just a face, they know her father is the main decisionmaker (said right in front of the *parshad*).<sup>59</sup>

In contrast, however, I also found multiple examples of women who were considered highly effective by the men around them, and women *parshads* who viewed themselves as valuable role models:

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<sup>58</sup> Clayton (2014) also found that women in Lesotho districts with a gender quota were less politically engaged than in unreserved districts.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with father of female *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur.

Now you see a good number of female parshads in the JMC, some are even heads of committees. They serve as role models for other women in our area, who now they think that they can also work outside of the house.<sup>60</sup>

Most scholarship assumes *a priori* that the elected representative enters the legislature with a degree of individual agency. However, in highly patriarchal societies, these accounts illustrate that this independence should not be taken for granted. The alarming challenge such a phenomenon poses to our standard conception of democracy makes *individual independence* the core dependent variable of this dissertation. To determine individual levels of independence or dependence, selections from each *parshad's* narrative and field observations were coded as measuring individual independence if they addressed the following questions:

- Who answered the phone and set up the interview, the *parshad* or their spouse, or both?
- Does the *parshad* provide all the interview answers, do they just sit to the side while their spouse answers, are they present?
- Who conducts the official work of the post? How involved is the *parshad's* family in their official work? How about their spouse, do they get involved or not at all?
- Does the *parshad* demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the JMC?

*Independence* codes were organized by narrative, and each narrative was then analyzed and categorized as either *independent*, *moderately-dependent*, or *highly-dependent*. Conceptually, I define *independent* as able to run the office without the regular participation of another. While these *parshads* rely on communal support, they are the prime decision-maker and are able carry out basic duties of the office on their own. I define *highly-dependent* as unable to run the office without the regular participation of another. Without the contribution of their spouse or parent, a

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/28/2016 in Jaipur.

highly-dependent *parshad* would be incapable of carrying out the basic duties of the office. This is conceptually different from ineffective *parshads* who are simply poor at their job. Several *parshads* gave indications that they lacked interest in serving their constituents or were not very active. Still, they understood their position and could carry out the basic functions. Highly-dependent *parshads* enter the post with very little political experience, demonstrate little interest in participating fully in the post or are blocked by the participating family member, show very little knowledge of the JMC and its processes, and have significant familial responsibilities that leave them little time to gain the knowledge and experience they need to be an effective *parshad*. Finally, I classify *moderately-dependent* in between independent and highly-dependent. These *parshads* do not fit either extreme, and instead they fall into a grey area of “tandem” arrangements. These *parshads* are neither completely independent nor dependent, but have formed joint working relationships with spouses or male advisors to spread the office load of *parshad* responsibilities. *Parshads* in these arrangements have some autonomous decision-making power for some office responsibilities, while their spouse or family member has taken over in others. Using these definitions, the following table lays out the number of *parshads* by gender and their classification.

*Table 5.1: Independent and Dependent Parshads by Gender*

	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Moderately-Dependent</b>	<b>Highly-Dependent</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Women <i>Parshads</i>	5	8	10	23
Men <i>Parshads</i>	13	5	0	18

Given the unique interviewing circumstances discussed in Chapter Four, practicing reflexivity during the analysis of the interview narratives was critical. A key contribution of the feminist methodology is addressing the influence of power on the research process (Maynard,

2004), and recognizing that a researcher is never objectively absent from the narrative (Pinsky, 2013; Hyden, 2014). Therefore, researchers must make the process “by which they came to know” explicit, and remain conscious of the personal demographic and ideological influences on their work (Frosh and Emerson, 2005, cited in Grant, 2014: 2).

Recognizing the restrictions on the ability of women *parshads* to be completely open during the interview due to the power imbalance and societal barriers imposed both by the presence of myself and male research assistant, and the frequent presence of male family members, I built my analysis of *parshad* independence on explicit, manifest indicators. Latent indicators of perceived independence/dependence that relied on my own interpretation of the situation would be inherently biased and likely invalid. Therefore, to determine which *parshads* were highly dependent, I relied on both minimally subjective observations from the interviews themselves – the *parshad* never engaged with us over the phone or during the interview, we spoke only with the husband or father; or on statements made by the interviewees which explicitly made it clear that the *parshad* was minimally involved in running the office. These statements included: family members made the decision that the *parshad* would run for the seat and managed the campaign; family members conduct most of important *parshad* business; the *parshad* rarely leaves the house independently to engage in official duties; and the *parshad* expressed little knowledge of important JMC processes during the interview. To further improve validity, I classified a *parshad* as highly dependent only if *all* of these statements were present in a narrative.

It became clear early in the project that dependence and the manipulation of the *parshad* seat by male family members was not socially controversial. As discussed in Chapter Three, as the narratives will illustrate, there appears to be little effort by the *parshad-patis* to hide the



arrangement from voters. The narratives from the interviews with dependent *parshads* (or their husbands) are generally overt. Men speak openly of conducting official business in place of their *parshad* wives or daughters. Husbands and fathers were also often brutally straightforward with their opinion on their wife or daughter's unsuitability for the seat, even in their presence. This honesty creates additional concerns regarding the reification of existing power imbalances within the family and society. However, it also removed the need for me to attempt to inductively determine how independent many of these women were, as it was generally blatantly clear. Such a methodology would likely have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, if the interviewees had been encouraged to dissemble due to probable societal backlash.

### **Independent Variables**

To determine the causal processes that lead to independence and dependence within the JMC, the rest of the analysis focuses on the five common themes that emerged across the narratives that appear to act as independent variables: campaigns and elections, access to political networks, constituent activity, institutional environment and qualifications. The rest of this chapter discusses each of these themes, how codes were developed to measure each, and provides examples to illustrate their application.

*a. Campaigns and Elections.* The process of representation begins with the campaign and winning elections. Overall, the literature has extensively examined the ability of women to win national elections, but less work has looked at local elections. Bhavnani (2009) did find that within the rotating system of gender reserved seats in Mumbai municipal corporation elections, electoral wards with prior experience with a gender reservation were more likely to elect women in future open-gender elections. However, the literature has rarely examined the campaigns of individual women candidates. Particularly in Indian politics, campaigns demonstrate to voters

the candidate's commitment to their ward, willingness to engage with constituents, and more importantly, their political connections (as demonstrated by who and how many support their campaign). Candidates must run an effective campaign, which requires campaign funds for advertising, volunteers to canvas, and a candidate and team willing to go door-to-door to ask for constituent votes. Five years later they then must have enough political desire and ambition to complete the process again. Integral to this process is support from the party, the candidate's family and close associates, and, as discussed in Chapter Three, luck in the reservation lottery that determines which wards are reserved for whom.

During election season, getting party tickets, running a campaign, and getting re-elected dominate the *parshad's* schedule for several weeks, and thus the narratives surrounding elections are very detailed and forthcoming, as this husband of a *parshad* described:

For the campaign we went street to street, meeting with people, we convinced them. They told us about their problems. We had two separate teams, one of men, one of women, I led the men and my wife (the *parshad*) led the women. She had a team of 15-20 women. The women's team went door to door. In Muslim communities, women usually do not come out of the house, so the women's team could go inside the house.<sup>61</sup>

Campaigns also illustrate the complex relationships between the representative and the constituent created by the restrictive traditional gender norms on interpersonal interaction. Women generally rely quite heavily on male family members to guide and support their campaign, both to benefit from their experience and to accommodate normative expectations that a woman always be accompanied by a man in public. To determine how these dynamics influence the ability of *parshads* to assert autonomy, selections from each *parshad's* narrative

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with husband of *female* *parshad* on 02/16/2017 in Jaipur.

and field observations were coded under the *campaign and elections* theme if they addressed the following questions:

- Did the *parshad* decide on their own to run? Did their spouse encourage it?
- How did the *parshad* get a candidate ticket? Did they have connections in the party? Who managed and participated in the campaign?
- Did the *parshad* go door-to-door with everyone, or did they stay at home? Was the *parshad* comfortable interacting with voters?

*b. Access to Political Networks.* Once elected, the literature prioritizes the measure of representative preferences to determine substantive representation. Women are expected to prioritize issues of concern to their women constituents that have historically been under-prioritized by men. Scholars generally find that women generally “care more about, know more about, and do more about women’s issues” (Reingold, 2008: 6). Women are more likely than men to express concern and interest in women’s issues and push through more legislation addressing women’s issues. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, when the level of analysis moves from the national and state level to the local level, and into the developing world, distinctions on gendered issues start to blur. Women’s issues, communal issues, everything tends to blend together into a shared focus on improving infrastructure, access to benefits, and day-to-day life. The core issues faced by *parshads* across India for example – maintaining a clean environment, functional sewage lines, working streetlights, roads with less potholes, and supporting constituents in need – do not divide along liberal/conservative or gender lines, they are demanded by everyone. In these cases, what’s more important is the ability of the *parshad* to access public resources to fulfill these demands. This access is generally controlled by gatekeepers such as their regional MLA or MP, and the JMC executive, who can provide considerably greater funds for local *parshads* than the *parshad* independently has access to.

Based on this reality, I focus on *access to political networks*. To determine how this access influences the ability of *parshads* to assert autonomy, selections from each *parshad's* narrative and field observations were coded under the *access to political networks* theme if they addressed the following questions:

- Does the *parshad* have independent political connections, or do they rely on family connections and experience?
- Have they been able to get support and funds from the mayor, MLA or MP, or are they frustrated with the lack of?

For example, *parshad* access to MLAs and MPs significantly. This is illustrated by separate accounts from *parshads* in the majority party (BJP):

I talk with my MLA continuously to get help. Recently he gave 60-70 lakh rupees for small diesel trucks to go in the small passages and collect garbage. I got some of these trucks as we needed some in our area. I'm also in talks with my MP about what he can help me with.<sup>62</sup>

And from the opposition (Congress):

From the MLA and MP funds I haven't received any help. There is a discrimination against us as the opposition. Recently the MLA has gave diesel trucks to nearby wards, but he didn't give us any. If he didn't give us anything that's ok, but he gave two trucks to the nearby BJP ward. If I sit down and cry about the lack of resources, it won't help my people. We have to clean as we did earlier, whether we have the diesel trucks or not. It's me who has to face the public, not the MLA, so if I cry about it people aren't going to believe me.<sup>63</sup>

These opposing quotes illustrate the significant discrepancy I observed in *parshad* access to benefactors. Whereas some *parshads* received ready support and extra funds from their MLAs

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 2/20/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with the husband of female *parshad* on 2/22/2017 in Jaipur.

and MPs, others complained of receiving nearly nothing, and often blamed partisan differences for their neglect.

*c. Constituent Activity.* As asserted within the literature, the core link between descriptive and substantive representation rests on the connection between the representative and the constituent. Representatives enter office with a life experience that informs their decision-making, but equally important is the ability of constituents to keep their representative updated on their evolving needs. Women are often found to bring unique approaches and skillsets to elected office that their male colleagues lack. For example, women at the county level in the US are found to be more approachable for constituents, more trusted, and more responsive to their concerns than their male counterparts (Flammang, 1985). Female *panchayat* leaders in India are found to reflect the preferences of both their male and female constituents better than male leaders (Lindgren et al, 2009). Furthermore, more female US state legislators emphasized constituency service as a priority than men (Richardson and Freeman, 1995), dedicated more time to staying in contact with their constituents, and in turn received more constituent requests (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; Epstein, Niemi, and Powell 2005).

Constituent interaction dominates the *parshad's* official duties in the JMC. Much of their day is spent in their ward – meeting with constituents, monitoring projects, and looking for problems. Whether at the office or home, people walk in off the street or call in regularly to discuss problems and complaints. However, a potential barrier for female constituents is traditional norms on gender relations, which are still strong in Indian society. These barriers often make it difficult for women constituents to access their representative unless they bring their husbands, as this female *parshad* described:

Men and women come in equal numbers to me, but since I am a woman, other women feel safe around me to talk, they are not hesitant to speak their minds. And since I am a woman I can naturally better understand their problems. They also feel free to come at any time, they don't need to be accompanied by their husbands, because I'm a woman. For example, the problem of water will only be encountered by woman. As her husband is at work, she has to find a way to acquire water for the household if they aren't connected to public water. Sometimes women tell me that if their *parshad* had not been a woman then they would not be able to come directly to me without their husbands.<sup>64</sup>

Constituent service also includes serving constituent needs through the legislative process. Methods measuring women's effectiveness as legislators generally track the introduction or sponsorship of legislation, self-reported efficacy, and reported time spent developing legislation. However, in the JMC, given the lack of a regular legislative process, most of these measures are not directly applicable, but its quasi-legislative environment does allow inquiry into general activity and approaches. *Parshads* conduct their official duties on the floor in general board meetings and committees (giving speeches, speaking with colleagues), engaging with the bureaucracy (pushing through work orders), and outside of the JMC (touring their wards, addressing problems). Furthermore, communication with constituents (recording problems, facilitating paperwork) is an essential part of their official duties, as they are the only personal connection most constituents in the city have to the state.<sup>65</sup>

These two general activities, constituent interaction and service, encompass the *constituent activity* theme. To determine how this activity influences the ability of *parshads* to

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016

<sup>65</sup> Past research has generally tracked observed or reported communications with constituents (Epstein et al, 2005; Reingold, 2008; Fridkin and Kenney, 2014; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Richardson and Freeman, 1995; Beaman et al, 2010), marking the prioritization of minority interests by minority women representatives (Barrett, 1995; Bratton & Haynie, 1999; Swers, 1998), policy preference congruence with constituents (Lindgren et al, 2008), and coordination with outside women's groups (Weldon, 2004).

assert autonomy, selections from each *parshad's* narrative and field observations were coded under the *constituent activity* theme if they addressed the following questions:

- Are they comfortable going outside the house alone or only with a family escort? Is the *parshad* comfortable and able to engage with constituents alone?
- Do constituents come to them with issues? Do women constituents come, do they come on their own or only in groups?
- Do they visit their ward regularly on their own? Do they hold regular office hours or does their spouse?
- Could the *parshad* achieve most of the goals they had or only some?
- Do they struggle with the bureaucracy? Are they reliant on another's experience? Do they understand the bureaucratic process or does their spouse take care of it?

Following the literature, I pay special attention to the interaction with women constituents, activities that support women's interests, and connections to outside women's groups. The narratives from the JMC also demonstrated that for many *parshads* constituent service goes beyond connections to local groups and into personal relationships with individual constituents, as the following two women *parshads* describe:

Sometimes children come to me with problems they don't want to take to their parents. For them I set aside a special time. These children come with problems such as unaffordable education, or they need a better job, but they don't want to go to their parents about these problems. Some of them don't want to study, they want to work, so I enroll them in nursing, sewing, knitting, computer, and beautician courses.<sup>66</sup>

Sometimes *parshads* are asked to help in problems outside of the JMC ambit: police issues, JDA issues, women's issues, domestic problems, financial help, RSB, and loan related problems, financial problems. People do come to me for these problems, or sometimes domestic feuds, and they call us to mediate or talk some sense into them.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/30/2016 in Jaipur.

These quotes illustrate the broad range of personal services constituents look to their parshads for, from educational support to financial issues. *Parshads* have the general responsibility of acting as a facilitator for many services, not just those connected with the state.

*d. Institutional Environment.* More women in politics should not only improve the representation of women's interests, but should also change how political outcomes overall are realized. When women make it into a legislative body, they tend to shift the way business is conducted. Women in US state legislatures take a more communal, inclusive, and collaborative approach to legislation, and are more likely to seek consensus than their male colleagues. However, as the number of women increases in state legislatures, threatened male counterparts often become more aggressive and dominant, and less collaborative and accommodating (Kathlene, 1994; Rosenthal, 1998). Furthermore, these findings are primarily developed from legislators observed operating in the highly regimented deliberative environment of US state legislatures. From my own experience observing the less disciplined JMC environment, with different norms of behavior, we need to not only consider hostility towards women members, but complete exclusion as well. As this excerpt from my participant observation of a JMC board meeting describes, women face significant barriers to fundamental participation:

Several men are shouting over each other. The *parshad* Sama stands up and tries to object to what was being said. I can't hear her as she is drowned out and then sits down. The men speaking just keep going unperturbed. She raises her hand, apparently asking the mayor to recognize her, but no one does, and this is the only time I see anyone raise their hand the whole night. She tries to get in her objection again, and is again unsuccessful, her voice is not loud enough to be heard as the men continue to shout at each other. She gives up, visibly frustrated.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Participant Observation of JMC general board meeting on 10/16/2016 in Jaipur.



This observation demonstrates the need to consider the environment women representatives enter. Changes in individual preferences and styles brought about by increasing the number of women elected will have little impact on the overall deliberative body if these women are suppressed. The literature has generally measured the ability of women to influence the process by counting the amount of legislation addressing women's issues that is proposed, the appointment of women to leadership positions, and the observed ability of women to voice and successfully push their interests within male-dominated environments. As illustrated by the observation above, the ability of women to voice and push their interests within institutional and social environments that favors men's preferences and legislative styles is particularly applicable to the JMC. Women *parshads* must act within multiple formal and informal environments – JMC board meetings, JMC bureaucracy, other city and state agencies, and an array of social environments outside the JMC. All of which are dominated by traditional patriarchal norms. These factors are combined into the *institutional environment* theme. To determine how the environment influences the ability of *parshads* to assert autonomy, selections from each *parshad's* narrative and field observations were coded under this theme if they addressed the following questions:

- Is the JMC difficult to operate within?
- Did normative obstacles emerge during the election campaign? Does the party support their work?
- How do male *parshads* feel about women brought in through the reservation system?
- Do women speak in the general board meetings? Do women engage in a similar manner to men?
- Does their family support their political activity? How difficult is the work/life balance for her? Is she still a housewife saddled with domestic responsibilities? How have societal norms and expectations influenced her ability to represent her constituents?

*e. Qualifications.* A common opposition to the establishment of quotas is the concern that women will push better qualified men out of office (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010). These concerns appear to be unfounded in many cases, as scholars have found that quotas can raise the overall level of qualifications among politicians (Weeks & Baldez, 2015). Research in Sweden even found that party quotas both brought in equally qualified women and, by forcing men to compete for a smaller number of seats, raised the qualification levels of male candidates as well (O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; Besley et al, 2017). However, other scholars have found that women brought in through quotas often have less experience, which can reinforce negative societal stereotypes on the capacities of women in politics (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2012). I also encountered a variety of education and experience levels in my interviews with JMC *parshads*, from those with only the minimum tenth grade education, to those with master's degrees, and housewives who rarely ventured outside the house independently, to women who ran their own businesses.

Within the discussion on measuring qualification, there is a substantive representation question. Despite the call for greater racial and ethnic diversity among women representatives to reflect the diversity of their constituents, less attention has been paid to diversity in socio-economic and education backgrounds. Following substantive representation theory, we would expect women from disadvantaged backgrounds, and thus generally lower education attainment, to better represent women from similar backgrounds based on their shared experiences. Indeed, research from Germany argues that a benefit of quota institution there has been greater participation by women from the working class without university degrees (Geissel & Hust, 2005). Theoretically then, effective quotas would need to bring less educated women in as well.

However, the general assumption within the existing literature is that more education is always better.

What is less debatable is an individual's ability to serve as an effective representative. Notably, given the previously discussed concerns about *parshad* dependence, I encountered *parshads* who did not appear ready to take on the full responsibilities of the office, and were leaving the running of the office up to husbands or fathers. As one father of a *parshad* commented:

She doesn't know anything about how the JMC works because she has never been to the working area of it, never managed the tender process, never met with any officer or contractor. I manage all of this.<sup>69</sup>

To gauge the qualifications of JMC *parshads* I follow existing research on individual qualifications, which primarily relies on reported education levels and prior political experience (Nugent and Krook, 2015), as well as self-reported political interests prior to entering office to gauge political ambition (Thomas, 1994). The relative accessibility of *parshads* and their willingness to discuss past experiences and future ambitions makes the JMC particularly well suited to measuring qualifications in terms of education, prior political experience, political interests and ambition, and perceived efficacy, all of which form the *qualifications* theme. To determine how experience and ambition influences the ability of *parshads* to assert autonomy, selections from each *parshad's* narrative and field observations were coded under the *qualifications* theme if they addressed the following questions:

- Did the *parshad* have political experience prior to the election?

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with father of female *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur.

- Did the *parshad* have experience outside of the house? How educated are they? Did they have experience interacting with the public, such as doing social work, or community organizing?
- Was the *parshad* interested in politics before being elected, or was interest all spousal?
- How motivated is the *parshad* to continue in politics? Will their spouse take their place in the next election if the seat is open-gender?

These codes then guide the analysis of independent and dependent *parshad* development that are presented over the next three chapters. As Maxwell (2012) points out, in qualitative research “the goal of coding is not to count things”, but to instead separate the data and arrange it into manageable categories that enable within-category comparison (96). To begin the coding process, I took the five primary measures of substantive representation as a process developed in this chapter – campaigns and elections, access to networks, constituent activity, institutional environment, and qualifications – and use them as my overarching categories to examine how and why some *parshads* take office independently while others are highly-dependent. With these categories as a guide for the information I wanted to pull from the narratives, I continued to open coding, with no pre-established code list. Codes were then developed within the narratives themselves with these categories in mind. These codes are primarily based on the manifest content – the actual phrases of the authors (Berg, 2004) as translated by my assistant – I do not attempt to subjectively interpret their words. I also code manifest ethnographic observations from my assistant and fieldnotes (e.g. who set up the interview, who did most of the speaking, interaction between *parshad* and spouse). I do not code or incorporate latent content – the interpreted meaning of statements – into my systematic analysis. Comments on interpreted latent meanings from my assistant and fieldnotes are only included anecdotally to provide illustration, but do not form the basis of my conclusions.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, the goal of quotas is not just to bring qualified and effective women in, but to also bring about the expected changes in preferences, policy output, legislative style, and constituent service that links descriptive to substantive representation. Scholarship has found that quotas can lead to more debate and discussion on women's issues (Devlin & Elgie, 2008, Xydias, 2007), and more supportive public policy (Beaman et al. 2009, Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004, Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008). Women representatives brought through quotas also feel more obligated to their women constituents than non-quota women (Xydias 2014). However, in other cases, quotas appear to have a mixed or no effect.<sup>70</sup> These discrepancies demonstrate the inability of quotas to bring about real change if women are unable to alter policy and process after election. To understand this, we need to consider the causal processes that ultimately links descriptive and substantive representation – the guiding forces that influence a female representative's ability to wield power (Reingold, 2008).

As the narratives that are presented in the next chapter will demonstrate, electoral and legislative institutions act in tandem with, competition with, and are often overcome by the larger, and often much more powerful social institutions that influence the political process at every juncture. Winning an election does not free a woman from the social constraints that restricted her agency prior to the election. Even relatively inconsequential societal norms can significantly constrain the latitude of women parshads to carry out their responsibilities,

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<sup>70</sup>The institution of quotas does not appear to have changed policy outcomes in Rwanda (Devlin & Elgie, 2008), while in Argentina the number of bills introduced on women's issues improved, but not legislative success (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008). Other research in Mexico found little change in the sponsorship and passage of bills, attaining of leadership positions, and committee representation after the introduction of quotas (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013), with similar findings in France (Murray, 2012).

particularly when their position demands time in public. The rest of this dissertation explores this competition between progress and constraint, using the narratives from the women who live this experience, to illustrate the stubborn resistance of social norms to change, and even the ability of these norms to infiltrate the institutions that were designed to suppress them.

To address concerns with selection bias (Collier and Mahoney, 1996), I have defined each coding category and provided examples to clarify the determination of independence and dependence and the application of the independent variables to the analysis. This chapter described the focus on measuring substantive representation as a process, which frames the following analysis. Then the chapter identified the dependent variable for this analysis – individual *parshad* independence, and defined the three categories of independence relied upon for the analysis: *independent*, *moderately-dependent*, or *highly-dependent*, and discussed the categorization process. Finally, I described the five independent variables and the coding process used to apply them to the narratives for: *campaigns and elections*, *access to political networks*, *constituent activity*, *institutional environment*, and *qualifications*, which are used to explain the causal processes that lead to independence and dependence.

In Chapter Six, I use the narratives of the most dependent *parshads* to demonstrate the *parshad-pati* phenomenon and investigate the process that leads to significant dependence. In Chapter Seven, I use the contrasting narratives of independent women *parshads* to demonstrate the ability of women to assert themselves and engage as competently as their male JMC colleagues, with the caveat that even these women continue to rely on male benefactors to cultivate this independence. Then, in Chapter Eight, using both the narratives and outside literature, I describe the broad base of restrictions and obstacles in Indian society that drive process of dependence and create the phenomenon of *parshad-patis*, notwithstanding the gender

reservation. Finally, in Chapter Nine I conclude with a discussion of the institutional weaknesses of the gender reservation system when faced with powerful patriarchal norms, and a call to reconsider what we expect of democratic representatives operating in a communal society.

## Chapter 6: Women as Proxy Representatives

This chapter begins the core analysis of this dissertation – the 41 narratives gathered through semi-structured interviews with JMC *parshads* from 2016-17. Using the independence/dependence categorization discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter solely examines the narratives from the *parshads* categorized as *highly-dependent*. Chapter Seven will then provide contrast with the narratives from the *parshads* categorized as *moderately-dependent* and *independent*. Finally, using comparison across these narratives, Chapter Eight concludes the examination with a discussion on the role societal norms play in the establishment of dependence.

The analysis and discussion of the narratives in this chapter begins with a brief review of the literature and the criteria used to categorize dependence. Then it progresses into the narratives themselves, which are organized by common themes. Each *parshad's* story is presented as it was told. It should be kept in mind that several of these stories came strictly from the husband or father, as the *parshad* was never present. I clarify in the footnotes who participated in the interview. After the presentation of each narrative in the thematic group, I discuss which commonalities they highlight. Most of the commonalities discussed are shared by nearly all the *highly-dependent* narratives, but are highlighted best by the narratives they follow. The first two narratives illustrate near total dependence, these *parshads* appear to have very little agency and only engage in the minimum required for the office. The next three narratives demonstrate the motivations and interests of husbands interested in gaining access to power via the gender reservation. The next two illustrate how women are pressured into running for the *parshad* office, but are unable to fulfill the responsibilities independently. Finally, the last three narratives discuss the societal restrictions on women *parshads* that prevent them from fully



engaging in the office, due to a need to “protect” them from the political realm. While these narratives are presented thematically, they are not intended to progress along a spectrum of dependence. Rather, they illustrate different forms of dependence that vary in terms of *parshad* agency and engagement, *parshad* political interest, spousal/parental motivations, and external constraints.

### **Institutional Challenge: Proxy Representatives**

Most of the women *parshads* in the JMC, 30 out of 33, came in through the gender reservation system. As discussed in Chapter Two, the reservation system is intended to accelerate the development of core democratic virtues, such as fair representation and constituent accountability, in societies where such tenants are constrained by societal norms and weak institutions (Bhavnani, 2009). However, while past research has demonstrated that such reservations have significantly improved female representation at the local level in India relatively quickly, the literature has also found that social and institutional traditions are persistent. For example, female candidates often require the assent of male family elders before deciding to run (Bhavnani, 2009).

As the narratives from this chapter illustrate, social traditions persist within the gender reservation system to a much greater extent than simply requiring assent. A startling cohort of women *parshads* brought in by gender reservations in 2014 elections appear to be nearly totally dependent on male family members to conduct the duties of the office. In most cases, an ambitious male family member sees an opportunity to gain a political benefit through her candidature, and pressures her to run. In none of these cases does the woman herself independently profess the initial interest in running for the seat, she is always prodded, encouraged, or told she should enter politics. She then essentially becomes a proxy of that actor,

and often competes against the proxies of other actors. On their own, these women would have considerable difficulties campaigning as they have very little political experience. Therefore, these competitions are generally managed by the same men who pushed them to run for office, who have the political experience and connections needed. After entering office, the lack of public experience generally forces her to rely heavily on her husband or father to carry out most of the duties of the office and even to interact with constituents, which is primarily because society perceives such activities as inappropriate for women. Still, several of these women still attest that this new, public experience has kindled an interest in political life that encouraged them to become more involved.

The narratives selected for this chapter were chosen based on the level of dependence I observed relative to the narratives as a whole. Based on the criteria discussed in Chapter Five, I have categorized these *parshads* as highly-dependent. Conceptually, I define highly-dependent as the inability to run the office without the regular participation of another. Without the contribution of their spouse or parent, a highly dependent *parshad* would be incapable of carrying out the basic duties of the office. This is conceptually different from ineffective *parshads* who are simply poor at their job. Several *parshads* gave indications that they lacked interest in serving their constituents or were not very active. Still, they understood their position and could carry out the basic functions. Highly-dependent *parshads* enter the post with very little political experience, demonstrate little interest in participating fully in the post or are blocked by a family member, show very little knowledge of the JMC and its processes, and have significant familial responsibilities that leave them little time to gain the knowledge and experience they need to be an effective *parshad*.

As discussed previously in Chapter Five, to determine which *parshads* were highly-dependent, I relied both on minimally subjective observations from the interviews themselves – the *parshad* never engaged with us over the phone or during the interview, we spoke only with the husband or father; or on statements made during the interview which explicitly made it clear that the *parshad* was minimally involved in running the office. These statements included: family members made the decision that the *parshad* would run for the seat and managed the campaign; family members conduct most of the important *parshad* business; the *parshad* rarely leaves the house independently to engage in official duties; and the *parshad* expressed little knowledge of important JMC processes during the interview. To further improve validity, I categorized a *parshad* as highly dependent only if *all* of these statements were present in a narrative.

Out of the 41 *parshads* I interviewed, I found ten who demonstrated that they were highly dependent on those around them to conduct the office effectively. Nine of these were women dependent on their husbands, and one on her father. Notably, no men demonstrated that they were highly dependent on their family members.<sup>71</sup> These narratives come from interviews held either with the *parshad* and husband or father, or with just her husband in many cases, as she was either uninterested or unable to meet with us. Again, the following narratives are presented

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<sup>71</sup> Of the 18 men I interviewed, none appeared highly dependent on anyone around them. However, when discussing the *parshad-pati* phenomenon with one of the independent women *parshads*, she commented that, “It is common for husbands to take care of the female’s office, as there are only two to three cases of men vacating a seat and having their wife run when a seat is assigned a General reservation (open-group/open-gender) in the lottery.” This is an interesting exception that does not appear to illustrate the dependence of a husband on their spouse, but rather that their wife was more politically competitive than they were (Interview with female *parshad* on 10/5/2016 in Jaipur).

thematically, and are not intended to progress along a spectrum of dependence. Rather, they demonstrate different forms of dependence.

### **Complete Proxies: *Parshads* with No Agency**

These first narratives are two of the more extreme examples of women *parshads* I interviewed who were highly dependent on male family members. These women had no initial interest in participating in politics, the decision to run for office came entirely from male members in their families. These men had personal political ambitions that were either blocked by the assignment of gender reservation to their ward, or saw opportunity in the reservation. As the one with more political experience and a public image, these men take the lead in the campaign, and the woman herself at most engages on the side with women constituents. After winning, the newly-elected *parshad* returns into the home to resume domestic duties, while her husband or father takes over the official duties of the seat. On occasion, she will attend public functions and mandatory JMC meetings, and this experience may kindle a political interest that could motivate her to engage further, but only if her family allows it.

*Mr. Darzi, father of parshad Haleema*

After the ward-lines were redrawn, I was unable to run for *parshad* as the seat was now reserved for a woman candidate. My situation was helpless, as only my daughter could run, her mother was less-educated. I knew education would be an important part of this election, as it was time for the next generation to step up, so I proposed that my daughter run as an independent. People seemed to like her, there was a craze about her, and then she won the election.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with father of *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* father arranged and set up the interview. After we asked to meet with the *parshad* he called for her, and she eventually joined us partway through the interview. She spoke very little, the vast majority of the narrative comes from her father.

Mr. Darzi<sup>73</sup> had been involved in politics since the tensions in 1992 following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodha, a seminal event for Muslims confronted with the rising political presence of Hindu fundamentalism. He was ambitious and persistent, first running for the *sarpanch* position of his village and losing, then eventually winning the deputy *sarpanch* seat. After moving to Jaipur, he ran for the *parshad* seat of his ward and lost, and even competed in state legislative assembly elections, losing there as well. Approaching the 2014 elections, he wanted to try for the *parshad* seat once more, but he faced a challenge following the reservation lottery for the upcoming elections. His ward had randomly drawn a gender reservation. His community was not listed on either the central or state lists of communities who qualify for reservations as a Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), or Other Backward Classes (OBC),<sup>74</sup> but luckily, the only restriction was on gender, no group reservations were attached, so he could still push his wife or daughter to run. However, his wife had received little education, so he worried about her ability to compete. That left his daughter Haleema, a quiet girl who had rarely stepped outside the house without family in accompaniment, but had completed more schooling than her mother. Party electoral tickets were already secured for other candidates running under the BJP and Congress symbols, but Mr. Darzi saw an opportunity and entered her as an independent.

Haleema was suddenly thrust out into the campaign trail. For two weeks leading up to the election, she followed her father and brother from house to house throughout their ward. Her father introduced his previously anonymous daughter to local voters, and promised to address local issues with water and sewage if they elected her *parshad*. He was well known in this ward

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<sup>73</sup> All names are pseudonyms. I have also changed some individual details to protect anonymity.

<sup>74</sup> If they qualify for any reservations, Muslim communities generally fall under OBC.

already from his previous work on a ward development committee, so they did not have to meet everyone. Voters did ask – why bring her out of the house to deal with all these people? Leave her at home, they only needed to hear from him. Voters understood the system, they knew he would be the acting *parshad*, she was only there to fill the reservation. The campaign was successful, and despite heavy spending by the other candidates they won a comfortable victory, with the BJP candidate unable to get her bail returned in the predominantly Muslim ward.<sup>75</sup> The family celebrated and Mr. Darzi prepared his plans for the next five years, while Haleema retreated back into the house. Over the next two years, she would rarely engage in *parshad* duties, attending JMC meetings only four to five times. She attended several weddings and public events, but people did not recognize her, they only knew her father.

Mr. Darzi enjoys politics and is already planning for the next elections in 2019. If the lottery leaves the ward unreserved, he will be able to try his luck again himself, now practically as an incumbent. However, if it is reserved for a woman once more, he plans to stand his daughter again, unless she marries and thus leaves the household. In preparation for that possibility, he is currently trying to find an educated girl for his son to marry, someone who will qualify for recently enacted minimum education requirements and thus able take Haleema's place.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Electoral candidates must pay a bail to compete in elections, which is only returned if they receive over 10% of the vote total. It is not a large amount of money, usually less than 50 USD, but it is considered embarrassing to lose it.

<sup>76</sup> Minimum education requirements for parshads were established in Rajasthan in 2015, after the 2014 elections. In future elections, candidates must have completed at least 10<sup>th</sup> standard (equivalent to 10<sup>th</sup> grade) to stand for elections. Some estimate that as many as half of current parshads across the state will be barred from participating in the 2019 elections due to this rule.

*Mr. Salvi, husband of parshad Mrs. Salvi*

Fighting an election never occurred to me before, but through my friend's circle and my family's support, I was encouraged to run... I said that if we get a ticket then we will fight the election.

With the grace of God we got the ticket, then I convinced my wife to fight the election, she was ok with it and we decided to fight and luckily we won.<sup>77</sup>

Mr. Salvi had been active with the BJP for the past 15 years, but had not seriously considered competing in elections. However, the same lottery that had reserved Mr. Darzi's ward for a woman reserved his as well, alongside an OBC group reservation. His community was listed as an OBC, so many members of his close friends and family encouraged him to compete. His father remained skeptical, given the lack of familial electoral experience, but their family had lived in this area for multiple generations and were well-known. Several locals continued to push Mr. Salvi to request a ticket from the BJP on behalf of his wife, who still had no knowledge of the proposal. Eventually he did. They were competing with ten others for the ticket and started low in internal party rankings initially, as the party was looking for a good candidate to compete against a popular incumbent Congress candidate (who had found a woman from his family to run as well). However, after local polling showed strong support for Mr. Salvi and his wife, when combined with his years of party service in the area, he rose to the top of the list and they were given the ticket. He returned home and informed his wife that she would be competing in the upcoming *parshad* elections. Following her surprise, he convinced her to run and they started the campaign.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with husband of *female* parshad on 3/22/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. *Parshad* was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.

Given the short amount of time before the election, Mr. Salvi aimed for efficiency. Over the past two years, thousands of new families had moved into their ward, and he needed to reach out to the new voters who were unfamiliar with him and his family. With BJP volunteers, he canvassed new housing developments every morning and helped the new residents fill out voter registration forms, which he would then submit. As a real estate broker, he knew the area well. He had bought and sold several of these newly built lots and developments. He reminded voters of the work he had done with the BJP in their neighborhood and encouraged them to vote for him and his wife. He often brought his wife along. She would go door-to-door with him, trying to reach every person in their ward. It was a big ward, they would start early in the morning at six, eating their breakfast and lunch on the road. He would then often continue campaigning late into the night. His family helped. His five brothers and father joined the campaign alongside other relatives and even close neighbors. Each reached out to local contacts and acquaintances to ask for support at the ballot box. Ultimately, their work paid off, as Mr. Salvi and his wife rode the 2014 BJP wave to join the supermajority in the JMC.

Mrs. Salvi became pregnant soon after the election, and now they have a young daughter. Due to her domestic responsibilities, she is rarely able to go out to meet with voters or address issues in their ward, so Mr. Salvi takes care of those aspects. He thinks that it is better regardless, as a woman should not be subject to the foul language constituents often direct at their *parshad*. She does have family nearby to watch her daughter, so she is able to attend JMC meetings and go out into her ward occasionally. This experience has triggered a new interest in politics for her, and now that her daughter is older she takes her to party meetings and public programs. She has become more outgoing, and is more comfortable calling JMC officers and pushing them to complete her work orders.



Their ward has a large population from communities who qualify for the OBC reservation, making it more likely the lottery will reserve this ward for them again in the future. This was the second time in a row it had been reserved for their group, previously it was for a man. Mr. Salvi plans to run again in the next election if reserved again for an OBC, either his wife or he himself will stand depending on if there is an accompanying gender reservation.

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Neither Haleema nor Mrs. Salvi had any initial interest in participating in politics. The decision to run for office came entirely from male members in their families (father in Haleema's case and husband in Mrs. Salvi's) who had political ambitions that were either blocked by a gender reservation within their district, or who saw an opportunity to gain access to power through their wife or daughter.

These two cases share features that were common across the interviews of highly-dependent *parshads*. Six of the ten narratives from highly-dependent *parshads* came strictly from the husband, as the *parshad* herself was never present throughout the interview. Of the remaining four, in two the *parshad* was present but only provided a few short answers, the narrative was dominated by the husband or father, and in only two did the *parshad* herself provide a fair amount of information. Therefore, these narratives generally begin with the husband or father describing their personal political ambitions, which usually stem from several years, if not decades, of local political activity, and their desire to compete for a *parshad* seat. These ambitions were often checked many months before the actual election when the reservation lottery was held and their local ward was made off-limits to them personally by a gender and/or group reservation. Depending on their personal political reach and luck granted by the lottery, they may have been able to run in nearby wards that are open-gender if they are well-

known and have connections to local power-brokers who can deliver critical vote-banks. There is no residency requirement for candidacy, but the parties generally only hand out nominations to candidates who can demonstrate they will be competitive in the ward, so crossing ward-lines is difficult.

If they do not see opportunity for themselves outside of their ward, the ambitious man then looks for alternate means to access political power. He must find a candidate who fits the various requirements to be both a candidate (gender, community, and education) and receive a party nomination (voter and party appeal), combined with the willingness to step aside and allow him to act as de-facto *parshad*. These requirements generally limit him to women in his family who feel a deep obligation to him – a wife or daughter. Then he must convince her to enter political life, which is an incredibly intimidating prospect for a woman who often has spent most of her life sheltered – first by her family as a daughter and then by her husband as a housewife. Upon convincing, he must then make her a competitive candidate for the party's nomination. A history on his part of loyal party service and personal connections within the party go a long way towards pushing her name to the top of the list, often competing with up to ten or 11 others. As Mrs. Salvi's case demonstrates, husbands may even put off informing her of his intent to propose her candidature until after securing the nomination. If they are unable to land a nomination, there is still the option of competing as an independent, but they are generally electorally unsuccessful against candidates with national party backing.

Typically, nominations are handed out only a week or two prior to the election itself, so upon being nominated, the candidate must immediately begin campaigning. As the one with political experience and a public image, the *parshad's* husband or father takes the lead in the campaign, often with the help of close brothers or relatives. The former housewife now joins her

family on the campaign trail, knocking on the doors of as many potential voters as possible. He is generally already recognized, but his wife or daughter is likely a newcomer. Marriage traditions play a key part in this dynamic. Due to massive migration from the villages to the cities over the past few decades, particularly by men looking for work, there is often a scarcity of eligible brides from one's own community/caste who live nearby. Therefore, a suitor frequently returns to his village to marry, then brings her back with him to the city where he now lives and works. She leaves both her family and social circles behind to join those of her husband. Thus, many aspiring women *parshads*, dependent or not, must rely on the social contacts of their husband and his family.

The politically aspiring husband or father introduces this new face to each household as their future *parshad*, with their blessings, and she often goes to the side to speak with the women of the household, while her husband or father discusses his plans for the ward with the men. It is generally clear to everyone in the household that the candidate herself will not be the main decision-maker. They understand that she is foremost a face that checks the necessary boxes. It is publicly acknowledged that official, and unofficial, requests will go through her husband or father. As the voters at one house told Haleema's father during their campaign, "she doesn't need to come, as we only know her as your daughter, we just know you... Don't trouble taking her around with you," in other words, just leave her at home.<sup>78</sup>

The campaign grinds through an arduous week or two of 12- to 18-hour days until the election, ideally culminating with a win. If not, they may try again next time if it was close and the reservations line up correctly. If they do win, then they set down to the business of being

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with father of female *parshad* on 11/29/2017 in Jaipur.

*parshad*. However, in respect of experience, tradition and gendered responsibilities, the highly-dependent *parshads* return to the home to maintain the household, raise the children, and care for their husband and in-laws. Mrs. Salvi herself became pregnant soon after their electoral win, and spent much of her first two years in office raising their new daughter. Women *parshads* from wealthier families can discharge a portion of these responsibilities onto hired help, but none escape them entirely.

Still, these women are the face of the seat, and so they will attend public functions and weddings to meet constituents, and they must attend regular JMC committee and general board meetings. Annually, every *parshad* must give an account of their ward in the general board meetings, and many of the highly-dependent women will read out loud to the body from a sheet prepared by her husband. Her signature and stamp are also required on all official paperwork, which comes in daily via constituent requests for government benefits and contractor tenders that allocate money to infrastructure projects in her ward. However, she leaves the decision-making and field work for the most part to her husband or father. Constituents call day and night to make requests or file complaints – sewer lines break or clog, electricity fails, and roads fall apart under monsoon rains. Many of these problems require the individual attention of the *parshad*, either to address the problem personally or to ensure the contractor addresses it expediently and correctly. However, most of these interactions will be with men, and it is generally normatively inappropriate for women from these traditional households to engage independently with men not of her family, so many feel that these responsibilities are best left to her husband.

Despite a lack of engagement, for many of these women, this experience kindles a political interest. They appreciate the respect they now receive in public, they like engaging with constituents, and they enjoy being able to help their family and neighbors now on a broad scale.

As they gain more experience, they may engage more in areas where they are comfortable, whether speaking more in the board meetings or meeting on their own with women constituents who come with requests. Many enjoy the position so much they plan to run again in the next election if given the opportunity. This suits the motivations of their husbands or fathers as well, whose only assurance of remaining competitive in the next election is having a woman in their family willing to compete, in case the reservation returns. As Haleema's father said, he will run if the seat is open to gender. However, if it is reserved and his daughter is married and thus left his family by then, he needs to find an educated girl for his son to marry and take her spot.

### **Sensing Opportunity: Exploiting the Gender Reservation**

Many of these *parshad-patis* resent both the gender and group reservation system that can make large numbers of seats off-limits to them. However, they also see opportunity in the gender reservation of their respective wards. Some would have run themselves if the ward had lacked a gender reservation, while others had run themselves in the past but lost. Now, using their years of campaign experience and local contacts, they can gain power through their wives. Generally, their *parshad* wives do not have significant public experience and are not comfortable interacting with voters and constituents. While they may do some of the JMC paperwork, they are very dependent on their husbands to conduct most of the *parshad* duties, particularly those that involve leaving the office to go out into the ward. However, these women can interact with women constituents in the more traditional households, where their husbands cannot. Despite their attempts to engage in some of the *parshad* duties, they are frustratingly hindered by a lack of experience. As housewives previously, the public interaction, documents, government officials, and the general bureaucracy is intimidating and difficult to understand.

*Mr. Joshi, speaking for parshad Mrs. Joshi*

She was not very interested in politics originally, going through elections and being a politician, but this ward was reserved for a woman candidate. If it had been unreserved than I would have run, and if it is in the future I will, but it was reserved so I encouraged my wife to run instead.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Joshi and his father-in-law had been involved in local politics for some time. They had contacts within the BJP, and Mr. Joshi himself had served in several lower-level political posts within the party. He had once led the committee that distributed candidate nominations prior to elections. He had planned on running for *parshad* in the 2014 elections, but when it was reserved for a woman he had to reconsider. The reservation system irritated him. As a Brahmin, his community did not receive any reservations, and it essentially blocked him and those like him from competing in a majority of the seats. For this reason, he felt that candidates with reserved status should stick to the reserved seats, and leave the open seats to the communities who do not benefit from reservations to give men like him an opportunity. Luckily, their ward had been reserved for a General Woman, so despite their community's lack of a group reservation, his wife could still run. The whole family, even neighbors, supported and encouraged her to run. They lived in a large joint household, so there were several other women within the family who could take up her domestic responsibilities when she needed help. She had been to BJP party meetings before with her husband and was vice president of the local BJP women's wing (*mahila morcha*), so despite being a housewife for most of her adult life, she had some public experience. She felt comfortable meeting with her women constituents when they came to her

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. She was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.

house with issues. Still, her husband takes on most of the responsibility of public JMC duties, which helps given his political experience in the ward.

*Mr. Koria, speaking on behalf of parshad Mrs. Koria*

In the previous election, 2009, my mother ran for parshad of this ward with Congress but lost... My mother ran in the previous election because my wife was pregnant, otherwise she would have run.<sup>80</sup>

Mr. Koria's wife was far from her family, she had followed her husband across several states with his job after marriage before coming to Jaipur. Now that they were relatively settled, she was attending university and hoped to teach in the future. She had no previous interest or experience in politics, but her husband had been politically involved since his days in university politics before their marriage, when he had become college president. When they arrived in Jaipur, he became actively involved in local politics, even running and losing as an independent for *parshad* of a nearby ward. He also worked with an old friend from university in a local NGO that provides poorer students in Jaipur with clothes, bags, and winter clothes. Mrs. Koria, on the other hand, had always been housewife, and rarely engaged in any public activities until now. Through his contacts with the party, her husband landed her a nomination for the upcoming *parshad* elections and she won.

Mr. Koria was quite proud of the campaign that they had run. He had significant campaign experience, albeit often unsuccessful. After his failed bid for *parshad*, their ward was reserved for a woman. His mother received a party nomination and he managed her campaign.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with the husband of female *parshad* on 01/11/2017. Parshad's husband arranged and set up the interview. *Parshad* was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.

He tried to adapt his campaign experience from his days in student politics by focusing on persuasive speeches and intimidating the opposition. However, these tactics did not work in the *parshad* elections, and his mother lost. However, for the next elections, the reservation lottery landed another OBC Woman reservation for his ward, and this time he vowed to apply the lessons he learned from this failed campaign to beat the incumbent and get his wife elected instead. This time he focused on building contacts with key local groups. He had been politically active at the ground level for the previous five years, and he reached out to the heads of the large joint families in the area, who each could deliver 50-100 votes. His mother also spread the word through her successful dairy business to all the elderly women who came for their morning milk.

He put his wife on the campaign trail going door-to-door to get her face out there. She was nervous at first, but he told her to just remain polite, no matter what was said to her. Due to local familiarity with her husband, she was generally welcomed and faced few problems. She only complained of having to drink so much hospitality tea. The voters really warmed to her. Thinking back, he attributes her success to his change in campaign tactics, and her youth and education, which he credits with bringing in the support from the younger generations that his mother had lacked. Now he runs the *parshad* office out of their home. He is looking forward to moving into the official JMC office, which is under construction at present. However, currently in his home office, if constituents come in with paperwork that need the *parshad's* signature, his wife is at hand to sign it. In the future, he will have to run home from the new office every time her signature is required.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> We witnessed this firsthand during the interview when we presented the signed consent form. He went back into the house to get the *parshad's* signature. All we ever saw of her was her arm when she handed in her business



*Mr. Nawaz, speaking on behalf of parshad Mrs. Nawaz*

She signs all the forms, she goes to JMC meetings. Whenever a letter has to be written, she signs it and personally takes it to the JMC officer. After that, if we have to deal with the public, or regular communication is required with the officer, this work is done by me.<sup>82</sup>

Neither Mrs. Nawaz nor her husband had had much in the way of political affiliations early in their marriage, until Mr. Nawaz was persuaded to get involved by a combination of politically active friends and a speech given by then Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi at a huge rally in Jaipur. He joined the youth wing of Congress, then was noticed by local Congress politicians, who encouraged him to run in local elections and promised their support. When his ward was reserved for a woman, he decided to ask for their support in getting his wife a nomination from the party. She too was a member of the youth wing, and had been to a few social gathering and programs, so she received a nomination. However, older local leaders angrily objected to their seniority being ignored and such a new member being nominated. One decided to run as an independent and stood his daughter-in-law in as a candidate.

During the campaign, Mr. Darzi countered this challenge by contacting and convincing several *ex-parshads* from the area to give their support. Despite that fact that his wife would normally not go out in public, he asked her to go door-to-door to meet their voters and ask for their support. She was also able to go into some of the more traditional households and speak with the women, something her husband would not have been able to do as a man. These tactics

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card at the end of the interview through the door that went to rest of the house, which he took and then promptly locked (Interview with husband of *parshad* on 01/11/2017 in Jaipur.)

<sup>82</sup> Interview with husband of *parshad* on 02/16/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. *Parshad* was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.

paid off, and they beat the “rebel” candidate. Mr. Nawaz credits having the Congress symbol as his biggest asset in tipping the election.

Now that his wife is *parshad*, Mr. Nawaz has brought on a colleague to help with his dental practice during the day while he helps her, but he is still able to practice in the evenings. He sits at his home office in the mornings and meets with constituents, before heading out into to check on the ward in the afternoons. If anyone comes while he is out, he has an office girl who can fill out necessary paperwork for Mrs. Nawaz’s signature. Despite their lack of experience, they feel comfortable with the JMC process now and understand it. Still, he wishes that there were more training resources available for new women candidates to help them adjust to public life. He does credit his wife with encouraging more women from their predominantly Muslim ward to come to them with their problems. Mrs. Nawaz enjoys helping people address their issues, and the respect their family now receives, but neither are comfortable with her going out into the ward to deal with the public on a regular basis. It seems like even if they consistently provide for constituents, if one issue goes unresolved people will get angry and disrespect you, even if their *parshad* is a woman. It seems better if she avoided these kinds of people. Even so, they want to run again in the next elections, if they are given the nomination.

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Resentment and curbed ambition were not restricted to gender reservations for Mrs. Joshi’s husband, as he felt that the entire reservation system blocks out men like him. As discussed in Chapter Three, forward-caste communities do not receive any group reservations, and as a man, he will never benefit officially from any gender reservations. As he stated, he felt that the reservation system prevented him from competing in most of the seats. Indeed, in the 2014 election, 58 percent of the seats in the JMC had some sort of group or gender reservation,

which left only 38 seats that men like Mr. Joshi were eligible to compete in. However, in contrast to Mr. Joshi, both Mrs. Koria's and Mrs. Nawaz's husbands saw opportunity in the gender reservation of their respective wards. While both likely would have run themselves if the ward had lacked a gender reservation, Mr. Koria had been trying unsuccessfully for years to get access to a *parshad* seat, first by he himself running as an independent, then through his mother with a Congress nomination, but failed until his wife finally ran and won. All three husbands also managed their wives' campaigns, as was the case with all highly-dependent *parshads*. Mr. Koria brought years of campaign experience and local contacts, and critically, the support of local power brokers. The patriarchs of large local families have several generations living nearby, and thus can deliver a large number of votes. These "vote-banks" can be critical in elections often decided by under a thousand votes. Mr. Nawaz faced the stiff challenge of a renegade Congress candidate angered at being skipped over for the nomination, essentially creating a proxy contest with Mr. Nawaz pushing his wife and the Congress-man pushing his daughter-in-law. Mr. Nawaz, with his party resources, ultimately prevailed.

Perhaps due to being raised in a more advantaged, forward-caste community, Mrs. Joshi had more public experience and felt more comfortable interacting with voters and constituents than either Mrs. Koria or Mrs. Nawaz, both of whom came from reserved communities. While Mrs. Joshi did more public engagement than the other two, all three women were very dependent on their husbands to conduct most of the *parshad* duties, particularly those that involved dealing with the public or with contractors. Mr. Joshi and Mr. Koria both stated that their wives primarily limited themselves to signing paperwork and attending JMC meetings, both of which they themselves could not do as non-*parshads*, and occasionally meeting with officials and constituents. Mr. Nawaz painted a similar picture, pointing out that he had hired office help, so

that when he was out of the house someone could assist constituents in filling out paper work and getting it signed by his wife. He did mention that he relied on his wife to engage with women constituents in the more traditional Muslim households, as these women would rarely be permitted to interact with him, as a man outside their family. He also argued that the JMC should provide more resources and training for new women *parshads*, particularly for those who were previously housewives, and thus had trouble with public interactions, documents, government officials, and the general bureaucracy that is incredibly convoluted and intimidating for those without prior experience.

### **Outside Pressure: The Communal Push to Run for Office**

In contrast to the rest of the highly-dependent *parshads*, these two women were not pushed to run by their husbands. After their ward was reserved for a woman, they were either pushed by friends and family to run or by party members looking for a viable candidate. As their husbands were not personally seeking office, they were also initially reluctant to take on the extra work-load that they expected to fall on them if their wives won. Although still unable to run the office on their own, these women appear to be better able to share the workload than other highly-dependent *parshads*. Experience outside of the home appears to help build the knowledge and confidence that allows a woman to assert herself to a greater degree than others.

*Mr. Deshpande, on behalf of parshad Mrs. Deshpande*

I accompany her wherever she goes, to all of the departments. Whenever I am not here or busy, then the driver will take her to the JMC or JDA, otherwise I will go with her.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with husband of *parshad* on 04/08/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. *Parshad* was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.

Mrs. Deshpande had gained public experience while working with the women's wing of the BJP, but still had not really been interested in politics prior to 2014. However, when their ward was reserved for a woman, many women she had met during her work with the women's wing came to her and told her to run. She was initially skeptical, but they were persistent, so she decided to go to her husband. He had worked for several decades with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu nationalist parent organization of the BJP, and had the political connections within the party that she would need for the nomination. One day she told him, "If you promise to say yes, then I will tell you what I am thinking", and he responded, "has there ever been a case where I have denied you?"<sup>84</sup> She told him of the elections and he initially protested, as they were already involved in community service through the RSS and BJP, but she persisted and asked him to get her the BJP nomination. He conceded and began discussing the idea with colleagues and party workers. Fortunately, they were in search of a suitable candidate and quickly agreed. They campaigned and won the election, and now Mr. Deshpande credits the reservation with giving women like his wife the opportunity to gain political experience. She has gone from being a housewife to talking with JMC officials and bringing up important issues in the general board meetings. Still, he complains of the enormous number of phone calls he gets every day, some of them very late at night, from constituents with issues or complaints. Each phone call often requires him to make several subsequent calls to rectify the problem.

*Mrs. Pande*

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with husband of *parshad* on 04/08/2017 in Jaipur.

Originally it was very difficult in the JMC. I didn't know how to speak, what to say, how the apparatus inside the JMC works, how to deal with officers. I used to call my husband now and then and he would help me with things. He asked me to bring the files home, then he would guide me on the necessary steps to be taken.<sup>85</sup>

Although still very dependent on her husband, Mrs. Pande was more comfortable and confident in public than some of her female colleagues, likely due to her previous experience as a teacher. While her husband dominated our interview, she engaged more than any other highly-dependent *parshad*. Neither Mrs. Pande nor her husband had been interested in the 2014 elections when the local MLA called her husband, an old friend, after their ward was reserved for a woman. He convinced her husband to accept the party nomination on behalf of his wife for the upcoming elections. Due to the exception granted by the redrawing of ward lines for the 2014 election, this ward had been consecutively gender-reserved, so their competitor from Congress had experience as an incumbent, but still they won by over a thousand votes. She enjoyed the campaign. Her husband and son ran the operation, and she welcomed meeting new people and accepted the newfound respect they offered. She did have to retire from her job in the government school, given the ban on serving in public office while holding a government post, but she has gotten to know her ward and its inhabitants well. She gets up at four every morning to tour her ward and look for problems. Still, it's been an uphill climb. She relied heavily on her husband for guidance and assistance at the beginning, and still she does not fully understand the JMC, but she enjoys being able to help her constituents and plans to run again in the next election.

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with female *parshad* and her husband on 11/11/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. Both the *parshad* and husband were present throughout the interview. She answered a few questions, but often deferred to her husband, and the majority of the narrative comes from him.

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In contrast to the previous narratives in this chapter, Mrs. Deshpande and Mrs. Pande were not motivated to run by their husbands. Mr. Deshpande described how the women his wife volunteered with as part of the BJP women's wing encouraged her to ask for his support in gaining a party nomination. Mr. Pande said that he and his wife were convinced to accept the *parshad* nomination by an old family friend, the local BJP MLA who had been tasked with finding competitive BJP candidates for upcoming elections in the wards of his constituency. Both husbands were initially reluctant, citing the expected workload that would fall on them. It appears that Mrs. Pande is better able to share the workload with her husband, as she mentioned that she was initially very dependent on him, but now two years in, she feels more capable and independent. This may be due to her experience as a government school teacher, a position which would require public interaction and familiarity with governmental bureaucratic procedures.

### **Protectors**

These final narratives illustrate the significant disadvantage in terms of education and public experience that women generally have when entering politics. Furthermore, they are often entering an alien social environment that is dominated by loud and aggressive men, where they do not feel comfortable or able to speak up. Their husbands and families recognize this and do not think it appropriate that women should have to face angry and frustrated constituents who may use language they feel is inappropriate for women to hear. By taking their wife's place, these men also see an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to deliver public goods and resolve problems for their constituents, which could be used as a foundation for a future campaign of their own.

*Mr. Wazir, speaking on behalf of parshad Mrs. Wazir*

In 2014, this seat was reserved for a woman, that's why my wife ran for the office, otherwise I would have been the candidate.

Its only because of me that she ran for the office, as previously she was a housewife.<sup>86</sup>

Mr. Wazir had been active in politics for nearly 20 years, primarily helping local politicians and assisting neighbors and associates with problems. As a lifelong resident of the *kacchi basti* (undeveloped housing area) in the ward and a former bus conductor, he was intimately familiar with the area and its constituents. He had tried to move into politics officially in 2004, running as an independent in the *parshad* elections, but lost. He planned to run again in 2014, but their ward was reserved for a woman. Still, the reservation presented an opportunity if he could get his wife a nomination. Fortunately, minimum education requirements were not established in Rajasthan until after the 2014 elections, so even though she had no formal education he was able to get her a nomination from Congress and win the election. He managed the campaign, spending 12 hours a day in the field talking to voters, many of whom already knew him well, while his wife met with their mothers, wives and daughters.

Despite her lack of education and political experience, Mrs. Wazir has been able to help her husband with *parshad* duties. She attends JMC meetings, occasionally meets with constituents, and takes care of the required paperwork. Dealing with the public has been difficult for her however, as she had always been a housewife. Therefore, her husband does most of the *parshad* work in the ward, meeting with JMC officials, fixing problems, and arranging

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with husband of *parshad* on 02/22/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. *Parshad* was never present during the interview, the entire narrative came from him. The consent form was taken back to the *parshad* in the house to be signed.



contractors. He was already familiar with the workings of the JMC from his previous work in the ward. He thinks this arrangement is better anyways, given the language frustrated people use nowadays – abusive language that a woman should not hear. Anymore, entering local politics is like being pushed onto the battlefield (*maidaan utarate*), you never know what someone might say to you or about you. He feels that it is better if she restricts herself to maintaining the household and JMC duties that involve less public dealings, such as signing paperwork, attending meetings, and possibly meeting with female constituents, and leaves the rest up to him. The arrangement seems to be working well, and he is optimistic that he will get the party nomination in the next elections, if reservations allow.

*Mr Mehar, speaking on behalf of parshad Mrs. Mehar*

She was a housewife before. If the seat had been unreserved then I would have run. During the first campaign, since I had worked here since 1990, I knew it very well. Through our education program for local people, everyone knew me.<sup>87</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Mehar were getting old, this was her second term as *parshad*, but they hoped someone younger would come along for the next election to take their place. Their ward had been reserved for a woman for a second election in a row, allowing Mrs. Mehar to stay on as incumbent. They had been in the area for 25 years and were well known, so they did not have to engage in the exhausting standard door-to-door campaign. Mrs. Mehar had been born in a nearby village, in a time when rural women rarely received much of an education, but she was literate. She had been a housewife most of her life, and found it difficult to speak at the general board

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with female *parshad* and her husband on 11/23/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. Both the *parshad* and husband were present throughout the interview. She spoke very little, the vast majority of the narrative comes from her husband.

meetings due to a few people loudly dominating the discussion. She still must sign and stamp the necessary paperwork, attend the mandatory JMC meetings, and may meet with constituents, but Mr. Mehar performs most of the *parshad* duties. He tours their ward in the morning, then sits in the office from nine to five, and his door was always open. He was proud of the new sewer line, improved water supply, and paved footpaths and roads that had been installed on their watch – a significant improvement over the mess he saw in the ward under the previous *parshad*.

*Mr. Gavaria, speaking on behalf of parshad Mrs. Gavaria*

My wife and I share our work together. Before, the JMC used to give 2-3 office boys to every *parshad* who would write all the letters, manage files, register complaints, but now JMC has stopped this practice, so the husband of a female *parshad* automatically comes into the picture. A male *parshad* can do his work alone, but a female *parshad* needs a man as well.<sup>88</sup>

Both Mrs. Gavaria and her husband were born in their ward. They both have been involved in some form of social service supporting their community group for most of their lives. Mr. Gavaria had worked with a local organization focused on development for nearly two decades. He would contact government officials on the behalf of neighbors to push for more government projects, such as improved roads and drains, for their neighborhood. He eventually gained a reputation in the area as someone who could deliver government support when needed. Mr. Gavaria had always been a BJP member and brought his wife into the party a little over a year before the 2014 elections. When it was announced that their ward was reserved for a woman, they were fully supported by the party and received the nomination.

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with female *parshad* and her husband on 03/27/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad's* husband arranged and set up the interview. Both the *parshad* and husband were present throughout the interview. She answered a few questions, but often deferred to her husband, and the majority of the narrative comes from her him.

The campaign was difficult, they were competing against three other candidates, with even the independents drawing some support. Mrs. Gavaria had just given birth three months before to a daughter and was also very shy. She had a difficult time reaching out to voters, although she did grow comfortable meeting and talking with the women constituents. His strategy of campaigning on his previous service to the party and community paid off, and he was proud that their team did not have to distribute any liquor or money to still win by a substantial margin. Now in office, Mr. Gavaria takes on the bulk of the work, which feels like 20-hour days most of the time, but is glad he can spare his wife the brunt of criticism and foul language that he receives from constituents on occasion. Still, he knew the local MLA before the elections and has turned to him for additional funds when needed, and Mrs. Gavaria is able to help him when her mother-in-law can watch their young daughter and take care of the household. Mrs. Gavaria is gaining confidence, particularly in the general board meetings, and she feels more comfortable speaking up in front of her colleagues. She also reaches out to other female *parshads* in nearby wards when she needs help. She and her husband are both proud of the work they have done for women in their ward. During their term, they've opened three Anganwadi centers (publicly-funded mother and child support centers) and one daycare center for working women, held functions to raise awareness on women's issues, and even helped women in the more undeveloped areas apply for federal funds to install a personal toilet in their homes.

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Mrs. Wazir and Mrs. Mehar entered politics at a significant disadvantage in terms of education and public experience. Both likely had very little if any formal education and had spent most of their lives as housewives. Given the passage of state law mandating a minimum of a tenth-grade completion in 2015 for candidates in upcoming local elections, neither woman will

be able to compete in the next election. As with many women *parshads*, Mrs. Mehar was in a completely different social environment than the one she grew up in. She moved from her rural village to her husband's family in Jaipur upon marriage. On the other hand, Mrs. Gavaria serves in the ward she grew up in and is much more familiar with her constituents. Both Mrs. Gavaria and Mrs. Mehar feel restricted by the loud and aggressive environment of the JMC general board meetings, where they do not feel comfortable or able to speak up. I saw this myself as an observer. The discussion is generally dominated by a few loud men who continually must be restrained by the mayor's gavel. Mrs. Gavaria would like a set amount of time each meeting for each *parshad* to speak about their issues without constantly being interrupted. Furthermore, all three women are not comfortable going out into their ward to deal with constituents and contractors. Mr. Mehar agrees with Mr. Gavaria and Mr. Salvi that women *parshads* should not have to sacrifice their dignity by talking to angry and frustrated constituents who may use language inappropriate for women to hear. Mr. Mehar used the colorful metaphor of being "pushed onto the battlefield" to describe what it is like for women to enter politics for the first time.

From my own interviews with *parshads* in the JMC, many listed "social work" or wanting to "serve the people" as a primary motivation. In his investigation of student politics in Uttar Pradesh, Jeffrey (2010) interprets the choice of these terms as intentional to both establish the authority of the leader as deriving from their societal contributions, as opposed to other types of authority common in India that stem from religious or lineal ties, and to protest their humility and subservience to the communal good. Following Jeffrey, both Mr. Gavaria and Mr. Wazir see their wife's office as an opportunity to further demonstrate their own commitment to "social work", i.e. their ability to deliver public goods and resolve problems for their constituents. Mr.

Gavaria built on his history of social work to win in 2014, and both men may try to build their reputation in the current term as a foundation for a future electoral bid, as reservations permit. On the other hand, Mr. Mehar and his wife are both much older and tired. They've been in the JMC for two terms now and are hoping for a newer younger candidate to take over in the next election.

### **Conclusions**

Several themes tie these narratives together and provide a general description of the mechanism that brings these women into politics as *parshads* who are highly dependent on their husbands or fathers. First, a political actor sees an opportunity to gain a political benefit through her candidature, whether ambitious husbands blocked by the gender reservation, or those unable to win on their own. Outside actors as well can become involved, such as party colleagues or a local MLA desperate for a viable candidate in their district. These actors are looking for someone who fits the reservation requirements and will be competitive. In none of these cases did the woman herself profess the initial interest in running for the seat, she is always prodded, encouraged, or told she should enter politics. She then is relegated to a proxy role and often competes against the proxies of other actors, as the examples of Mrs. Salvi and Mrs. Nawaz demonstrate.

These women have very little public experience, particularly political experience. Therefore, these competitions are generally managed by the same men who pushed them to run for office. These men have the political experience and connections, often from previous campaigns of their own, needed to win local elections. During these campaigns, it is clear to ward constituents that she is serving merely as a "face", a token representative, and that her

husband will conduct most of the *parshad* duties. Still, she generally goes door-to-door with him, and is often tasked with speaking with the women of the households they visit.

After entering office, the lack of public experience becomes more pronounced, as she relies heavily on her husband or father to deal with the JMC, contractors and constituents. This is often attributed to her own personal lack of experience, but as I discuss in Chapter Eight, it is also a result of external societal restrictions. As Mr. Salvi, Mr. Nawaz, and Mr. Wazir stated, along with several other male *parshads* we interviewed, extensive public interaction is perceived by many as inappropriate for women. While the fundamental core of this norm is much more complex, the typical justification given is that angry constituents tend to use foul language, and women should not have to hear it. As I illustrate in Chapter Eight, the idea of politics as a masculine arena, where femininity will be tarnished and thus does not belong, is both common and a significant obstacle to increasing women's substantive representation.

Several of these women do feel comfortable engaging in the minimum required JMC duties, such as attending meetings, signing paperwork, and meeting with some government officials. Others made it clear that they were also becoming more comfortable engaging with constituents at public functions or at speaking up in meetings. As I discuss in the next chapter, this new, public experience often kindles an interest in political life that encourages some of these women to run again and develop the expertise and experience that enables them to assert their independence to a greater degree over time. In the next chapter, I use these contrasting narratives from independent women *parshads* to demonstrate the ability of women to assert themselves and engage as competently as their male JMC colleagues. However, as discussed in this chapter, these women continue to rely on male benefactors to a degree to cultivate this independence. Then, in Chapter Eight, using both the narratives and outside literature, I describe

the broad base of restrictions and obstacles in Indian society that drive process of dependence illustrated in this chapter.

## Chapter 7: Independent Women Representatives

This chapter moves the analysis to the narratives from the five women who were categorized as *independent* and the eight women categorized as *moderately-dependent*.

Table 7.1: Independent and Dependent Parshads by Gender

	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Moderately-Dependent</b>	<b>Highly-Dependent</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Women <i>Parshads</i>	5	8	10	23
Men <i>Parshads</i>	13	5	0	18

As discussed in Chapter Five, I define independence as the ability to run the *parshad* office without the regular participation of another. While independent *parshads* still often rely on communal support, they are the prime decision-maker and are able carry out the basic duties of the office on their own. In between the extremes of independent and dependent *parshads* are those who fit neither category. Instead, they fall into a grey area of moderate-dependence. These *parshads* are neither completely independent nor dependent, but have formed joint working “tandem” relationships with spouses or male advisors to spread the office load of *parshad* responsibilities. Eight female *parshads* and five male *parshads* were categorized as moderately-dependent. Each of these *parshads* indicated that they could conduct most of the office responsibilities on their own, but were still reliant on the assistance of family members for the rest. I present the narratives from two of these *parshads*, which were representative of the rest of narratives that fell into this category.

The first section describes the most independent women I interviewed. These women either entered political office nearly entirely independent, or arrived dependent but then asserted their independence over time. I review the significant challenges and dramatic responsibilities imposed on these women who choose to take on the *parshad* office single-handedly. Despite



often having considerably less political experience than their male colleagues, these women embrace their role and often make a notable effort to reach out specifically to women and children in need. While most women lack prior political experience, most of these independent women have leveraged their social experience from professional or volunteer backgrounds in social work and education. Throughout these narratives, the importance of past professional or public experience, relative wealth and access to household help, and the support of their families is made clear.

Promisingly, these narratives also demonstrate significant engagement with the intention of establishing a political career by several of these women. Most claim that they would likely not have been interested or able to pursue such a career without the gender reservation. Secondly, independent and moderately-dependent women provide societal exposure to female leaders that could encourage voters to revise stereotypes and prejudices regarding female political leaders, and influence future voting behavior. However, across these narratives, the inescapable constraining influence of the patriarchal environment is obvious. To differing degrees, all of these women still rely on male supporters and family who enable them to attain independence. While these narratives demonstrate the ability of women to gain autonomy, they also demonstrate how quickly that independence could be revoked by their husbands and families.

This chapter first presents and analyzes the independent *parshads*, and then progresses to the moderately-dependent *parshads*. The analysis and discussion of the narratives are again organized by common themes. Each *parshad's* story is presented as it was told. In contrast to the highly-dependent narratives from Chapter Six, the interviews that provided these narratives were all conducted with the *parshad* herself present – sometimes alone, sometimes in the presence of

family members. Those family members may have contributed to the narrative, but a significant portion always came from the *parshad*. I clarify in the footnotes who participated in the interview. After the presentation of each narrative in the thematic group, I discuss which commonalities they highlight. The first three narratives illustrate total independence comparable to their male colleagues. These *parshads* have significant agency and engage fully in the office responsibilities. The next two narratives demonstrate the dramatic lifestyle changes that taking on the *parshad* office as an independent woman requires, particularly for women who were primarily housewives previously. The final two narratives shift to the moderately-dependent women and illustrate how women can engage independently in certain aspects of the office, but due to private responsibilities and societal constraints, still rely on a family member to assist with the rest.

### **Establishing Independence**

In contrast to the narratives from the highly-dependent women presented in Chapter Six, these narratives demonstrate that women can enter the JMC as fully independent *parshads*. They may either join the JMC largely independent of their husbands and maintain that independence, or in other cases enter office heavily reliant on men, but then assert themselves over time as they become more experienced. Either way, these women have reached the point where they can run their own campaigns and are the primary decision-maker within the office. The narratives suggest that significant past public experience makes it more likely that a woman enters politics independently. Public experience can be garnered from either outside the office in private work or during their *parshad* service, as incumbency is particularly valuable. The opportunity to learn their responsibilities over multiple terms makes them much more capable and confident than new *parshads*. Overall, these narratives illustrate that gender quotas can initiate the political

participation of previously politically disengaged women, which over time could develop a cadre of experienced women politicians who can compete with their male counterparts. However, good fortune in the reservation lottery can be critical as well, as the assignment of supporting gender reservations makes incumbency more likely as discussed in Chapter Three, while the assignment of blocking group reservations can make competition impossible.

*Mrs. Mohania*

I would not feel right if someone treated my husband as the *parshad* and not me. I would feel dishonored, bad. I would want him to feel dishonored. Voters should say, “I will talk to the elected *parshad* only, you (husband) can go out”. I discuss issues with my husband, a healthy discussion, but it’s my decision. I make it a point that he is not a part of the office – I’m on the stage, he is down below.<sup>89</sup>

Notably, this is the first narrative presented entirely by the *parshad* herself, with no family members present. Mrs. Mohania came with her father to Jaipur as he transferred jobs to a local bank. She sought higher education, and after completing her bachelor’s wanted to pursue an MBA. However, her conservative father objected to her leaving the house unmarried, so she stayed at home and completed her master’s in science at nearby Rajasthan University, where she was at the top of her graduating class. Combined with her perfect English, she was hired to teach classes at a premier Jaipur school that prepared students for entry tests to the incredibly competitive Indian Institutes of Technology. During this time, she married a successful Jaipuri businessman and started a family, giving birth to a son. Her husband had never aspired to politics, but her father-in-law had been involved in politics for a long time, and when their ward was reserved for a woman in 2009, he strongly encouraged her to stand for election. This was a

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/06/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself and provided the entire narrative.

significant choice for her. The demands of campaigning and the office would force her to leave an exceptional job, and her young son was only a year old. Still, family offered to help take care of her son, and her father-in-law convinced her to run. Using his contacts in the BJP, he secured her a nomination. As she had never been politically involved, her only experience outside the house was at university and then professionally as a teacher, so her father-in-law managed the campaign. Initially, she found it difficult and awkward to go out into a strange, new arena and ask strangers for their vote. However, their ward leaned heavily to the BJP, and with his leadership and party support they won.

Her first tenure was quite difficult. The BJP was in the opposition and she had to learn the complicated process required to get anything done in the JMC bureaucracy. One of her husband's employees would accompany her around the JMC to help her navigate the building. It took six months just to find all the officers she needed to see. She would carry around a heavy packet of documents wherever she went in case one was required by a bureaucrat. Her father-in-law initially managed the office and met with her constituents. Over time, she became more comfortable. She came to know which documents were required by which official and in what order. She also started to meet with constituents on her own. Her household could afford a driver and office assistant, which helped her considerably. Her husband also supplied workers from his nearby store on occasion if JMC employees were inadequate. She credits her father-in-law and family with both helping her gain office and giving her the freedom to assert herself, but she is frustrated by the lack of independent women in the JMC. If her husband attempted to interfere in her work now she would tell him pointedly to get out, the voters elected her, not him.

By the end of her first term, she was confident in her abilities and wanted to continue. Luckily, for the 2014 elections the current BJP MLA secured her the nomination for a second

term. This time, she required little help from family. She knew her ward, and the voters knew her. She planned the campaign, distributing portable radios to her canvassers, and went out on her own to meet constituents. Redistricting had brought in new areas that were dominated by Brahmin families, and the party was worried they would not support her, as a candidate from another caste. However, she proved them wrong and won a second term. Completely on her own now, she has plans to implement the Prime Minister's nationwide waste removal plan and improve healthcare access for residents of the only *kacchi-basti* in her ward. Although several years off, she is also planning to run in the next election, if reservations allow.

*Mrs. Chandal*

Whenever there are JMC meetings, there are so many problems that female members face. Like stage fright – they don't know how to speak in front of all these people. They lack exposure in expressing their thoughts publicly... I believe that everyone is not a born orator. It is dependent on experience. These women have to work independently to improve.<sup>90</sup>

Mrs. Chandal came from a much lower social class than Mrs. Mohania. She had grown up in a village outside Jaipur, where girls from her community generally only completed tenth grade before being married off. However, her father did not observe these traditions, and encouraged and provided for his daughter to pursue higher education. Her father was often taunted for not marrying her off young. People from their community would ask him – what did he want, for her to become a collector (district magistrate)? She put off marriage until after completing her bachelor's, then finished her master's soon after that. However, she was unable to go straight into the workforce and use her education as she wanted, because she had to stay

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself and provided the entire narrative.

home to raise her two young boys. Moreover, she had to raise them largely on her own as her husband was working and both of her in-laws had passed. As they got older, she started doing social work in the nearby *kacchi-basti*. There, she helped children get an education and encouraged women to get out of the house and get engaged in their community. Despite not residing in the ward, when it was reserved for a woman from her community group in the next election, the local neighborhood she had been serving demanded she run for *parshad*. Once she agreed, the amount of local support for her in the ward convinced the BJP to give her the nomination.

Mrs. Chandal had political experience from her childhood, when she had helped her father support local candidates in campaigning and registering voters. He was well-known and respected within their community. She was comfortable campaigning, as she knew the ward from her social work. She preferred to meet voters during the day, as the men were usually at work and she could engage primarily with local women. She would walk the *kacchi-basti*, meeting with large groups of voters who gathered whenever she came. By eight in the evening she would return home, as the men would return to the neighborhood and she began to feel unsafe. She won easily, as Congress did not field a viable candidate. The years of working with women and children in this community gave her a deep awareness of local needs, and meant she already knew many of her constituents. This experience enabled her to work independently from the start. During her first term, she focused immediately on her policy priorities – developing the public parks in the area that had fallen into disrepair. She too is frustrated by the number of women in the JMC dependent on their husbands. She counts Mrs. Mohania as one of her close friends, but only considers her and one other woman in the JMC – Mrs. Tiwari, truly independent.

Politics suited Mrs. Chandal, but electoral law mandated that a ward could not be reserved for a woman over consecutive elections. Instead the lottery assigned an open-gender OBC reservation to this ward in the next election. As she did not come from an OBC community, she did not qualify and was thus blocked from running. However, five years later, the lottery assigned her ward a reservation that she qualified for, and she decided to make her return. This campaign was significantly different. This ward was much wealthier than her original, and she could not count on crowds to show up and listen to her campaign. She had to go door-to-door and meet each individual family. Her family and local women she had worked with before helped her canvas the new ward and she won by a thin margin. She continues to support the disadvantaged in her ward, particularly women, who appreciate having a woman *parshad* they can speak to openly and honestly without their husbands present. Now that their children are older, her husband has offered to help more around the house, which will give her more time to dedicate to the JMC. If reservations allow and the party continues to support her, she plans on running again in 2019.

*Mrs. Parashar*

Among the eight candidates I was the only female, all others were male. This last election meant a lot to me, because it was very satisfying that as the only female, I beat the other male candidates. Since it was very close, the feel of winning was very strong. I worked very hard for this election.<sup>91</sup>

Alongside Mrs. Chandal, Mrs. Parashar also decided to push for another term in 2014. On the opposite side of the aisle, with Congress, she managed to both defeat seven male competitors

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/30/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself and provided the entire narrative.

and weather the BJP electoral wave, which pushed so many fellow Congress candidates out of office that election. As an incumbent, she was an adaptable and experienced campaigner. After her first electoral victory in 2004, in 2009 she was shifted by the party to a nearby ward. After winning there, in 2014 she had to move once more to a new ward, to campaign with new voters, and this time without a gender reservation. She credits her well-known honesty and blemish-free record with consistently garnering solid electoral support across multiple wards. Ambitiously, she plans to build on this broad base of support and push for an MLA nomination in the 2019 elections, as she has already demonstrated she can win across at least half of the MLA constituency.

Mrs. Parashar has never had any issue campaigning on her own door-to-door, and asking strangers for their vote. After shifting wards multiple times, she has chatted with thousands of voters, new and old. Engaging with strangers outside of the home has been her life's work. Prior to running for *parshad*, she was raised in a village far outside of Jaipur before coming to the city to do both her bachelor's and master's at Rajasthan University. She then took over as manager of a local school, where she continues to teach. She also regularly worked with local women – organizing workshops to teach income-producing skills such as sewing, knitting and computer literacy. Initially, she had no interest in politics. Her father had not been involved, and her husband had participated in student politics, but rarely afterwards. It was not until her ward was reserved for a woman, and people who knew her from her school and her workshops suggested that she compete, that she even considered it. After her victory, her husband supported her desire to work independently, and did not involve himself in her JMC work. His support gave her the confidence to succeed on her own early on, and she continues to run the office from the grounds of her school, surrounded by the portraits of famous Congress leaders from the past.



When she first went to the JMC, she was nervous, but quickly managed to figure out the process. As with most *parshads*, she has found that JMC bureaucrats rarely act on requests without consistent prodding: “Files do not move by themselves, you push them from table to table, otherwise they will be dumped and forgotten. You have to be active to get your work done”.<sup>92</sup> She feels that the men she works with, both in the JMC and constituents, respect her. She finds a cooperative approach the most productive, and sees her key role as a mediator giving suggestions. She has not been able to accomplish everything she intended – drainage is still quite poor in her ward during the rainy season, but she hopes the budget will allow for improvements in the coming years. Her influence will likely increase as she joins the “high performance” committee focused on the overall development of Jaipur, where she will be able to question and push high-level bureaucrats to do more.

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In contrast to Chapter Six, these narratives demonstrate the ability of women to enter the JMC and act as fully independent *parshads*. They appear to be as capable as any male *parshad*, and more so than many. As the narratives of Mrs. Chandal and Mrs. Parashar illustrate, female *parshads* can join the JMC largely independent of their husbands or any other family members. Comparatively, as Mrs. Mohania recounted, female *parshads* can still enter office heavily reliant on men, but then assert themselves over time as they become more comfortable in the position with experience. In notable contrast to the replacement role men play for highly-dependent *parshads*, Mrs. Mohania’s case demonstrates that the support and encouragement of men can

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/30/2016 in Jaipur.

help develop a woman's confidence and ability to the point that she no longer requires their assistance.

The ability of Mrs. Chandal and Mrs. Parashar to enter politics predominantly independent was likely supported by significant experience both in political campaigning (Mrs. Chandal) and in managing a large education institution (Mrs. Parashar). Both experiences provided public exposure, political understanding, and exposure to government bureaucracy. In contrast, Mrs. Mohania had little public experience prior to running for office, and was therefore much more initially reliant upon men to both organize her campaign and familiarize her with the JMC bureaucracy.

Regardless, all three women over multiple terms have reached the point where they run their own campaigns and are the primary decision-maker within the office. Out of the 23 women interviewed, only these three women were incumbents. As these women describe, the opportunity to learn their trade over multiple terms makes them more capable and confident than new entrants, which is critical to gaining independence. From the outside, male *parshads* have also commented that by the middle of their tenure, two to three years in, female *parshads* are generally more adept: "they are more experienced, and they can handle the pressure better".<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, all three of these women entered politics because a nearby ward was reserved for a woman. They were then able to win re-election both with the help of a subsequent gender reservation (Mrs. Mohania) and without (Mrs. Chandal and Mrs. Parashar).

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 01/10/2017 in Jaipur.

This process demonstrates one of the primary long-term goals of a gender quota system – to prompt the political participation of women who previously were not engaged, and over time develop a cadre of experienced women politicians who can compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts (Deininger et al, 2011). However, as discussed in Chapter Three, the electoral prohibition on gender reservations in consecutive elections for a ward likely hampers this goal. When two of these women made the jump to open-gender wards, it was clear that these campaigns were much more difficult. Certainly, it appears that their prior experience as incumbents made them more competitive; however, they were two of the most publicly-experienced women I interviewed. For the average woman *parshad*, entering an open-gender race after only one term, and without significant prior experience, would be a daunting challenge. Moreover, Mrs. Chandal’s experience also demonstrates how the reservation system can both support and block the participation of individuals from disadvantaged communities such as hers, as she was blocked from running again in her ward for a second term due to the assignment of a group reservation that she did not qualify for.

### **Dramatic Changes: Assuming *Parshad* Responsibilities**

While prior public experience is common across all highly-independent women *parshads*, the following two narratives illustrate the diverse paths these women take into office. To gain office, women may have to work their way up the party hierarchy much as their male colleagues do, or they may use the leg-up provided by the gender-reservation to enter politics with little to no prior experience with a party. However they get there, nearly every female *parshad* experiences a significant shift in responsibilities that could be overwhelming, but all the independent *parshads* embraced their obligation over time. Correspondingly, several mentioned the particular responsibility they felt towards women and children in their ward, which is often

cited by the literature as an expected benefit of improving female representation (Thomas, 1994; Reingold, 1992). Promisingly, a minor networking effect is observable across these women, as several of them serve as role models for other women in the JMC who want to emulate their independence. Furthermore, several of these independent women are actively pushing back against societal acceptance of the *parshad-pati* phenomenon, which in the long-term could contribute towards the normative rejection of dependent candidates by voters that will be required to change the existing order.

*Mrs. Rawal*

This is an area where men often stay out late drinking and come home drunk, sometimes they beat their wives. In this process, the women do not have their own means of livelihood, they aren't working, so they're totally dependent on their husbands. That's why I encourage them to take training courses, so they can get their own work. I try to address other issues for my ward collection beyond simply garbage collecting, like family matters, husband and wife problems, and issues with children.<sup>94</sup>

In contrast to most women *parshads* in the JMC, Mrs. Rawal had always been interested in politics, particularly after joining her husband's family. Her husband and several of his brothers were politically active, and encouraged her to get involved as well. They would take her to community events and introduce her to local leaders. A decade ago, she joined the BJP and began her political career as a minister in the party's neighborhood commission. She also worked with a trade union to address local issues. Several years later, she got further involved as an assistant to Mrs. Mohania during her first term as *parshad*, and gained experience in working with the JMC bureaucracy. Mrs. Rawal and her husband both admire how Mrs. Mohania

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself and provided the entire narrative.

conducts herself, and Mrs. Rawal credits her with positively influencing her own working style. She had considered running for office herself in 2009, but the ward was assigned a reservation she did not qualify for, preventing her from running. Still, she kept the *parshad* who won apprised on neighborhood problems, despite her Congress affiliation.

Prior to the 2014 elections, Mrs. Rawal joined the campaign of the BJP MLA competing in her constituency. She worked alongside his wife, going door-to-door, and gained valuable experience on how to run a winning campaign. MLAs will often bring along political up-and-comers in their campaigns to boost their prospects, and, despite four others competing for the nomination for upcoming *parshad* elections, the party recognized Mrs. Rawal's previous contribution by nominating her. She was strongly supported locally, came from a family with demonstrated service to the party, and fit the reservation – the ward had been reserved for a woman from her community. She immediately put her prior experience into campaigning across her ward. She was less familiar with the *kacchi-bastis* and had difficulty organizing an effective effort there, as there were no set streets or addresses. However, in the rest of the ward she had a strong rapport with local voters, both from her social and party work, and from three generations of familial residency in the ward through her husband. This paid off handsomely in a blowout victory, reportedly the largest winning margin in this ward in recent memory. She is confident she can have a career in politics and plans to run again in the next election if the reservation lottery allows and she is granted the nomination.

If Mrs. Rawal is unable to run again, she still wants to continue working on her core passion of improving the quality of life for women and children in her ward. She is an imposing woman with a serious countenance. Business-like and straightforward, she sees herself as more than a *parshad* who merely arranges garbage collection. She wants to address social issues as

well. She passionately discusses issues local women have with alcoholic husbands and domestic abuse. Many of these women are stuck in daily-wage jobs, such as sweepers, *bidi* (cigarette) rollers, or garment makers. Children in her area also have difficulty affording an education. She has tried to help both groups gain some independence by enrolling them in courses for better-paying industries such as nursing, sewing, knitting, computer work, or as beauticians. For her ward in general, she is not hesitant to track down her MLA or MP if she needs additional funds or an extra lever of pressure on the bureaucracy to get development projects approved and funded. She has always worked independently, but credits the support her joint family provides in relieving her of domestic responsibilities, which she acknowledges forces many other women *parshads* to spend more time at home and less time at the JMC.

*Mrs. Goswami*

Management ability is not something new to women, it is a natural quality they have. A woman can do anything, and can manage anything, if chance and exposure is given to her. Take my example. For two and a half years I didn't know about these things, my only duty was being a housewife and mother. The whole time, I was only focused on waking my son up at 6 and sending him to school. What was happening in the neighborhood was completely unknown to me. I understood that I did not know about these things, because they were not my area, not my work, so why would I think about them. But now, I know I have the responsibility of almost 1 lakh (100,000) households, so now I definitely think about them and try to understand them.<sup>95</sup>

Mrs. Goswami points to her mother, a professor at Rajasthan University, as a key independent woman role model for her growing up. Well-educated herself, Mrs. Goswami completed both a bachelor's and master's before marrying. Through her husband, she joined a very politically active family. Her husband himself was *parshad* of their ward the previous term.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself and provided the entire narrative.

Prior to marriage, as with the rest of her family she had little interest or involvement in politics. She considered herself a housewife, but regularly engaged in social work and was very active at the nearby Hindu temple. Her beautiful singing was often requested there on weekends. However, this changed in 2014 when her husband's ward was reserved for a woman, and the regional MLA, familiar with her husband, urged her to accept the party nomination and run in his stead. She resisted at first, as she found the typical campaign work of "holding hands and touching feet all the time" not appealing. Nonetheless, appeals and support coming from family and elders soon swayed her and she dove in.

The campaign was a family affair. Mrs. Goswami wanted to cover the entire ward, from the houses of the wealthy IAS officers to the make-shift dwellings of the *kacchi-bastis*, and she relied on many in-laws who took the train all the way from Delhi to walk with her through the blistering streets of summer for 15 days. Everyone worried for Mrs. Goswami, who was prone to fainting in such heat. Still, she connected with the voters, especially the women, who were impressed to see her face on campaign posters across the ward. They were also able to build on the strong image her husband had established in this ward over the past five years. He had avoided the populist rhetoric of the conventional "*kurta-pyjama*" politician. His preference for the standard collared-shirt and pants to their emblematic starched white *kurtas* appealed to the educated, upper middle-class constituents of the ward. This broad base of support translated into massive margin-of-victory, nearly eight times the size of her husband's in his 2009 win.

Mrs. Goswami entered the office fully intending to work entirely on her own. However, she soon realized that she needed her husband and other family members more experienced in politics to help her get started. They helped her find her way through the bureaucratic maze of the JMC, accompanied her to intimidating upper-level officers, and advised her on how to work

with the bureaucracy effectively. Over nearly three years of holding office, she listened carefully and learned quickly. Now, she has the experience and confidence to find and engage whomever she needs to on her own. She works with officers to redesign work-flow to improve efficiency, and regularly consults outside experts on municipal law to improve her understanding. She has black-listed a corrupt public contractor who cut his cement with too much sand to improve profits, which resulted in a seven-year road built in their ward washing out in only one. In hindsight, she appreciates both the support her husband provided early on and his willingness to not interfere in her work now that she is independent. She has much more she wants to accomplish this term and has not seriously thought about the next elections. Her primary concern is that she be remembered to have been as good of a *parshad* as her husband, if not better.

Now Mrs. Goswami is something of a local celebrity. She is very open to the media, and has aired in several news interviews and regularly puts out bulletins on the radio. TV hosts have told her that she is a natural in front of the camera. Local women in particular are impressed by her. She was particularly touched by several young girls who approached her in the *kacchi-basti* and told her they wanted to be like her in the future. Her family also appreciates all the compliments they receive on her behalf, which is a real source of pride for her in-laws. As with her good friend Mrs. Mohania, Mrs. Goswami hopes she can be a role model for the women in her ward as well. She hopes that her example will encourage college girls to think of politics as a potential profession rather than a waste of time. She also thinks that her success has given local women the courage to come to their *parshad* on their own. Compared to her husband's term, it seems like more wives come to the office now, when before it was mainly their husbands.

Mrs. Goswami does not think that as a woman she is unique in her ability to succeed politically. As with many women in India, she spent most of her married life as a housewife and



mother, whose biggest concern was getting her son up and off to school in the morning. Now she is responsible for almost 10,000 homes. She feels that all women are natural communicators and organizers well suited to politics, given their experience managing a household. Compared to many other *parshads*, who spend most of their time shouting at the bureaucracy before giving up, she has found more success in listening carefully to the officers and their explanations on the process. Critically, she knows that JMC officers know best how to bend the rules to get her requests through the red tape.

On the *parshad-pati* phenomenon, she objects to the public acceptance of husbands who get their wife nominated and elected, and then tell her to stay home while men do the work. Just because the men in the family may have more political experience than her, it still does not give them the right to treat her as a dummy candidate and serve their own interests. She believes that these women must make it clear that she will fight in the election and will run the office. Not simply read in the meetings from a piece of paper written by her husband or father-in-law. If they do not agree, then she should refuse to run. She acknowledges that most women *parshads*, whether educated or not, have a difficult time asserting their independence from the beginning, unless they have a political background. However, the bigger problem is the men in their families who shut these women out and run the office themselves. Mrs. Goswami worries that if the husbands and father-in-laws of these women do the rounds of the ward instead of her, they will discourage local women from coming forward with their problems. Particularly in lower-income, lower-educated areas, where women are already intimidated by authority figures, having to address a male authority is incredibly daunting. She regularly counsels her fellow female *parshads*, who often ask her to speak with them, and advises them to take and use the guidance, knowledge and experience of their husbands and father-in-laws, but use it to assert themselves.

She challenges them to think about where they will be after the five years of their term is up and are wondering if they gave their best and accomplished what they wanted to.

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The narratives of Mrs. Rawal and Mrs. Goswami display the range of paths female *parshads* take to winning office. Mrs. Goswami essentially succeeded her husband as *parshad* in a partially revised ward following redistricting after it was reserved for a woman, while Mrs. Rawal worked her way up from the neighborhood commission a decade prior. Mrs. Rawal's path mirrors that of most of her male colleagues that I interviewed. No male *parshad* mentioned succeeding a spouse or relative, and most had been working in lower level party positions before finally being nominated as a *parshad* candidate, whereas the majority of female *parshads* interviewed had rarely engaged in politics prior to becoming *parshad*. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, the reservation may allow women to bypass Mrs. Rawal's substantive journey and enter politics as a novice at a higher position than most men.

Upon joining the JMC, nearly every female *parshad*, and many male *parshads* as well, commented on the dramatic change in their responsibilities. As Mrs. Goswami succinctly described, she went from being primarily responsible for her son to thousands of families in her ward overnight. All five of the independent women discussed embraced this burden. Notably, many mentioned the responsibility they felt to support local women and children in their wards. Mrs. Rawal specifically detailed her focus on improving the quality of life for disadvantaged women and children. Mrs. Mohania and Mrs. Goswami both feel that they serve as role models for women and girls in their ward, as they demonstrate that women can be both independent of their husbands and families, and in positions of power, which has been cited as key to improving the political participation of young women (Elder, 2004). Effective gender quota systems should

both encourage eligible women to run in the short-term and inspire younger women to become more politically involved in the long-term. Ideally, more female role models will establish larger future cohorts of women leaders who are better able to independently compete and serve in office.

A key enabler for most of these women is likely wealth and class. I met with four out of the five independent women in locations that illustrated relative wealth. Mrs. Mohania, Mrs. Chandal, and Mrs. Goswami asked me to come to their homes, all of which were quite large, in nice neighborhoods, and were staffed with at least one *naukar* (house servant).<sup>96</sup> Mrs. Parashar, as the manager of a local school, was also likely upper middle-class. I met Mrs. Rawal at her home, which was of modest size and plain, an average middle-class house that likely indicated she was not as wealthy as the rest of the independent women. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, wealth and class can make the path to independence for women politicians significantly easier. *Naukars* can be hired to take over household and familial responsibilities to free up time for political work. Women from the upper-classes also receive more education and come from more educated parents, which often translates into a less constraining youth that allows for more public and political experience for young women.<sup>97</sup> However, several highly-dependent women appeared to come from relative wealth as well, so the correlation is not absolute. Wealth may make independence more likely, but it does not guarantee it.

These women did express considerable frustration over the number of female *parshads* in the JMC who are dependent on their husbands and families. Anecdotes from Mrs. Mohania and

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<sup>96</sup> Notably, based on her narrative, Mrs. Damari was likely raised in a much lower income household.

<sup>97</sup> Although not in all cases, as Mrs. Mohania's conservative parents illustrates.

Mrs. Chandal claim the total number of independent women in the JMC is quite low. Still, optimism can be found in the assertions by Mrs. Mohania and Mrs. Goswami that it is normatively inappropriate for women to cede their seat to their husbands. Essentially, they argue that this subverts the will of the voters, who selected her not him. While this norm certainly does not seem to be widespread, given the success of *parshad-patis* in the polls, the reputation of these women and their willingness to engage publicly could encourage a wider transmission of this norm throughout the electorate going forward. Referring to the discussion on voter accountability in Chapter Three, the only realistic institutional method of effectively discouraging *parshad-patis* is through the ballot box. As long as such candidates are electorally successful they will continue to run.

Finally, there may also be a minor networking effect that has encouraged female independence. Both Mrs. Mohania and Mrs. Goswami appear to be role models and mentors for several of their female colleagues. Mrs. Mohania was cited by several women as someone they sought to emulate. Mrs. Goswami recounted several fellow women who asked her for advice and direction. Recognizing the reality for many of these women, she often pushed them to use their assets – take a more cooperative approach with the bureaucracy, and build on the guidance and support they received from their husbands and family to assert themselves over time. While gradual, this may be the most pragmatic method of encouraging independence in the short-term.

### **Moderately-Dependent Parshads: Working in Tandem**

Finally, the remainder of narratives from women *parshads* form a middle ground between the highly-dependent women discussed in Chapter Six and the independent women covered above. I recount two of the most representative narratives, which cover many of the themes contained in the remaining six. These women describe tandem arrangements with their

husbands or male advisors, in which they have varying degrees of independence from the men around them, but none are completely independent. Instead they have formed joint working relationships to spread the office load of *parshad* responsibilities, which must be balanced with domestic and familial obligations. These relationships can be more segregated, with the *parshad* only taking on specific duties she is comfortable with, or more broadly shared, with both partners engaging jointly in a range of *parshad* activities. Both arrangements appear to put all actors on an equal footing. In contrast with highly-dependent women, who typically engage in only the minimum amount of *parshad* responsibilities, the narratives of moderately-dependent women indicate that they fully engage in much of the work, but are incapable or uninterested in certain aspects, or they must share the responsibility with another due to time constraints. For example, Mrs. Manihar meets with constituents, JMC officers, and contractors, but was politically inexperienced in campaigning so she relied on her male sponsor to run the entire campaign, like Mrs. Mohani in her first term. Mrs. Shrimal engages in nearly all the *parshad* work, but so does her husband to share the load. Notably, several of these women seem to be asserting themselves over time and will likely become fully independent in the future, while others appear comfortable with the joint responsibility and are unable to assume more. However, these arrangements do challenge our standard conception of representative democratic legitimacy, as several of the actors involved in these tandem relationships are unelected. Nonetheless, this question also encourages reflection on the concept of democratic legitimacy, and its applicability to the communally normative environment of South Asia.

*Mrs. Manihar*

They used to say to my father, “Why are you giving her so much freedom, you are allowing her to go out of the house and do such things?” But my parents used to say that we have faith in our daughter, if she wants to progress in her life we should let her.<sup>98</sup>

As a woman raised in a traditional Muslim community by progressive parents, Mrs. Manihar was accustomed to standing out. Her preference for stylish sunglasses and trendy *salwar* suits continue to grate her relatives, who regularly ask why she does not wear a *burqa* outside of the house. However, she is no stranger to social challenges. Her husband has passed away, but even as a widow and single mother, she managed to raise her daughter on her own while simultaneously running a clinic and arranging affordable education for Muslim children in her neighborhood. Her interest in social service also motivated her to pursue politics when her ward was reserved for a woman. She had no political experience, but was well known in her community through her clinic. The previous *parshad* of the ward and a family friend, now unable to run due to the gender reservation, arranged for his younger brother to mentor her and run her campaign. The *ex-parshad* came from a famous family in Rajasthani politics, going back six decades. They brought her on and treated her like family. He put her in touch with senior party leaders and helped her get a nomination. During the campaign, she could relax and let his brother guide the campaign to a comfortable victory.

The *parshad* and his brother both admire Mrs. Manihar’s courage and work-ethic, as she campaigned with them from early morning into the late night, and even alone at times. She takes on much of the *parshad* duties herself, such as meeting with local constituents, especially women

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with female *parshad* and male sponsor on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur. *Parshad* set up the interview herself. Her male sponsor was present during the interview and answered a few questions, but she provided the vast majority of the narrative.

who are more comfortable speaking with another woman. As someone who has challenged multiple norms and received considerable social criticism over her lifetime, Mrs. Manihar knows the importance of discretion. Local women know they can trust her to keep conversations on family issues private to avoid gossip making its way back to their families. Early on, she relied heavily on her mentor and a maternal uncle who knew the JMC well to help find her way around the bureaucracy, but she is now able to operate primarily independently. She knows she can call them anytime if she needs help. She also lives with her parents, who help manage some of her JMC work as well. Furthermore, as a woman, she is uncomfortable going out alone after nine in the evening, so she will generally take her mother or father with her. Overall, she enjoys politics, and will definitely run again in the next election. If her ward is not reserved for a woman, then she will look for a nomination to a nearby ward that is. As it stands, she is even contemplating an MLA run, but is waiting to see how the field pans out.

*Mrs. Shrimal*

I don't take help from my family members, but my husband helps me with everything. Wherever I go my husband accompanies me.<sup>99</sup>

Mrs. Shrimal moved all the way from central India to join her husband in Jaipur. Well-educated, with a master's degree, and family experience in business, she was well prepared to help her husband run several local shops. Despite no political experience, when their ward was reserved for a woman, she grew motivated to try her hand and was encouraged by her husband's family, several of whom were well-established politically in this ward. After gaining the

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with female *parshad* and her husband on 10/21/2016 in Jaipur. Husband of the *parshad* set up the interview. *Parshad* and husband both present during the interview and provided approximately equal parts of the narrative.

nomination, her husband's family went door-to-door with her asking for votes. Their campaign led to a considerable win, more than doubling the opposing candidate's vote total. However, the office itself has taken its toll on Mrs. Shrimal and her husband. They are constantly busy listening to constituents, addressing complaints, and haranguing JMC bureaucrats. Mrs. Shrimal has no desire to run again in the next election, she wants to return to her shops and spend more time with her two young boys, and her husband wants to do the same.

Mrs. Shrimal's family has been very supportive during her political run, especially her husband's side. While she does not allow the rest of his family to involve themselves in her JMC work, her husband helps her in nearly every part of it. Constituents know they can contact either one of them directly to get their needs addressed. Furthermore, wherever she goes, her husband accompanies her. She is not defensive about this arrangement, as she is already fairly overwhelmed by amount of time and work required to get anything done, and he provides welcome help. They both must continue to support their household by maintaining the family business on the side, as *parshads* only receive a minimal allowance every month. Despite having no interest in continuing, she counts her experience as a positive one. She feels that she has undergone a transformation after engaging in an environment traditionally reserved for men, and is glad that the gender reservation is there to ensure other women get the opportunity to have a similar experience.

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The narratives of Mrs. Manihar and Mrs. Shrimal illustrate a middle-ground between the highly-dependent *parshads* of Chapter Six and the independent *parshads* recounted above. These two women, along with the six additional moderately-dependent women, are categorized as neither highly-dependent nor independent. This categorization is much more fluid than either



extreme, as these women work in varying degrees of independence from the men around them, but none of them appear to be completely dependent nor do any appear to be entirely independent. Several seem to be asserting themselves over time, like the story of Mrs. Manihar, while others appear more comfortable with the joint responsibility and are unable to assume more, like Mrs. Shrimal.

These narratives demonstrate two outcomes of tandem relationships vis-à-vis the development of *parshad* independence. Mrs. Manihar describes an apparently segregated environment of responsibility. From her experience running a public clinic and other social work, she is comfortable engaging with her constituents. Due to a lack of political experience and connections, she relies on her male advisor, the *ex-parshad*'s younger brother, to run her campaign, provide connections to key party leaders, and on occasion, to smooth her interaction with the JMC. On the other hand, Mrs. Shrimal describes a more integrated environment. Due to the need to maintain their source of income, their private shop, alongside their official responsibilities, they appear to both engage in a range of *parshad* activities whenever they personally have the time. They relied on her husband's family for political connections and support during the campaign, but now that she is elected, both meet with constituents and engage with the JMC. Because of their outside responsibilities, neither appears capable of taking on the office independently. While she is dependent on him to accompany her when she leaves the house, in most other aspects of the arrangement she appears to be his equal.

Considering the narratives from the beginning of this chapter, a primary question for these tandem arrangements is whether they describe *parshads* who are using the distribution of responsibilities to work towards eventual independence, as Mrs. Mohania did in her transition from moderate-dependence in her first term to full independence in her second, or are they static

arrangements the *parshad* is not interested in modifying, as appears to be the case with Mrs. Shrimal. The narratives describe a range of tandem relationships. Some women appear to be using the support and experience of the men around them to assert themselves over time, with the goal of becoming completely independent. Such a process is not unique to female *parshads*, as multiple male *parshads* describe similar journeys of increasing comfort and capability within the JMC as they gained experience. Other women are not entirely comfortable or able to interact with constituents or JMC bureaucrats on their own, and may always require male support in these aspects. Most also have significant domestic and private responsibilities that prevent them from dedicating themselves full-time to the JMC.

These realities make it difficult to designate the tandem arrangement as either a positive or negative in terms of democratic representation. On the one hand, we can look at tandems as a stepping stone that bridges the gap for so many women who run for office but lack the political and social experience required to be an effective *parshad*. However, if these tandem relationships are static, and result in two or more people essentially serving as representatives for the duration of the term, with only one of them officially elected by their constituents, then problematic questions arise with regards to democratic legitimacy. In the Western context, we generally accept the numerous non-elected actors who exert disproportionate influence on an elected representative's decision-making, i.e. special interests and large donors, as a dubious but unavoidable feature of a modern democracy. Yet, if such tandem arrangements were actively visible within Western representative institutions, I would expect significant public outcry and academic claims of undermined democracy, nepotism and ultimately, illegitimacy. Therefore, it could be argued that these arrangements at the very least impair democratic development, if not entirely delegitimize these *parshads* as democratic representatives.

Still, it must continue to be noted that voters have not likely been deceived by *parshads* who are either highly dependent on or in tandem arrangements with their husbands or other supporting men. These narratives described electoral campaigns that regularly make it clear and obvious to constituents that their *parshad* will likely be dependent to a degree on others. Therefore, by voting these candidates into office, often by large margins, most voters appear to accept this representative arrangement as appropriate and legitimate. In turn, this dynamic encourages further discussion on the concept of democratic representation. Specifically, is legitimate democratic representation limited to the elected individual listed on the ballot? Does the extension of representative power to individuals not listed on the ballot, but informally accepted by the voters to serve as their representative, delegitimize the democratic process? Furthermore, would it be preferable for these moderately-dependent women to attempt to take on the office alone, even if they do not have the expertise or time? This is often the case with women who are new to politics and/or are still normatively expected to maintain their household and familial responsibilities while in office. These tandem arrangements may be the only way women in these situations can successfully act as *parshads*. Within this discussion, considerable attention must be paid to the role of Western norms, particularly individualism and the preeminence of formal rules, in the generation of the concept of democratic representation. Given the more communal norms and greater acceptance of informal rules within South Asia, perhaps we should reconsider the blanket application of democratic concepts developed for the Western context.

### **Conclusions**

The narratives of this chapter have shown that women can enter political office entirely independent, or arrive dependent but then assert their independence over time. I reviewed the

significant challenges and dramatic responsibilities imposed on these women who choose to take on the *parshad* office single-handedly. Despite often having considerably less political experience than their male colleagues, these women embraced their role and frequently made a notable effort to reach out specifically to women and children in need. While most women lack prior political experience, these independent women have leveraged their social experience instead from professional or volunteer backgrounds in social work and education.

While the narratives from the independent *parshads* demonstrate that women can assert themselves in the JMC, particularly if they have professional or public experience, come from relative wealth, and are supported in their endeavor by their families, the tandem arrangements highlight a problematic commonality across these narratives. Nearly every woman I interviewed, independent or not, was dependent to some degree on male supporters. Specifically, even the very independent women, such as Mrs. Chandal and Mrs. Parashar, who even entered politics largely on their own, still mentioned that they were dependent on family for income support and assistance with household responsibilities. Essentially, these support structures enabled their independence. This is partially because the *parshad* office is essentially unpaid and thus not sustaining, but even more critical is the reality that, even after being elected, these women still operate within a society that enforces strict gendered roles. These gendered roles place them at a political disadvantage in terms of social experience, political experience and networks, and bureaucratic and institutional understanding. All of which can be remedied by male support. Critically, most of these women would likely not have been successful without the expertise provided by their husbands and other supporting male actors.

Mrs. Mohania, one of the most independent women I interviewed, was quite dependent during her first term on her father-in-law and male assistants hired by her husband to gain the

nomination, win the campaign, and manage the office. Mrs. Chandal gained much of her political experience serving on campaigns alongside her father when she was young. Mrs. Rawal was introduced to local communal leaders and gained an interest in politics through her politically active husband and brothers-in-law, and campaigned on his family's reputation in the ward. Mrs. Goswami essentially replaced her husband after a gender reservation blocked him from running, and was also able to campaign on his reputation and rely on his expertise to navigate the bureaucratic maze. However, each of these women also credited their husbands and family with providing the support and acceptance that enabled them to assert themselves. Markedly, several husbands provided advice and backing when asked, but were willing to step aside when that was no longer required. Several of these women acknowledged that they would likely be unable to dedicate themselves to their work if their family was not able to assist them at home. While inspiring, these stories also illustrate the annulling alternative. If these husbands and families had refused at any point to accept or support her pursuit of political office, then very likely none of these women would be in their position. Even the most independent women recounted in their narratives important junctures when fathers or husbands had the power to open or block critical pathways for political advancement, such as attending college.<sup>100</sup> The stark power differential between men and women in such a patriarchal society simply does not enable women to strike out on their own, as the reservation does not intrinsically grant a woman autonomy.

While pessimistic, this reality existed before the imposition of gender quotas and I saw no indication that patriarchal norms had hardened since the establishment of quotas. Quotas were instituted to change this reality over time. However, these narratives demonstrate that patriarchal

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<sup>100</sup> Mrs. Mohania discussed her father's rejection of her plan to pursue an MBA, and Mrs. Parashar praised her husband's willingness to allow her to attend college.

norms are stubbornly persistent, and change is extremely gradual. Pessimism should be further tempered by a consideration of how we are judging these arrangements. From a Western perspective, these narratives are particularly problematic, as we are accustomed to individual, elected representatives making independent decisions. However, that reality is certainly debatable, and no reasonable argument could be made that representatives in the West are absolutely independent. They rely on spousal, familial, and collegial support and advice as well. This support is just much less public and observable than in India. *Parshads* are likely much more comfortable advertising and acknowledging the role their family plays because it is more socially acceptable in South Asia than it would be in the West. Comparable to previous discussions of what constitutes corruption, while acts such as nepotism or gift giving are generally abhorred in the Western context, in other social contexts they are understood to be necessary and appropriate (De Sardan, 1999). Perhaps we need to rethink what constitutes legitimate representation in the Indian context. Debating whether communal representation is compatible with true democratic representation is likely a dead end. It is more useful to focus on outcomes. The key question is whether communal support, such as that provided by a husband, family, or other community member, facilitates or restricts a woman *parshad's* legislative ability to act on her priorities. Using this standard, reviewing the narratives from the highly-dependent *parshads* of Chapter Six demonstrates that these women were restricted by their communal support, and decision priorities were predominantly determined by someone other than her. Reviewing the narratives from the independent narratives of this chapter, I argue that these women were enabled by their support networks to act on their own priorities. While still dependent to a degree on the men around them, this support allows them to act on their own, likely to a degree they would be unable to if that support was withdrawn.

There are two possible ways of incorporating these findings into the existing literature. As women politicians comparable in independence and capability to their male colleagues, the independent narratives from this chapter could be interpreted as evidence of the ability of gender quotas to improve substantive female representation in positions of power. However, the literature requires a direct connection between female representatives and their constituency (Mansbridge, 1999; Urbinati and Warren, 2008; Weldon, 2002), which ensures that the women elected continue to represent the interests of their constituents, particularly women's interests that have been historically neglected. The continued dependence, even for the most independent women *parshads*, on their male supporters and enablers makes this critical connection more tenuous. The literature has traditionally focused on the societal and political constraints that restrict women from gaining office, and upon taking office, the continued institutional constraints that restrain them from pushing their preferences. However, the literature generally assumes that women who take office have personal agency and independence. There has been little consideration of women representatives who may continue to be hindered by revocable individual agency and independence. As the independent narratives from this chapter and the dependent narratives from Chapter Six have demonstrated, familial and societal constraints can make it very difficult or impossible for women representatives to fully engage in their office. Even if these constraints are lifted to some degree, as they were for the independent women of this chapter, they are often revocable. If the men who support these women choose to withdraw that support, it is feasible that many of these independent women would lose that independence to a considerable degree. Therefore, returning to the literature, the substantive representation that has been established by the gender reservation in this case is also tenuous and possibly revocable. This does not mean that the gender quotas have not been able to establish substantive

representation for women in Jaipur, but it does indicate that substantive representation is not dichotomous, it is more complex. Once established, the possibility remains that it is not total and that it can be removed. Therefore, substantive representation should be evaluated along a spectrum, as either more or less firmly entrenched and irrevocable.

This chapter provided a counterpoint to Chapter Six with narratives from independent women who were brought in by the gender reservation and have established themselves to be as capable as any of their male colleagues. Critically, many of these independent women have made politics a career and provide societal exposure that could both encourage voters to revise stereotypes and prejudices, and inspire future female leaders. Still, these narratives also demonstrate the inescapable constraining influence of their patriarchal environment, as these women still rely on male supporters and family who enable them to attain that independence, which could be revoked by their enablers at any time. The next and final chapter of analysis uses the preceding narratives from both the dependent and independent women to isolate and explain the powerful patriarchal norms that create a tension between the institutional quotas designed to improve female political participation and the social norms that continue to restrict such behavior and force women seeking political office to utilize and rely upon the support of men to be successful.



## Chapter 8: Obstacles to Full Participation

We Indians have this mentality that women belong at home, and now when we are forcing them to come out they do not want to. Let's say this seat got reserved for a woman and I asked my wife to fight the election. She would not, she would fight me, but she would not fight the election.<sup>101</sup>

The prevalence and position of dependence among women *parshads* outlines several key dynamics that create a tension between the institutional quotas designed to improve female political participation and the social norms that continue to restrict such behavior. Following the quote above, parental and societal attitudes, gendered family traditions, societal normative constraints on public and political actions, and challenging institutional environments significantly restrict the ability of women to enter politics independently.

Women in Rajasthan are discouraged throughout their lives from engaging fully publicly or politically. Even at the peak opportunity for independence, while attending university, women are generally much more restrained than men of the same age. After university, most marry, which traditionally requires leaving their own family and joining their husband's. New norms and constraints come with this transition, most of which continue to discourage any broad-based public or political behavior. Critically, all women, *parshad* or not, operate within a society that emphasizes the need to protect their purity and honor, which often designates politics as an inappropriate environment for women to engage in. These factors combine to put aspiring women politicians at a serious disadvantage in terms of public and political experience,

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/21/2017 in Jaipur.

connections, reputation, and confidence in comparison to their male peers, and forces them to rely on men to address these shortcomings.

This chapter discusses the impact of these societal norms on female political participation by comparing the experiences of the highly-dependent women narrated in Chapter Six, and the narratives of the independent and moderately-dependent women of Chapter Seven. Comparison of these contrasting narratives highlights the persistent patriarchal norms that continue to restrict women's political agency. Parental and societal attitudes on political engagement for young women, gendered family traditions that significantly alter the accessibility of the political environment to married women, societal normative constraints on women engaging in public and political actions, and challenging institutional environments erect barriers across the entirety of a woman's lifetime. These barriers reduce experiential knowledge and political capability for most women to the point that to pursue political office effectively, women must rely upon the support of men. This reliance often continues after electoral victory. These restrictions make the development of full autonomy challenging for most women politicians and thus make it more likely a woman *parshad* entering the JMC through the gender reservation will be highly or moderately dependent on men to carry out her responsibilities.

This chapter works through the societal constraints that shape the ability of women politicians to develop full independence in Jaipur. It begins with a comparison of foundational female and male political experiences that illustrate a significant gender gap in the development of political connections, knowledge and understanding. The chapter then moves to gendered family traditions that influence the political development of women, particularly in northern India. This section reviews the joint family structure, gender segregation, bridal relocation, and work outside the home, and discusses how each normative tradition can encourage or discourage

the development of participatory norms across women. Following this section, the chapter shifts to the broader societal normative constraints that influence the ability of aspiring women politicians to act autonomously, particularly when politics is perceived to be an inappropriate environment for women to engage in. Finally, the chapter concludes by connecting each of these restrictive factors to the development of highly-dependent *parshads* and the *parshad-pati* phenomenon. Throughout this chapter, examples from the *parshad* narratives are provided to demonstrate each dynamic in action.

### **Political Beginnings**

The university experience not only contributes to the development of the knowledge and skills valued in the workforce, it also affects social development through public interaction, guiding the development of participatory norms and social networks, which in turn guide political participation (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; Isaksson et al, 2014). For most Indian students, the university is their first experience living outside of their natal home and is generally one of the first political experiences for students that is independent of their parents. This is notably important for young women, for whom public participation of all kinds are often discouraged by family while at home. Positioned between the restrictive environments and accompanying duties of the natal home and the forthcoming married household, university is a unique window of opportunity for many women to expand their public and participatory horizons. In the narratives, both women and men suggested that a university education was central to success as a *parshad*. For example, a woman *parshad* stated that:

I did not feel any hesitation at first in the JMC. I had been exposed to the outside before, while at Delhi University. I believe that if you are more exposed then you will be a better *parshad* as compared to those women who are sheltered.<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, a male *parshad* explained:

From my perspective, women who are well-educated and come from open-minded families, where they have had public exposure, they do better (in the JMC).<sup>103</sup>

Across India, there is near gender equality in higher education enrollment. Data from 2016 surveys show women at around 46-percent of the total 34 million students in some form of higher education nationwide.<sup>104</sup> Within the JMC itself, women *parshads* are as educated as their male peers if not better. Of the 23 women interviewed, three had a bachelor's and eight had master's degrees (48-percent), compared to five men with bachelor's and two with master's (39-percent) out of 18 interviewed. Notably, each of the five women rated as independent had master's degrees, and none of the women *parshads* with a master's were highly dependent. In comparison, five out of the ten women rated as highly-dependent had less than a tenth-grade education, with two reporting no education at all. Still, the contrast is not absolute, several highly-dependent women had completed some university, with one completing a full bachelor's. More education appears to assist women in establishing political independence, but does not guarantee it.

While degree attainment may not fully explain independence or lack thereof, a deeper look at the college experience indicates that there is a significant difference between women and

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/12/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 1/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>104</sup> All India Survey on Higher Education 2015-16. See: [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/statistics/AISHE2015-16.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/AISHE2015-16.pdf) {Accessed 06/24/2018}

men. First, a woman's ability to attend university is still often controlled by a male family member, which reinforces men as the primary decision-maker:

When I got married my husband asked me if I had an interest in education. I said if you will allow me to study then yes, I would like to. After that, my husband provided me with the best education... then he also suggested politics.<sup>105</sup>

My father was orthodox when young, I wasn't allowed to leave the house and do my MBA.<sup>106</sup>

Attending university also does not always allow a woman to leave her parent's house. Two women *parshads* reported that they completed their bachelor's from their family home, only traveling for exams. Such arrangements would not provide comparable levels of social and political engagement that physically attending a university would. However, nationally women compose only 46-percent of total distance learners (comparable to overall university gender disparities), so men are just as likely to miss the on-campus experience. Neither a lack of educational attainment or on-campus experience seem to explain why women are more likely to enter politics as dependents. However, the narratives also suggest that there is a considerable gender discrepancy in student politics engagement. While women attend university at a comparable level as men, they engage significantly less in university politics than their male peers. This is the starting line for many Indian politicians, and their absence puts them at a lasting disadvantage.

We don't just study the books here, we study democracy as well.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/06/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.

The significance of university politics has diminished over the past two decades, but is still an important foundation and stepping stone for the aspiring politician in India (Jeffrey, 2010). The standard path in Rajasthan begins with volunteering and eventually standing as a candidate with the local university youth wing of the respective national party, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) for students who aim to align themselves with the BJP, and the National Students Union of India (NSUI) for those aiming for Congress membership. The most ambitious students will run under the party banner in elections for the top posts: department president, college president, or the highest – university president. The demonstrated ability to win a large election at a prominent university, such as university president at the largest university in Jaipur, Rajasthan University (RU), can attract the attention of key party leaders at the national level.<sup>108</sup> National parties follow student elections as an indicator of future political trends, and are eager to adopt successful campaigns and candidates.<sup>109</sup> Successful student leaders then move from student politics into traditional politics, either back in their familial village as a *sarpanch* or *pradhan*, in the city as a *parshad*, or even a state MLA if they have the support and connections.<sup>110</sup> As one male *parshad* recounted:

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<sup>108</sup> Legends of the power of university presidents are common. No media account can be found to support his story, but one student leader recounted the story of Pratap Singh Kachariyawas, an ex-MLA and former Rajasthan University president, who was so politically powerful during his time at RU that he prevented the Prime Minister's plane from landing at Jaipur Airport to demonstrate his sway. (Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.)

<sup>109</sup> Interview with local journalist on 04/18/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur. However, as this journalist also pointed out, the value of winning university elections has been diminished by the number of students involved in student politics. The expansion of universities across the state, public and private, has increased the number of elections, thus diluting the value of winning an individual position. Still, winning a university-wide position at a prominent public university will get a student in a state-wide newspaper, often on the front page.

From college on I was very active in student politics. I started with the BJP student wing and then I joined BJP and RSS. I have been politically active for 28 years.<sup>111</sup>

A primary benefit of competing in student elections is building a base of core supporters. Electoral competitiveness in India has become more dependent on both financial backing and political “muscle” via family and party support networks (Michelutti, 2010; Vaishnav, 2017). Successful student politicians can build large teams of fellow students from their respective youth wings to support their campaign. If successful, the core of these teams often remains with the student leader as they make the jump to local, state or national politics.<sup>112</sup> During this period, they gain campaigning experience, which is particularly valuable to those who come from families without political experience, as this male *parshad*, who came from such a family and pursued student politics for experience, described:

You learn the democratic setup in student politics, it’s a learning phase... When you are involved in student politics you will get good exposure, meeting new people, new problems that a normal student would be unaware of.<sup>113</sup>

This view was shared by a woman currently involved in student politics:

If you don’t have any background and you still want to make politics your career, or you just have an interest in politics, then student politics is the best way.<sup>114</sup>

Students also gain valuable political connections early on that they will rely on for the rest of their careers. The current JMC mayor, himself a former RU president, regularly visited

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/31/2017 in Jaipur. 7

<sup>112</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/31/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with female Rajasthan University student politician on 05/03/2017 in Jaipur.

the university after student elections to speak with prominent student leaders.<sup>115</sup> Even those who only work on the campaigns of successful candidates gain valuable connections. One *parshad* discussed a friend who eventually became an MLA representing Jaipur with Congress:

One of my friends in student politics ended up running in MLA elections. He had been president of the university... I worked for him for 10-15 days during legislative elections.<sup>116</sup>

Student leaders who can catch the eye of established politicians look to them for advice and support:

The connections we make with politicians in college politics, they do not pay immediate returns, they are helpful to us in the future, when we become full-fledged politicians. A good relationship with a politician will teach you what mistakes they made and what you should avoid.<sup>117</sup>

University presidents can then use the support networks they have built, political connections, and campaign experience to launch themselves into state and then national politics. Multiple student leaders at Rajasthan University named up to seven current MLAs in the current government who had previously been president of RU, several of them cabinet ministers.<sup>118</sup> Others claimed up to 40 of the current MLAs had been prominent in RU politics.<sup>119</sup>

Most of the leaders from BJP, and of Congress, have gone through student elections, that's why they're here.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Research assistant account from 02/14/2017. The Deputy Mayor also engaged in RU politics (Interview with male *parshad* on 03/31/2017 in Jaipur).

<sup>116</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/02/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur. Journalists cited similar numbers (Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur).

<sup>119</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.



Notably, while many male *parshads* and husbands of female *parshads* reported participating in student politics, no women did.<sup>121</sup> This was supported by my conversations with current student leaders at RU, all of whom could only recall two or three women who had participated in RU elections over the past several years.<sup>122</sup> The lack of young women engaged or even interested in politics has been noted elsewhere. Lawless and Fox (2013) found that young women in the United States are less likely than young men to consider running for office, or to perceive elective office as a desirable occupation. Notably, they found a comparable gender gap in professions that serve as traditional feeders to political office as well. In turn, the lack of participation at the bottom of the ladder exacerbates the lack of women in the higher echelons of political power. Lawless and Fox attribute this gap to multiple factors: divergent parental socialization of boys and girls, lack of political exposure for girls in school, gender gaps in organized sports, lack of social encouragement, and lower individual perceptions of political capability. Elder (2004) adds familial responsibilities and relatively few visible women role models in politics. Several of these factors appear to be at work in Rajasthan as well, in particular: parental socialization, lower political exposure and societal discouragement.

Politics in general are often seen as unfit and dangerous for Indian women. This perception appears to be even stronger for university politics, which are generally perceived to be as distasteful as regular politics, if not worse. Although the situation appears to have

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<sup>121</sup> There are no reservations in student politics, gender or group-based.

<sup>122</sup> Interviews with male Rajasthan University student politicians on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur. This phenomenon may be regional, as one student reported he knew of several women who participated in Delhi University politics (Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/18/2017 in Jaipur).

improved, student politics at Rajasthan University were notorious for vote-buying, intimidation tactics, and violence. As one journalist described:

Student politics... grooms future politicians in the way to win and profit. Dirty politics and dirty money are as common in student politics as they are in adult politics...50-60-percent of student politicians don't come to the university to study, they don't have the time and that's not why they're here.<sup>123</sup>

Rumors of cooperation between student campaigns and minor local mafia who exchange money for student participation in intimidation and extortion efforts are common as well, which reinforce existing negative views of university politics.<sup>124</sup> Violence has also been an issue. Student elections at RU were banned during the 1980s and again from 2003 to 2008, following violent protests on campus that resulted in the deaths of several students.<sup>125</sup> New rules established by the Supreme Court in 2005 are reported to have improved the situation.<sup>126</sup> Still, in 2015, police were called in to quell student rallies at RU that turned violent, resulting in injuries to students and police both.<sup>127</sup>

The perceptions of student politics as rough, dangerous and dirty combines to create an environment seen as inappropriate or even unsafe for women to engage in, which discourages participation. Cross-national studies have found that intimidation and fear of political violence

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<sup>123</sup> Interview with local male journalist on 04/18/2017 in Jaipur. Student politics appear to be expensive as well, my research assistant described several candidates for university president whose family were known to have sold valuable land to fund their campaigns (Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur.).

<sup>124</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur; Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>126</sup> The Supreme Court established rules limiting all candidates to one term to remove the student "career" politicians who took classes at the university simply to remain in student politics, and established campaign spending limits. See: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jnu-elections-lyngdoh-recommendations-student-union/> {Accessed 06/24/2018}

<sup>127</sup> See: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/jaipur/rajasthan-university-violence-nsui-seeks-action-against-police/story-3pJzc4jtOQQRKMIIdNtFMSO.html> {Accessed 06/24/2018}

increases the gender gap significantly in voting across democracies (Isaksson et al, 2013).

Student leaders at RU report that parents often discourage their daughters while at university from either running for office or even voting. Election day has often been the peak time for flare-ups, so daughters are often kept home from the polls. According to one student politician:

It is difficult to convince them [women to run for office]. It is even more difficult to convince their parents to let them vote... They don't allow girls to go to vote, because of the perception. The perception is that we have a very robust and aggressive environment, so they are concerned about that.<sup>128</sup>

Similarly, another student politician argued that women are not drawn to electoral politics:

Girls don't come in large numbers to vote... It is because the atmosphere is not very conducive for that, it is a lot of hassle, and they think it is just a waste of time.<sup>129</sup>

This situation reportedly results in significantly less participation by young women across the board in student politics – fewer candidates, and fewer voters to support those candidates. In turn, this deficit both shrinks the pool of qualified women candidates in line to compete for traditional political posts, and means that those women who do choose to eventually compete generally start at a disadvantage in terms of experience as compared to men. Because women are not engaging in student politics to the same degree, they gain less political experience, and they do not develop the supporting team, party standing and political connections that their male counterparts do, and therefore often must look to these men to provide these critical assets if they want to compete politically in the future.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with male Rajasthan University student politician on 04/11/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>130</sup> Further research needs to be done on the effect increasing female participation at the university level can have on general political engagement as an adult. The university environment could be a prime opportunity to target female participation improvement, with an aim to boosting lifetime political engagement.

An exception appears to be the women's colleges and universities. Rajasthan University itself has two gender-exclusive colleges, Maharani College for women, and the Maharaja College for men. The Maharani College runs its own elections, with a college president topping the list. Voter participation is reportedly higher for women at the Maharani College than at RU in general,<sup>131</sup> and candidates gain experience in campaigning and developing a base of support.<sup>132</sup> As a lower-level position, winning a college presidency provides little guaranteed political benefits, but successful college presidents can go on to compete in the much larger, and more politically significant, university elections. However, only one woman has reportedly managed to make this transition successfully, becoming the first woman RU president in 2011. Several women have competed in more recent elections, but lost.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, it appears that many of these women were unable or uninterested in leveraging their position into professional or political opportunities. According to the current Maharani president:

There have been 21 Maharani College presidents, I'm the 21st. None of them have gone on to get government jobs, none fought elections afterwards, and even if they tried then they gave in too easily, accepted defeat too soon.<sup>134</sup>

She herself planned on competing in upcoming RU presidential elections and credited student politics with triggering her political aspirations:

I saw all of these problems at the college and from this became interested in politics. I thought if there was an opportunity, I would contest the elections... Right now, I am planning on joining a political party. In the future, I would like to work with a political organization.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur

<sup>132</sup> Interview with female Rajasthan University student politician on 05/03/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>133</sup> The voting population is much larger at RU, over 20,000, compared to the approximately 1,000 voters at Maharani. After becoming the first female RU president, Prabha Choudhary is fairly well-known in Jaipur. However, she won as an independent, with no party affiliation to build on, and it does not appear that she pursued a political career afterwards (Interview with local male journalist on 04/26/2017 in Jaipur).

<sup>134</sup> Interview with female Rajasthan University student politician on 05/03/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with female Rajasthan University student politician on 05/03/2017 in Jaipur.

There are still opportunities for political engagement outside of the university for women. Notably however, comparing the narratives of women with political experience to those of men shows that even when women do engage politically, it is often to a much lesser degree than men. Many men described a lifetime of political engagement:

I've been politically active for 25 years... First, I met with the regional MLA. He came with me to meet people in the area. I got his blessings. Then, I came into contact with the *parshad*, we grew closer, became very good friends. We used to go out into the ward, so my political activities were increasing day by day.<sup>136</sup>

In 1967... I joined the Jan Sangh Party. In 1967 there was a huge agitation in Rajasthan... in the process 6-7 people were injured or killed. I took all these people to the hospital on a handcart. From then I decided I would work for the welfare of society.<sup>137</sup>

Whereas the women I interviewed with the most political experience describe considerably less extensive levels of involvement:

My husband put me in contact with leaders from our own community. He used to take me to all of the small activities happening within our community, public functions. In 2006, I got a BJP membership and became a minister in the neighborhood commission.<sup>138</sup>

I used to help my father in campaigning, handing out election registration cards.<sup>139</sup>

While additional political engagement for young women is beneficial for their future political prospects, it does not guarantee independence. Of the thirteen women who reported having no political experience prior to becoming *parshad*, five were highly dependent, but three others were independent. Furthermore, of the ten women who had some political experience, five were still highly dependent. A husband of one of these dependent women described how she would accompany him to party meetings, and even became vice president of the party's

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/20/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 10/13/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

women's wing, but still she relies on him for much of the *parshad* work.<sup>140</sup> It appears that even the women who are able to engage politically early on are not getting as involved as comparable men, and thus the experience does not significantly influence their political development. This could be why we see so little variation in dependence between those with and without prior political experience.

### **Gendered Family Traditions and the “Northern Tradition”**

The literature has extensively evaluated the role of gendered family traditions in restricting the political engagement of women in India (Jensenius, 2018). Societal norms assign considerable household and familial responsibilities to women, which makes engaging publicly outside of the house very difficult (Nath, 1996). Researchers have found that in many cases, these demands in turn limit the pool of women available to run for office to largely the unmarried or widowed (Singer, 2007). Even the women who do find the time to engage often must gain the approval of their family before seeking a political post that will take away time available for household responsibilities (Singer, 2007). Without this approval, many women would not consider even running for office (Kishwar, 1997).

Each of these cultural traditions are active and influential in Rajasthan. Following university, traditionally most women in Rajasthan quickly enter married life. Although society is changing rapidly, particularly over the past decade, most brides in Rajasthan leave their natal family and join their husband's. This not only involves physically moving from her parent's house to her husband's, but also shifting her obligations to her new household and taking on new domestic responsibilities. Critically, she also leaves behind the social circle and connections of

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur.

her natal family and starts anew within her husband's. Politically, this essentially forces her to either create a support network from scratch or rely on her husband's. While there are certainly differences across families, many new brides are also unable to engage much outside of the home due to either lack of free time from household responsibilities and/or normative restrictions imposed on women of her new family, which creates an additional barrier to developing public experience and a new social network in their affinal home.

When discussing familial traditions around marriage and kinship, it is crucial to distinguish regional differences. India is incredibly diverse, and all generalizations fall short of specific realities, but we can roughly differentiate geographically between a northern system and a southern system (Dyson and Moore, 1983). The northern system predominates in the northwestern states (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab), and the southern system in the south (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana), with the middle states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra ambiguously dividing the two regions.<sup>141</sup> Dyson and Moore provide a useful comparison, which, although dated, describes foundations of the kinship systems that are still readily observable, particularly in more conservative areas of the country such as Rajasthan.<sup>142</sup> As they note, these are ideal-typical descriptions that do not reflect the many intra-regional variations. Furthermore, the northern and southern systems are not diametrically opposed, the difference is “often a subtle one of degree” (57).<sup>143</sup> Three

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<sup>141</sup> Dyson and Moore (1983) profess difficulties in mapping the kinship systems of the eastern states of West Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar, and as with many analyses of India unfortunately, the north-eastern states are almost entirely ignored.

<sup>142</sup> This analysis, as with most of the literature on Indian kinship traditions, is focused entirely on heterosexual relationships.

<sup>143</sup> These traditions are generally understood to predate the Muslim presence in India, and likely reflect cultural differences between the “Aryan” north and “Dravidian” south. Interesting arguments have been made that the southern system is less patriarchal because female labor was valued more in the rice-based agrarian systems of the

common aspects within these systems are particularly applicable to the political engagement of women and will be discussed: the joint family socialization process, societal gender segregation, and bridal relocation.

*The Joint Family.* The traditional framework for the family in India is the “joint family”, which traditionally consists of a patriarch and all his lineal male descendants living together with their wives and unmarried daughters. Daughters remain in the joint family until they are married, when they leave to join their husband’s family. As outside women marry into the family they become part of the joint family.<sup>144</sup> This system is more common in the north than in the south (Dyson and Moore, 1983) and remains the arrangement for 25-percent of all households in Rajasthan, which is second only to Uttar Pradesh across the country.<sup>145</sup>

The joint family structure preserves the tradition of patrilineal descent, which requires the resocialization of new members, such as new brides, to ensure commitment and loyalty to their husband and male in-laws. New brides under the northern system generally enter the family hierarchy at the bottom, and tend to be dominated by the senior wives of the family. The resocialization process can be a markedly negative experience for northern women, who are often treated with initial suspicion, and effort is made to ensure that she realigns her own interests with those of her husband and his kin. Women are often expected to understand that

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south. However, Dyson and Moore (1983) argue that such generalizations are problematic, given the massive socioeconomic differentiation within the northern and the southern regions.

<sup>144</sup> The federal government has created a special Hindu United Family (HUF) tax category, which provides special filing status on income taxes for joint families. See: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/money-you/unity-a-hindu-family-gains-divided-it-loses/articleshow/6212396.cms> {Accessed 06/24/2018}

<sup>145</sup> Most northern states have around 20% joint family households. In comparison, the largest share of joint households in the south was 17% in Kerala. See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/several-states-in-north-india-cling-on-to-joint-families/article2999837.ece> {Accessed 06/24/2018}



their own wishes and interests are subordinate to those of the family group. A key element in this process is cutting women off from their natal family to ensure their commitment. Women raised in communities who follow the northern system are less likely than those in the south to regularly interact with their natal kin after marriage (Dyson and Moore, 1983).<sup>146</sup>

Many *parshads* I interviewed were members of joint families, and the narratives present mixed opinions on the effect the structure has on the political fortunes of women. Some praised the support having so many women under one roof provided by relieving them of some domestic responsibilities:

Since I live in a joint family I have no domestic responsibilities, so I can dedicate myself to my JMC work.<sup>147</sup>

However, others questioned the additional restrictions entering a joint family can impose:

Usually in joint families, daughters-in-law are treated differently by their father-in-laws than their own daughters, but he treats me the same. In joint families you will see that there are so many social taboos, such as *purdah*, but I was given an open environment. My father-in-law has always encouraged me to act as his own daughter.<sup>148</sup>

Following the discussion on communal support from Chapter Seven, joint family structures can be either supportive or restrictive. The key question is whether the joint family facilitates or restricts a woman *parshad's* legislative ability to act on her priorities. As the narratives above illustrates, if the joint family supports a woman's political participation, it can

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<sup>146</sup> Because women are expected to leave their natal family, parents traditionally expect little support or assistance from their daughters after marriage. This tradition likely has considerable influence on a range of societal and regulatory norms: the preference for sons over daughters and the resultant skewed gender ratio, education and support of daughters, and the development of rules governing the transmission of property rights come to mind. This is an area in need of significant research.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/13/2016 in Jaipur.

be a crucial support that frees her up from her domestic responsibilities. However, joint families still often reinforce conservative social norms, which in many other cases likely restrict the ability of a woman to participate. Scholars have argued that the joint family is more effective at enforcing gender restrictive norms than the nuclear family structure (Luschinsky, 1962, cited in Dyson and Moore, 1983). By their nature, joint families put women in close contact with the male elders whose approval is often required to pursue a political career. Therefore, it would be very difficult, even inconceivable in many cases, for a woman to disregard an elder's prohibition and still engage politically. Her standing and safety within the household could be considerably jeopardized.

*Gender Segregation.* The last narrative of the previous section spoke specifically of *purdah*, which literally translates to “curtain”. This refers to the tradition of socially isolating women, with an approximate goal of protecting their chastity, and thus the honor of the family, which is more common in the north than in the south. As with any patriarchal society, controlling female sexuality tends to translate into restrictions on personal movements and isolation from the opposite sex. Hindu families who enforce *purdah* generally discourage female members from leaving the house, and if they do, they often wear a veil over their face, comparable to the *burqa* Muslim women may wear.<sup>149</sup> When men not of their family are inside the house, women practicing *purdah* may stay unseen in other rooms, or they may veil themselves in their presence. Again, various methods of controlling female sexuality are present across India, but tend to be stronger in the north (Dyson and Moore, 1983).

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<sup>149</sup> As with certain Islamic traditions the level of *purdah* varies. Hindu women observing *purdah* may cover their entire face with a *dupatta* (scarf) similar to a *burqa*, or only their hair, as with the *hijab*.

Varun and I never directly asked a family if they enforced *purdah*, but during at least two interviews with the husbands of *parshads* living in joint families, the experience indicated that *purdah* was likely part of the reason we did not speak with the *parshad*. During the first, while we spoke with the husband out on the porch, surrounded by his male kin, he mentioned that his wife was inside but made no mention of her joining us.<sup>150</sup> During a second, all we ever saw of the *parshad* was her arm when she handed in her business card for us at the end of the interview through the door that went to rest of the house, which her husband took and then promptly locked the door.<sup>151</sup>

Overall, *purdah* is a symptom of a broader system of gender-segregation norms for communication and social interaction that tend to be more common under the northern system. Men are expected to associate with men and women with women. Women are especially discouraged from associating with men outside of their family. This norm is particularly true before marriage, but tends to maintain a degree of influence even after. Notably, male communication networks tend to be inaccessible to women, and vice-versa (Dyson and Moore, 1983).<sup>152</sup> This normative expectation has a range of influence on female political engagement. As with findings from the United States, the inability of women to regularly associate with men publicly makes getting access to sponsorship and patronage, and thus advancement, much more difficult, and is partially to account for gender disparities across industries (Hewlett et al, 2010). Men tend to be better-connected and more powerful than women, and gaining their support is key to political success in any environment. Moreover, this norm also encourages women to

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 01/11/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>152</sup> Dyson and Moore (1983) also argue that female-specific communication networks are a primary medium for women to exercise social influence, using “gossip” and comparable strategies.

work in socially approved areas of employment, where they will only interact with other women (Dyson and Moore, 1983). By its nature, democratic politics is decidedly not gender exclusive, which makes it a socially restricted area for many women in Rajasthan.

Men within a woman's affinal family are also less likely in the northern system to enter into social, economic and political relationships with men from her natal family. Men in the northern system tend to limit their relationship to their own kin, men they are related to by blood (Dyson and Moore, 1983). As one male *parshad* commented, his brother was very helpful in establishing political connections:

My elder brother has been active in social services and helps me a lot, we go together to meet people, because he's more well known, my elder brother will take me to meet officials, and connects me with people.<sup>153</sup>

Following the joint family hierarchy, who a woman's husband chooses to associate with generally guides who she associates with. Therefore, this restriction on the development of relationships to the husband's kin only further ostracizes a woman from her natal family and makes her more dependent on her husband's kinship networks.

*Relocation.* Marriage is often accompanied by geographical relocation. Women in the north are much less likely to marry geographically-proximate men familiar to them and their family. They are more likely than their southern counterparts to physically move significant distances to join their husband and his family (Dyson and Moore, 1983). The narratives affirm this tradition, as

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 11/25/2016 in Jaipur.

the husbands of two highly-dependent women *parshads* revealed that their wives had moved quite far to join them in Jaipur:

She was born in a village in a nearby district (about 3 hours by car)... After marriage she moved with me to Jaipur.<sup>154</sup>

She was born in... (a nearby state). Her father was an accountant, because of my job we shifted to Delhi. After our marriage she came with me to Jaipur.<sup>155</sup>

Comparatively, no men mentioned moving to join their wife's family. Many men had a long family tradition in Jaipur, and were often well-known in their neighborhood:

My family has lived here for 150 years so everyone knows us. They come directly to our home usually... People come all day long, it's very informal, they can come to us anytime.<sup>156</sup>

For the last two generations my family has lived in this area.<sup>157</sup>

When combined with the normative expectations on separation from natal kin, physical distance further separates a woman from the support networks of her natal family, and makes her more reliant on the networks of her husband and affinal family. Furthermore, these women also likely face the stigma against newcomers and preference for locals that is common in JMC politics. Multiple *parshads* mentioned the political advantages being "a local" conferred on their campaigns. It reduced the need to knock on every door to improve name recognition:

I didn't need to campaign because I am a local and was already attached at the ground level to people. There was a belief among people that if they came to me then I would take care of their problems. These elections are very personal...<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/23/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 01/11/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/28/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 03/22/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with father of female *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur.

I believe that if you live in the same area you represent, this gives you an upper hand in campaigning. Since my family has been here a long time, people know me.<sup>159</sup>

Voters also tend to prefer local candidates, both for the personal connection and the trust created by long-time residence. Several *parshads* and their spouses expressed the belief that long-term residency in Jaipur bolstered their electoral prospects:

Since I am a bona fide resident of this area, they've known me since my childhood. I have been living with them for a very long time. I fought my election among them. They knew me well, which was a plus, as they were very clear on my image.<sup>160</sup>

Being a local is particularly important in making *parshads* accessible to constituents:

People have an expectation that the *parshad* should be a local. If you fight an election here, but people have to travel far to get to your house, they don't want that. People like a *parshad* who is a local and whom they have known for a while.<sup>161</sup>

*Domestic Responsibilities.* Moving beyond the north/south dichotomy, women across India are saddled with extensive domestic responsibilities. Depending on the level of her new family's wealth, women entering an affinal household are generally given the heaviest load. This may decrease over time in larger families as younger wives join the family and take on these responsibilities, or if the family is able to hire outside help. Several women *parshads* mentioned the difficulties they faced in balancing their official responsibilities alongside caring for their family and managing the house:

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<sup>159</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 11/11/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/31/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

Women already have the responsibility of the household, and you can't afford to work as a *parshad* all the time, you have to look after your family as well.<sup>162</sup>

Along with this [being *parshad*], I manage my kids, my family. I have to go to family gatherings alongside my JMC work. I am doing all my domestic duties alongside my JMC work.<sup>163</sup>

Balancing *parshad* responsibilities alongside raising young children is particularly problematic for *parshads* who are also mothers:

It has been very difficult for her to manage the JMC and the household. She does not have any household help, and is the mother of a baby and a young boy.<sup>164</sup>

Mothers are expected to be the primary caretakers of children, especially the very young. This responsibility can make engaging fully as *parshad* challenging for mothers both in terms of time availability and in terms of normative expectations. The narratives provide several examples that illustrate social expectations that women should stay at home with their young children. One husband discussed his wife's need to stay at home after giving birth, despite being elected *parshad*:

Women don't go out into the field [public], but I don't believe that women can't go into the field. In my case she was pregnant after we got elected, and now we have a very young daughter, so it's not possible for her to go into the field because she would have to take our daughter and she's too young to go out into the field.<sup>165</sup>

For many women, this responsibility does not diminish until the children grow older:

My husband is very helpful also... He tells me that now that our children are older, I should focus on my JMC work, he can help with the house.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 03/27/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>164</sup> Fieldnotes from interview with female *parshad* on 10/20/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 03/22/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

Previous research has found that women in India with more domestic responsibilities are less likely to be politically active and compete in local elections (Chhibber, 2002). Chhibber finds that as time spent on household duties increased, the likelihood that a respondent was a candidate in local elections decreased. Conversely, as women become more independent of responsibilities at home, they become more active participants in political life. As expected, those women who do compete tend to have a higher family income, which allows them to hire outside help to free them from some household duties. Interestingly, the selection effect that Chhibber describes should make it more likely that the women who are able to compete in *parshad* elections are independent, as they would have considerably more time to dedicate to politics than the women who are saddled with more domestic work. However, this selection effect assumes the agency of these women. As the narratives from Chapter Six demonstrated, many women *parshads* who are highly-dependent did not independently make the decision to run for office. They were often encouraged, convinced, or basically told they were running. Agency was primarily in the hands of their husbands or fathers in these situations. Furthermore, these women likely knew from the beginning that their husbands would be carrying out most of the responsibilities, and thus the full *parshad* burden would not fall on them. Both dynamics create a disconnect between household responsibilities and the decision to compete in elections, which makes the selection effect largely inapplicable in the cases of highly-dependent women. However, Chhibber's argument does appear to apply to the ability of women to attain independence while in office. The primary relief for Indian women at home is the contribution of family or the hiring of household help to assist with household responsibilities. Multiple narratives mentioned the importance of having help at home:



My family gives me support so I have no problems on the domestic front.<sup>167</sup>

We live in a joint family so there was always someone to help look after children.<sup>168</sup>

Sometimes I have to go out [on parshad work], and my child is young, but my mother-in-law is here to take care of her... Since my family is very supportive I don't find it overly difficult to manage these things.<sup>169</sup>

In comparison, one independent woman *parshad* who did have help at home contrasted her own experience to the challenges other women *parshads* often faced in managing the office and family responsibilities, which encourages them to leave *parshad* work to their husbands:

In many cases when a seat is reserved for a woman, her family or her husband pressure her into running, but then the husband will run the office. Due to their family circumstances, often these women have the double responsibility of both household and JMC. But since I live in a joint family I have no domestic responsibilities, so I can dedicate myself to my JMC work.<sup>170</sup>

Notably, all five women *parshads* who were marked as independent mentioned in their narratives that they had help at home with household work.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, only two out of the ten women *parshads* marked as highly-dependent mentioned having help at home. While not a systematic comparison, as *parshads* were not specifically asked during the interviews if they had help at home, the *parshads* who mentioned it generally brought it up on their own, it appears

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/30/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 03/27/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>171</sup> One *parshad* did not mention it verbally, but her household help was present during the interview, doing the laundry, cleaning, and working in the kitchen (Fieldnotes from interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur).

reasonable to assume that help at home makes it more likely a *parshad* will be more independent, but does not guarantee it.<sup>172</sup>

As discussed in Chapter Seven, a key enabler for most of the independent women is likely wealth and class. Four out of the five independent women lived or worked in locations that indicated relative wealth. Wealth and class can make the path to independence for women politicians significantly easier. *Naukars* (house servants) can be hired to take over household and familial responsibilities and free up time for political work. Women from the upper-classes also receive more education and come from more educated parents, which often translates into a less constraining youth that allows for more public and political experience for young women. Still, several highly-dependent women appeared to come from relative wealth as well, so the correlation is not absolute. Wealth may make independence more likely, but it does not guarantee it.

*Work Outside the Home.* As women are freed of domestic responsibilities, they are also more likely to work outside of the household, which again encourages more active participation in political life (Chhibber, 2002). Working outside both indicates a more open familial attitude on female behavior and assists a woman in asserting a more independent role within the household by providing both income and public experience. Furthermore, cross-nationally, Iversen and Rosenbluth (2008: 486) find that “as women enter the labor market, they become part of networks and organizations (such as unions) where they are more likely to be exposed to political discussion and advocacy, which in turn encourages interest and involvement in

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<sup>172</sup> An interesting counter-argument that these narratives do not address is presented by Gleason (2001) who argues that increasing household burdens can encourage women to be more active voters, to secure needed public benefits to support their families.

politics".<sup>173</sup> India overall continues to have very low rates of female labor force participation. At 30-percent of the total eligible female population, India is well below the global average of 50-percent, with the gender gap between working males and females one of the highest across G-20 economies at 50-percent (Das et al, 2015).<sup>174</sup> Rajasthan itself has above average levels of female participation in the workforce at 35-percent, which are only 16-percent lower than male levels, but still far below global averages.<sup>175</sup>

These conclusions are partially born out across the *parshad* narratives. Out of the 23 women interviewed, only seven reported working outside the house prior to becoming *parshad* in some form of paid work, with teacher being the primary occupation, while 14 of the 18 men reported working, mainly running private businesses. However, while one of the ten highly-dependent women reported working outside the house, she was a teacher in a government school, only two of the five independent women as well reported working. This is not the stark contrast we would expect based on the literature discussed. Interestingly, most of the women who reported working (four) were categorized as moderately-dependent. This corresponds with the finding from their narratives that most moderately-dependent women appeared capable of taking on the *parshad* duties, but did not have the time due to outside responsibilities such as running the family shop. However, the narratives do support Chhibber's (2002) assertion that public experience is important. For many of the female *parshads*, instead of paid work, this consisted of

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<sup>173</sup> Verick (2014) notes that many women in India are able to incorporate paid work alongside their household responsibilities by limiting themselves primarily to work they can do at home, such as tailoring.

<sup>174</sup> Remarkably, female labor force participation has been dropping since 2004, despite strong economic growth and rising wages (Das et al, 2015; Verick, 2014).

<sup>175</sup> Scholars have argued that in more conservative states, higher female labor force participation can indicate that young girls are also more likely to be in the workforce, and thus not in school, which may indicate why literacy rates are still so low for women in states like Rajasthan (Sundaram and Vanneman, 2008).

volunteer work in their communities. Ten women reported engaging in volunteer work supporting the community, alongside thirteen men, and all five independent women reported doing so. In comparison, only two of the ten highly-dependent women *parshads* reported engaging outside of the house in any form. Moreover, nine out of the 23 total women reported rarely engaging outside of the house in either work or social activities, generally describing their lifestyle as “housewives”, and seven of these women were highly-dependent.<sup>176</sup> For these women, the public engagement required by the *parshad* office was a significant and often intimidating change for them:

My life has changed after becoming a parshad, before I never went out, but now I have to.<sup>177</sup>

My wife does have problems in the general board meetings of the JMC, its evident that she has been a housewife for a very long time and now suddenly has to go out in public and speak in support of people’s problems.<sup>178</sup>

Comparatively, several independent female *parshads* spoke of the public experience they gained from volunteering in their community:

I was constantly in social work related to women before being a parshad. I was also managing an education institution by myself, and taught there.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup>The term “housewife” generally does not have the negative connotation it brings in the US. Men and women regularly referred to their wives or themselves as housewives in the narratives without intending ridicule or shame. Several independent women referred to themselves as housewives at times, even though they left the house for work or socializing. It appears to be a general term to refer to the work/responsibilities associated with the house.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 02/22/2017 in Jaipur. Measuring social activity in this way is problematic because I was unable to speak to many of the dependent parshads, only their husbands, who often just mentioned that their wives had been primarily housewives since getting married then moved on to their own experiences. Perhaps if we had spoken to her, she might have revealed social activities that her husband didn’t mention.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/30/2016 in Jaipur.

Before becoming a parshad, I was a housewife, but was very active in social work. There are plenty of NGOs working in this area... I used to work with them regularly. Secondly, I am very active in spiritual programs as well.<sup>180</sup>

And previous work outside often initiated political engagement:

I wasn't interested in politics, I wanted to do social service, to help the people in the slums. I started my social work in a slum area. I worked for children to get an education, for women to get exposure outside of the household so they can do things on their own... Once my oldest son was old enough, when the next elections came up and the seat was reserved for a woman, local people demanded that I run for the parshad seat.<sup>181</sup>

When asked about challenges for women entering politics, several male *parshads* agreed that having prior social experience outside of the house made it much easier for women to make the transition. A summary of one of these conversations after the recorder was turned off:

There is a difference between a housewife and a working woman coming into politics. Housewives do not have the general experience of being outside the home and interacting with people, or an understanding of the basics of city and infrastructure workings. While working women have a better understanding of these things, they in turn don't have the time to dedicate to their political work, because most wives, working or not, are still expected to take care of household chores and responsibilities. Both facts disadvantage women in comparison to men, who have both the understanding and the time to devote to politics. Therefore, women are initially dependent on men to get anything done in the JMC, as they don't have the experience.<sup>182</sup>

In sum, participation in the workforce appears to be low among female *parshads* prior to running for office, but this does not appear to significantly influence independence, as both highly-dependent and independent women do not report working much. Simply the act of getting out of the house in independent activity, such as community service, appears to be the critical variable. This is where many of the independent women took an interest to politics, gained

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>182</sup> Fieldnotes from interview with male *parshad* on 11/11/2016 in Jaipur.

public experience, and established an identity and confidence independent of their family. Most highly-dependent women did not have this experience and thus did not receive many of these benefits, which likely made politics a daunting prospect to take on independently.

### **Societal Normative Constraints**

For women who have been able to establish a level of independence in their familial environment that allows increased engagement in politics, prevailing societal norms create an additional barrier to participation. As with student politics, the political environment in general is often perceived as unsuitable for women, both due to disreputable associations and the need for action that is allegedly difficult for women to perform. These normative beliefs have deep cultural roots that are changing, but very slowly and with strong resistance. Furthermore, these perceptions are not entirely restricted to men, as several narratives and participant observations demonstrate that women themselves are hesitant to fully engage in the political environment, primarily due to a lack of experience, overwrought bureaucracy, and highly masculinized norms of engagement. Overall, the combination of socially-imposed constraints with the political reality creates an environment that discourages women from participating, and for those who do, significant obstacles exist that make full and successful engagement very difficult. Below, I highlight the societal perception of politics as dirty and its constraining effects on women, note the similarities between Hinduism and Islam in the establishment of this constraint, and discuss the difficulties women face in entering challenging political environments.

*Dirty Politics and Protection.* As with student politics, the political environment in general is seen as a polluted arena, which is both populated by corrupted actors and contaminates those who enter it. This perception often leads to familial resistance to proposed candidature, even for men, as this husband of a *parshad* attested:

My family's attitude towards this [politics], since none of them are connected to politics, is that they think it's a dirty job, and dirty people join it, or they become dirty after joining. So, my family was against it. Simple, clean people should not join politics.<sup>183</sup>

And this male *parshad*:

My parents were initially against me running, they said it [politics] is a criminal profession, in which people don't care for simple or honest people. At that time there were people who gave it a bad image by threatening people.<sup>184</sup>

This perception is certainly not unique to Rajasthan or India, but when combined with the normative need to preserve women as pure and unsullied that is culturally common in South Asia, it creates a particularly significant barrier to entry for women.

More importantly, female political participation challenges the cultural imposition of a gender-exclusive responsibility upon women to preserve their family's standing and "honor". Returning to Dyson and Moore's (1983) "northern system", the patrilineal normative structure alloys male "honor, reputation, and consequently their power" to the chastity and purity of their female members (44). The connection between male honor and female purity stems from the traditional role women play in the production of heirs and the formation of alliances through marriage. Any action that challenges this purity, i.e. a woman's engagement in a polluting activity such as political engagement, threatens both a family's reputation, and by "tainting" the woman involved, weakens the patriarch's ability to gain further power and influence by marrying her off, as her desirability as a bride may diminish. Again, this dynamic does not prevail to the same degree across all of India, it is less common in the south, but it does continue to hold significant sway in societal perceptions and thus women's political engagement in more

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 02/16/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/25/2017 in Jaipur

conservative areas such as Rajasthan. Narratives from several husbands discussed how important “female dignity” is and how easily it can be sullied:

I believe that when you allow women to go onto the battlefield (the political environment) you never know what someone might say about her or to her. I believe that we hold our own dignity in our hands. That’s why she takes on the responsibility of the household, and work related to the JMC (bureaucracy), but not the public dealing... You are never sure how people will behave with a woman, so we don’t want her to be involved in that. Therefore, it is only me who does the [public *parshad*] work and other issues.<sup>185</sup>

And male *parshads* on the breadth of restrictions imposed:

Women differ from men in a few cases, she won’t be able to go out into her ward late at night. Indian culture also restricts some actions of women, like they cannot hear swear words, they can’t be angry at someone, and they cannot go alone. All these things make them different from men.<sup>186</sup>

One father, who was running the seat for his recently elected daughter, discussed how her obscurity could protect her from insult:

When such a young girl comes into politics... people make inappropriate and insulting comments about her, like she doesn’t deserve the position. So, the fact that people don’t know her could save her from these comments.

He also noted how his support for her political engagement was unusual:

Even though I support my daughter, this situation is uncommon, most daughters would have less support.<sup>187</sup>

Discussing the aspects of the job that were difficult for women, other men argued that “fieldwork”, engaging with constituents and contractors, was problematic for women:

Sometimes you get calls very early in the morning or late at night, times when a lady is unable to go out into the field, so men have to go. Also, people use bad language

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<sup>185</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 02/22/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/2/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with father of female *parshad* on 11/29/2016 in Jaipur.



sometimes, and sometimes, when you are unable to fulfill everyone's goals, you get cursed at.<sup>188</sup>

Other professions were understood to be better suited for women:

I believe that this [parshad] is a field job, and in India sitting jobs are considered better for women. In this job you have to hear bad language from people, people who don't understand the system and use foul language.<sup>189</sup>

Notably, these norms have been internalized or accepted by many women *parshads*, both independent and dependent, who claimed that going into the field and interacting with the public was difficult and problematic at times, particularly at the beginning of their term:

Initially it was uncomfortable being a woman going out and meeting with constituents, but that has disappeared.<sup>190</sup>

Companions were often necessary:

The only difference from male *parshads* is that we are unable to go alone to many places. We have to have a driver or a companion, then we can go. If a woman can drive, then she can go by herself. The main problem is that I need a companion with me all the time.<sup>191</sup>

When I can, I go out, but when its late, after eight or nine pm, then I will take my mother or father with me, as I am a lady, I prefer to not go out after nine pm.<sup>192</sup>

The narratives also speak to class-based restrictions on female movement, specifically the perceived danger of going into lower-class areas and being around men alone:

The problem I faced was that since it (part of her ward) was a slum area, because of the population's bad habits, drunkenness, after eight pm, it was not a good place for a woman to be around. So, I could only campaign during the day in these areas. The men there are gone during the day because they are labor workers, so I could campaign when only women were around...

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 03/27/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 02/20/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/06/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/12/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

Conditions improved when her campaign shifted to higher-class neighborhoods:

In the second election, I could campaign till 11pm instead, better educated, safer environment.<sup>193</sup>

However, some women *parshads* argued that being a woman can make constituent engagement easier:

I think being a female candidate was also a benefit for me. People are not as blunt as usual, and secondly, female voters were very impressed by me. Every time I would visit a house, they would offer me tea or coffee. Sometimes they would say, oh you are Sama Goswami, we have seen your posters on the street.<sup>194</sup>

The external constraints imposed by a patriarchal society and the internal constraints imposed on themselves by women combine to make politics a very difficult arena for women to enter, and if they do, extremely challenging to act autonomously within. Notably, many of these constraints can be ameliorated by the presence of a male family member. Accompanied women can stay out later, engage with more constituents, and work with contractors to a greater extent than unaccompanied women, as the social censure decreases and women tend to feel safer. However, this also encourages dependence on male family members.

*Religious Influence: Hindu versus Muslim Norms.* A note on the role of religious norms should be made to address inevitable questions on differences between *parshads* from Hindu and Islamic communities. The role of religion in generating social values that restrict the ability of women to engage in politics has been well documented (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). Specifically,

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

religion influences gender-specific participatory norms that govern political engagement. As Isaksson et al. (2014) point out, Islam is commonly singled out as a religion which singularly reinforces traditional gender norms that discourage female political participation (Blaydes & Linzer, 2008; Inglehart & Norris, 2003a, 2003b), or at least Islam in the Arab world (Norris, 2009). The narratives from Muslim *parshads* do label Muslim communities as restrictive for women, as the husband of one *parshad* described their campaign:

She (his wife) had a team of 15-20 women. The women's team went door to door, because in Muslim communities, women usually do not come out of the house, and the women's team could go inside the house (where men could not).<sup>195</sup>

When discussing with a husband the reasons for why his *parshad* wife was unable to engage fully in her work:

Another reason is that in the Muslim community, the movement of women is very restricted.<sup>196</sup>

A woman *parshad* commented on her community's resistance to her habit of not donning the *burqa* at all times:

We are Muslims, and we all have those relatives who comment on how she does not wear the *burqa* like the others, but in reality, I still wear the *burqa* whenever it is required. They used to say to my father why are you giving her so much freedom, you are allowing her to go out of the house and do such things.

Although she also questioned the traditions of some of her Hindu colleagues:

Most of the women *parshads* I know are not very active, sometimes people will come from different wards to me for signature on their behalf. Sometimes women *parshads*

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

don't want to come to the office, because they want to keep the *pardah*, why didn't they have their husbands run instead for the office?<sup>197</sup>

I interviewed four women from Muslim communities, and three of them were highly dependent on their husbands or fathers. While significant, it does not negate the fact that the remaining seven highly-dependent *parshads* came from Hindu communities. Following the discussion on joint families and the practice of *pardah*, many Hindu communities assign powerful gender roles that restrict the public engagement of women comparative to certain Islamic practices. From personal experience, I found that many Hindu women were just as constrained and restricted from public activity as their Muslim counterparts.<sup>198</sup> As in many countries where Muslims are the minority, in India much is made of the practice of wearing the *burqa*, but less outrage is expressed regarding *pardah*. At least in the Indian context, axiomatically characterizing Islam as more repressive for women and other religions as less so is not accurate. From my experience, a conservative household is a conservative household, whether Hindu or Muslim. More useful insight will be gleaned by investigating the influence of pervasive communalism, ethnic violence, governmental negligence, and lack of public services on the preservation of patriarchy in an oppressed community.

*Difficult Environments: Negotiating the Bureaucracy and Legislators.* Across women and men, *parshads* face considerable difficulties in dealing with both the bureaucracy of the JMC and with one another. *Parshads* must regularly interact with JMC bureaucrats to push through constituent

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<sup>197</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>198</sup> Given the lower-class status of most Muslims in India, Muslim men are often relegated to day-laborer work, which requires their wives to take care of public business such as shopping, dealing with neighbors, and submitting requests to bureaucrats and politicians. During the day in Jaipur, Muslim neighborhoods are generally full of women, wearing the *burqa*, but outside of the house. In comparison, many similar Hindu neighborhoods are often dominated by men throughout the day.

requests for public benefits and to receive approval for ward projects that rely on JMC funding. Nearly every *parshad* mentioned that working with JMC bureaucrats was very difficult, particularly in their first term before they “figured it out”. Complaints range from officials ignoring their requests, a lack of funding, partisan discrimination, a lack of cooperation from the mayor’s office, complex paperwork and documentation requirements, confusing departmental jurisdictions, corrupt contractors, the list goes on. Both women:

I don’t think any of the parshads understand the JMC process completely.<sup>199</sup>

The bureaucracy is the major problem in working with JMC, they constantly give you the run around, bring this document, bring that document.<sup>200</sup>

And men:

All the departments for development in Jaipur, PHED, JDA, RSEB, they do not work in sync. They lack communication, which results in one job having to be done again and again.<sup>201</sup>

There are so many liabilities and restrictions when working with the JMC. We have problems with both obtaining funds and getting through the bureaucracy. Problems with authority and funds. Bureaucracy is all over the place.<sup>202</sup>

However, the challenge for women is enhanced by a bureaucracy that is overwhelmingly dominated by men, as these male *parshads* discussed:

It can be difficult for women to do this (*parshad* work), because before the elections they had not had this sort of exposure. Suddenly they come into this job and they have to get their work done through male officers, and the male officers can be aggressive. This can be hard for women.<sup>203</sup>

If male *parshads* have to literally fight with JMC officers to get their work done then that means its likely much worse for women *parshads*. For example, there is a *parshad* from my MLA constituency, she cried one time when arguing with the officers. She had tears

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<sup>199</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 02/16/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/23/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/02/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/16/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 01/10/2017 in Jaipur.

in her eyes when trying to deal with a request for manhole covers and sewer jetting machines. This problem is not due to the inability of the female *parshad*, it is because of the bureaucracy. The JMC officer corps is not very good.<sup>204</sup>

Several women *parshads* specifically emphasized that their lack of experience when they joined the JMC made it especially difficult, but improved over time:

Initially it was very difficult to interact with officials, I didn't have experience with that. I didn't know if what they were saying was positive or negative, but now I understand the system and process well.<sup>205</sup>

I was hesitant to ask officers to assist me or to get work done, but over time I have become more experienced and comfortable getting things done.<sup>206</sup>

Those women who did not face considerable trouble often relied upon their husbands to smooth the interaction:

Working with the JMC I don't have any problems, because I had the support of someone in the JMC, and my husband is in the construction business.<sup>207</sup>

My husband helped me a lot, starting from the campaign and asking for a ticket (nomination) to my working style in JMC – how I should talk with officers and other work-related help was provided by him.<sup>208</sup>

Legislative bodies in India also continue to be uncomfortable environments for many women because of patriarchal norms. Women often face harassment and slander is common by their male colleagues, who do not see political engagement as appropriate for women (Guha, 1974). In the JMC, no woman mentioned serious harassment from their colleagues, but the JMC is a challenging environment for all new *parshads*, particularly women. The general board

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/06/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/06/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/14/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/22/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.

meetings (GBM) are a prime example. These meetings are usually held monthly, and are an opportunity for *parshads* to discuss and debate important issues. Most importantly, they provide a platform for all *parshads* to let the executive and bureaucracy know what issues their constituents face that are not being adequately addressed by the JMC. However, this environment tends to be aggressive, intimidating, and highly masculinized. Several women *parshads* discussed the challenge they faced in GBM discussions:

My husband pushes me to speak more in meetings, so now I have started to speak more, you have to speak in meetings to make sure others know the problems your ward is facing.<sup>209</sup>

Her husband tells her to speak in the JMC meetings as she is very hesitant to do so. He says if you don't speak then you won't make any progress. If you want to say something then just say it.<sup>210</sup>

Correspondingly, several men commented on the difficulties that their wives and other women *parshads*, particularly those without significant public experience, have had when they are thrust into the spotlight:

She (his wife, the *parshad*) does not get the chance to speak much at the meetings, because a few people speak for a long time and very loudly.<sup>211</sup>

Still, a few men mentioned facing this problem as well:

It was difficult for me in the beginning for me to speak in the big JMC general body meetings. I was worried about making mistakes, what will I say, how will I say it.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/08/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 1-/20/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/23/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>212</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 12/12/2016 in Jaipur.

Upon attending these meetings myself, I found the environment quite intimidating and overwhelming at times as an observer in the public viewing gallery, let alone on the floor itself.

From my fieldnotes for the first meeting:

The first thing I notice when I enter the gallery is the prevalence of men. There are only men across both the viewing and media galleries overlooking the floor. The gallery becomes packed over time, at least 100 at the high point. The lone exception was an older woman who offered me food, and later one more woman came in to sit next to a man, probably her husband. She really stands out. However, you get used to it over time, as most public areas and businesses tend to be dominated by men in Jaipur. On the floor itself, the only women are the *parshads* themselves. The center table for top JMC officials is entirely men. These are the officials all *parshads* must interact with at some point to get their work done, projects approved, and funds allocated.<sup>213</sup>

Floor speeches by the *parshads* themselves were generally centered on complaints of JMC or mayoral inaction, or calls to action on important issues. These speeches were regularly interrupted by other *parshads* who loudly call out their support or objections to what is said. It often appears to be centered on displays of dominance, again from my fieldnotes:

Men often engaged in a bait and switch tactic against their opponents. They wait for the target of their attack to respond to their accusations, then after a few moments they start shouting them down. It appears to be a way to demonstrate superiority, particularly for the media cameras and constituents in the viewing gallery, who regularly chuckle and clap at the displays.

Women who attempt to engage are often unable to compete:

Mrs. Goswami stands up in the middle of one of the male *parshad's* longer speeches and tries to object to what was being said. I cannot hear her as she is drowned out by the continual shouting, and eventually she sits down. The men just keep going, arguing and yelling unperturbed. She raises her hand, apparently asking the mayor to recognize her, no one does. This is the only time I see anyone raise their hand the whole day. She tries to get in her objection once more, and is again unsuccessful. Her voice is not loud enough to be heard as the men shout at each other. She gives up, visibly frustrated...It becomes obvious that unless you can physically shout down the people speaking, you are not likely to get a comment in.

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<sup>213</sup> Participant observation of JMC general board meeting on 10/16/2016.



Mrs. Mohania tries to cut into the shouting match that followed the speech on cow protection. She only manages a few audible sentences in the tumult, and stops trying after a minute. As she tries to argue with the mayor, her mic keeps turning off and she keeps turning it back on. Everyone is yelling over each other.<sup>214</sup>

However, one experienced, older woman was able to quiet the crowd and make an extensive point, perhaps because of her standing:

Mrs. Tiwari stands up and gives an extended speech, with very little interruption. She is older, perhaps respect is being shown to an elder?<sup>215</sup>

The second meeting I attended quickly progressed from verbal quarrels to physical altercations. Much of the Congress opposition, sensing the unpopularity of the mayor and an opportunity to embarrass him when they were allegedly not given the agenda ahead of time, left their seats and gathered in front of the mayor's desk, chanting and yelling:

It is all men at the front of the group except for one older woman. The rest of the women are at the back of the group. The male *parshads* chant loudly over the official report being read by the mayor. Women are not participating in the shouting or chanting, they generally stand quietly at the back of the group, or stay in their seats. The BJP majority pounds their tables in support of the official report...After returning to their seats for a time, 15 male *parshads* come back up to the mayor's desk and continue yelling and chanting. Eventually, for reasons unknown to me, one male *parshad* is bodily picked up by four security guards and carried out of the chamber.<sup>216</sup>

This aggressive legislative environment composed of large numbers of men is likely very intimidating for women *parshads*, especially when intensified by traditional norms that discourage female public engagement with men. Adding to the pressure, during my participant observations I saw several husbands and fathers of multiple *parshads* in the gallery, whom I

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<sup>214</sup> Participant observation of JMC general board meeting on 10/16/2016.

<sup>215</sup> Participant observation of JMC general board meeting on 10/16/2016.

<sup>216</sup> Participant observation of JMC general board meeting on 11/28/2016.

recognized from previous interviews, watching and occasionally gesturing towards their *parshad* down on the floor. These normative pressures combine to significantly constrain the vocal engagement of women *parshads* in the general board meetings. While a small number of men dominated the overall debate, most male *parshads* got in a word at some point. However, the opposite appeared true for women. Generally, four to five at most tried to engage regularly in the meetings I attended, with a few more who spoke rarely. Most women sat together in groups chatting amongst themselves but never publicly speaking, often veiled and separate from the men. The only exception was the required public account of their ward each *parshad* was required to give, as one-by-one, every *parshad* would stand up and address the whole chamber, many from a prepared statement.<sup>217</sup>

### **Patriarchal Norms Create Dependence**

The comprehensive circumscription of women from the public realm via normative constraints and gendered family traditions across Rajasthan has established a system that brings new women each electoral cycle into the political arena with little political experience, few political connections and little standing within their party, who are often uncomfortable in public spaces, and finally, continue to be normatively discouraged from engaging fully in the political office. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, with only five incumbents out of 31 women currently in the JMC, any experience gained by women while in office is generally lost with the significant turnover. Based on this reality, it is no surprise that many of these women are dependent on men who do have the necessary experience, connections, social agency and

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<sup>217</sup> Participant observation of JMC general board meeting on 11/28/2016.

sanction needed to gain electoral office and effectively carry out the responsibilities of that office.

Across the narratives of female *parshads*, nearly everyone mentioned some degree of male sponsorship, ranging from men who provide initial assistance in campaigning or interacting with the bureaucracy before stepping aside, to men who assist in the daily activities of the office in a cooperative arrangement, to the men who push their wives or daughters as proxy *parshads* in the election then assume most of the official roles themselves. Sponsorship has been demonstrated to be key to success elsewhere, as women who lack a sponsor in the US are much less likely to progress in the business world than those who do (Hewlett et al, 2010).

Male involvement is crucial from the beginning. When asked about what drove their political interest, many women *parshads* (or their husbands) described the pivotal role male family members played in their entry into politics. Both highly-dependent women:

In her family, there were no political relations at all. As you can see, nobody in my family was in politics, so all the ideas of social service and politics came from me [her husband].<sup>218</sup>

Her family doesn't have any connection to politics, it all started with me [her husband].<sup>219</sup>

And independent women:

My father in law was in politics for a long time and encouraged me to stand for election in 2009. My father and mother had little political interest or connections.<sup>220</sup>

My husband has been a big support for me. Since I had no political background, I was unaware of the ins and outs of politics. My husband helped me a lot, starting from the campaign and asking for a ticket.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 02/16/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 03/22/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 10/06/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>221</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/207/2017 in Jaipur.

In all these cases, men are essential to gaining political office. Political connections are key in Rajasthani politics to both the party nomination process and to running a successful campaign. Following Dyson and Moore's (1983) discussion of the northern kinship system that is common in Rajasthan, relationships are often gender exclusive, with the closest ties between men, particularly natal brothers. Therefore, to gain access to important men, aspiring women politicians generally need to go through a male intermediary. Furthermore, as women join their new affinal families upon marriage, they lose their natal ties and must adopt the networks of their new family, which generally run through her husband or father-in-law.

Within the narratives, male *parshads* were much more likely than their female colleagues to be personally connected to key political agents. 20 *parshads* overall reported having some form of general connection either to the party, to local or state-level political leaders, community leaders, or JMC bureaucrats. Of these, 12 were personal connections (generally friends, colleagues, or family), but only four women had these close relationships. The remaining eight *parshads* with general connections only had second-hand connections that ran through intermediaries. All were women. Men are much more likely to have close, personal connections with key agents than women.

Key to this discrepancy is the simple fact that men dominate both the bureaucratic and political realms. Data at the state level is difficult to obtain, but 2010 surveys across the national bureaucracy, the Indian Administrative Service, indicate female representation was at only 8

percent.<sup>222</sup> It may be slightly higher in the lower, state-level services, and have improved in the past decade, but likely only marginally. Correspondingly, out of 200 MLAs in the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly, only 27 are currently women, and of the eight MLAs elected in Jaipur, only one is a woman. Regardless of where *parshads* turn to in the bureaucracy or higher-level politicians, they are largely dealing with men. This is borne out in the narratives as well. Of the 20 narratives that described general connections with a key agent, only four of these agents were women, the rest were men:

My husband's eldest brother has been active in politics for the last 35 years. My husband has six brothers and he's the youngest. They were all kind of involved in politics, the eldest brother the most... When my husband got a government job he also left politics, but he wanted to still be active, so he asked me to get involved in politics. My husband got me in contact with leaders from our own community.<sup>223</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, relationship norms that discourage inter-gender interaction outside the family force women to network with key male sponsors through male family members, often their husband or father-in-law:

Before only my husband was active in politics, for 40 years. When I became a *parshad*, I had no previous political experience, affiliation, or interest. I was behind him. He has known the current MLA for the last 40 years.<sup>224</sup>

Alternatively, women must network with men who they are comfortable with from within their community. As the sponsor of one female *parshad* described during an interview, male sponsorship is often integral to receiving a nomination and winning a campaign:

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<sup>222</sup> Government of India, 2010 Civil Services Survey. See: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cgg/unpan046740.pdf> {Accessed 06/24/2018}

<sup>223</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 12/10/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/16/2016 in Jaipur.

When we decided to project her as a candidate, my elder brother met with her and took her under his guidance. First off, we pushed for a ticket from Congress. In this, my brother helped her meet with the most senior leaders in the party. My family has a great history in Rajasthan politics. In the 1956 elections, the first, my grandfather became Deputy Home Minister, in 1980 my uncle became MLA from this constituency, in 1998 again my uncle was elected as MLA, and then became a Minister. This tradition is carried on by my elder brother who was *parshad* for this area for the previous 10 years. We brought her along. We knew her from childhood, she was like family to us. She has been a person always associated with my family. We believed in her. She was a good candidate, with a passion for helping people. We started our campaign by taking her around the ward. In the end we won the election very easily.<sup>225</sup>

After gaining office, connections are also important to accomplishing goals, particularly delivering public goods to the *parshad*'s ward. The most useful connections go through the JMC bureaucracy itself, the officers who approve requests, disburse funds, and arrange for work to be done; through the local MLA, who can pressure the bureaucracy or fund projects themselves from a personal MLA fund they have access to; or through the mayoral office, which can also influence the bureaucracy or approve funds for specific projects. Both male *parshads* rely on these connections:

Initially, I also struggled in the JMC for the first time, but slowly I got the hang of things. Whenever some work was getting delayed, I contacted my MLA and with their help, all my problems were resolved.<sup>226</sup>

And female *parshads*:

Because the *parshad* quota budget isn't always enough, there are some issues in dealing with problems, so I focus on the most problematic areas first, and then if it gets out of hand I'll go to MP/MLA for help. A lot of work has been done through their funds.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Interview with male sponsor of female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>226</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/06/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 11/28/2016 in Jaipur.

Gaining this kind of access does not appear to be an issue for women. 26 *parshads* overall reported receiving or expecting to receive some assistance/contribution to their ward from the mayor's office, or their respective MLA or MP, and 15 of these were women. However, as discussed, these relationships likely go through male intermediaries.

Finally, given the gender disparity in political experience discussed previously, men are more likely to have the background and know-how required for effective campaigning, winning elections, and engaging the bureaucracy. As one woman described, her entire campaign was managed by a male sponsor:

Mostly, women *parshads* are dependent on their fathers and their husbands, but since my husband has died, I don't have that luxury... My whole campaign was managed by the ex-*parshad* himself... In the election, I didn't know about anything, it was all managed by him.<sup>228</sup>

Men also have more experience in engaging with the JMC bureaucracy. As this same *parshad* describes, her male sponsor was helpful in getting her acclimated to the point that she can now act independently:

I was not very active in politics before, so I was not familiar with how the JMC works. But the ex-*parshad* from my area, he gave me training. To be honest, it didn't take very long to figure it out. I also used to go with women to deal with pension and other related problems at the JMC, and in this way I learned a lot... I know the JMC works in a particular way... In that, my maternal uncle helped me a lot. He told me how to prepare a tender, meet the CEO, take files from the mayor, but slowly I got better and now I work independently. Still, if I need help I can call him anytime.<sup>229</sup>

This narrative demonstrates both why so many female *parshads* are dependent on the men around them, but also how many women have used that experience as a foundation to assert

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/01/2017 in Jaipur.

themselves. Finally, men are also much more likely to have the neighborhood experience and name recognition key to winning over voters. This female *parshad* discussed using her husband's reputation from his time as a *parshad* previously in her campaign:

Now many people knew my husband, and we already had an image... I had a signature line... I would say, "you should visit our older ward, if anyone can say that our old *parshad* (her husband) was inactive or didn't cooperate, then don't vote for me."<sup>230</sup>

### **Conclusions**

The prevalence of dependence among women *parshads* highlights the tension between the institutional quotas designed to improve female political participation and the persistent patriarchal norms that continue to restrict such behavior. This chapter has described and shown how parental and societal attitudes on political engagement for young women, gendered family traditions that significantly alter the accessibility of the political environment to married women, societal normative constraints on women engaging in public and political actions, and challenging institutional environments erect barriers across the entirety of a woman's lifetime. These barriers reduce experiential knowledge and political capability for most women to the point that to pursue political office effectively, women must rely upon the support of men. Overall, this reliance significantly reduces the ability of institutional quotas to bring women into office who can substantively represent their constituents.

In Chapter Seven, I demonstrated how several women in the JMC have become as independent as their male colleagues by leveraging male support when required and over time developing and maintaining autonomy. However, even in those cases, male support continued to be integral to their continued autonomy, and thus could be revoked. Problematically in terms of

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<sup>230</sup> Interview with female *parshad* on 04/07/2017 in Jaipur.



establishing sustainable substantive representation for women, this dynamic demonstrates that gender quotas are unable to completely overcome the persistent patriarchal norms that have been described in this chapter. While a quota can put a woman in office, it cannot ensure her independence. This weakness in the gender quota institution, and possible methods of addressing it, are discussed in the next and final chapter, which concludes this dissertation.

## Chapter 9: Conclusions

Soon after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments instituted gender reservations within a broad national and even international push to begin to address gender inequalities in governance institutions, Indian activists and feminists, while embracing the change, warned against “tokens and show-pieces” that utilize the women’s movement vocabulary without putting the concepts into practice on a comprehensive scale (Ramachandran, 1995: 49). Governmental agencies, politicians, NGOs, and the private sector are often willing to advertise their commitment to gender equality policies, particularly if additional funding is attached; however, the actual effectiveness of many of their efforts have been questioned. As discussed in Chapter Three, comparable questions on the gender reservation system have been raised on similar grounds. Despite the effective implementation of the reservation for over two decades, gender inequalities remain in party hierarchies, women continue to be kept out of key governance posts, and numbers at the state and national level have barely improved.

The narratives from this book have illustrated the ability of husbands and fathers to manipulate the reservation system for their own benefit; however, it is evident that equality would be worse without it. Certainly, the *parshad-pati* phenomenon does not empower women nor address gender inequality. Moreover, it could be argued that the public demonstration of such obvious gender exploitation hurts gender equality efforts. The display of continuing voter acceptance of severe gender power imbalances may reinforce patriarchal societal norms and discourage the development of future women leaders. While the reality of the observed situation could prompt a declaration that the gender reservation has failed, instead this reality indicates how critical it is. Without it, gender equality in institutions such as the JMC would surely be worse, particularly taking into consideration the comprehensive checks on female political

participation discussed in Chapter Eight. However, attempting to determine the overall success or failure of the gender-reservation system based on this cross-sectional analysis of one point in time is not appropriate or practical. It will take decades more to truly determine whether the reservation contributed to gender equality in the long-term. Instead, this analysis should encourage a reexamination of what we expect from institutional efforts to impose gender equality. While useful, these institutions must function within the society that they are implanted, and the power of electoral institutions to modulate the influence of incredibly powerful patriarchal norms is limited.

Below I review how persisting patriarchal norms and institutional vulnerabilities were shown in this dissertation to consistently undermine the intended goal of quotas in enhancing gender equality. I then discuss how, despite these undercutting factors, the reservation still provides essential support to the development of gender equality in India, particularly in comparison to the absence of a reservation. Next, I argue for revising our expectations on the ability of institutional fixes such as gender quotas to deliver comprehensive gender equality quickly in highly patriarchal environments. Finally, I conclude with possible institutional changes that could improve the effectiveness of the gender reservation system and areas for future research.

### **The Persistence of Patriarchal Norms**

Persisting patriarchal norms embolden ambitious husbands or fathers who are blocked by the gender reservation, or unable to win on their own, to seek power through their wives or daughters. These same norms pressure these women to accept the *parshad-pati* arrangement as appropriate and discourages resistance. These norms also encourage voters to accept such candidates at the voting booth. Finally, even for the more independent women, a lifetime living

within a patriarchal society has placed most of them at a severe political disadvantage and forced them to rely heavily on men and their families. Ideally, the support these agents provide enables them to act independently, but given the continuing dependence of these women, the withdrawal or modification of this support would considerably weaken their ability to remain independent. Most of these women would likely not have been successful without the expertise provided by their husbands and other supporting male actors. Furthermore, this reality emphasizes that the reservation does not intrinsically grant a woman independence. If these husbands and family had refused at any point to accept or support her pursuit of political office, then very likely none of these women would have been able to run, regardless of the reservation. The patriarchal family structure continues to grant male elders the power to open or block critical pathways for political pursuit and advancement.

This dependence among women *parshads* highlights the tension between the institutional quotas designed to improve female political participation and these persistent patriarchal norms that continue to restrict such behavior. Parental and societal attitudes on political engagement for young women, gendered family traditions that significantly alter the accessibility of the political environment to married women and saddle them with considerable domestic duties, societal normative constraints on women engaging in public and political actions, a patrilineal familial structure that requires women to prioritize the interests of her husband and his family, and challenging institutional environments erect barriers across the entirety of a woman's lifetime that an electoral institution is unable to eliminate. These barriers reduce experiential knowledge and political capability for most women to the point that to pursue political office effectively, women must rely upon the support of men. This reliance then often continues after electoral victory.

These findings demonstrate that many of the normative restrictions that have checked female representation in India since independence persist. Women are still unable to conduct open, public campaigns and interact with constituents independently, as such outgoing behavior is often perceived as inappropriate for women (Singer, 2007). Women candidates are still hampered by fiscal and social constraints, as they are usually economically dependent on male family members (Guha, 1974). Institutional restrictions have persisted as well. A key restraint on growth continues to be party nominations. Parties are often only willing to field women candidates in areas they are confident of winning (Spary, 2007; Jensenius, 2018), thus limiting the ability of women to compete outside of gender-reserved districts.

### **Institutional Vulnerabilities**

These narratives also demonstrate that the reservation as an electoral institution does not act independently of social norms. The core goal of the reservation is to modulate existing patriarchal norms that discourage the engagement of women in politics by setting aside a portion of political space exclusively for women. However, as these narratives reveal, the effect is not unidirectional. Patriarchal norms persist in the electoral space and have even manipulated the reservation to male advantage. The *parshad-pati* phenomenon exposes the inability of the reservation institution to prevent such an appropriation of electoral power. To prevent such electoral ploys, all democratic institutions rely on the discernment of voters as a backstop. When the voters do not censure, there is little the institution is able to do independently.

Core democratic theory places the responsibility of choosing both desirable public officials and holding those who circumvent representational norms to account squarely on the voter (Ferejohn, 1999; Cheibub and Przeworski, 1999). Institutional design can influence both the ability of the voter to hold the representative to account through the ballot box and the

information available to the voter for their decision-making. Institutions can also reject unacceptable candidates with relatively objective characteristics, such as gender or a criminal history. However, such an institution has little ability to curb the *parshad-pati* phenomenon. Electoral institutions have little ability to discern between dependent and independent candidates, as the characteristics of each are subjective. It is difficult to envision a set of electoral laws that are specific enough to block highly-dependent candidates from competing in elections while still ensuring equal access. For example, raising minimum education requirements may combat dependency to some degree, but carry with it the real risk of shutting out candidates from disadvantaged communities. Without excessive censoring bureaucracy that would likely push out more women candidates than it would help, this problem cannot be legislated away. Only if voters change their mind on the appropriateness of *parshad-patis* will the current situation change. Voter acceptance of the *parshad-pati* phenomenon likely reflects common perceptions on the appropriateness of women in politics and their ability to succeed in such a masculine and challenging environment. Constituents may foresee benefits for their ward if their institutionally-mandated female representative is in practice replaced by a man.<sup>231</sup> This again illustrates the power of social norms over institutions.

The number of highly-dependent candidates also reveals supply-side issues. A patriarchal environment that is often resistant to the public and political participation of women has led to a shortage in qualified and committed female candidates. While reservations are effective at establishing a minimum number of women office holders, they cannot guarantee an adequate

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<sup>231</sup> Following Beaman et al. (2010), who found that women *panchayat* leaders in gender reserved seats generally received lower evaluations from their constituents than their male counterparts, this literature would significantly benefit from research focused on voter perceptions of expected returns between male and female candidates.

number of competitive candidates to fill those spots. While every male parshad interviewed described some form of past political involvement, the majority of women interviewed reported having no political experience prior to running for parshad. The ability of an electoral reservation to correct this discrepancy is limited unless it was massively expanded into additional institutions.

This dissertation has also begun to answer two core questions put forth by the literature: do reserved seats enable women to win unreserved seats (Yoon, 2016)? Can reserved seats become a floor to increase representation for women, rather than a ceiling (Paxton & Hughes, 2016)? As Chapter Three demonstrated, gender reserved seats in Jaipur have not enabled women to win unreserved seats to a significant degree at any level of government. Furthermore, the restriction of women largely to gender-reserved seats could illustrate a possible ceiling emerging that caps female representation at the quota established level. However, the reluctance of parties to nominate women outside of gender-reserved seats, and a lack of strong women candidates to compete in them are more to blame for any ceiling than the quota system itself. Still, these findings demonstrate that one of the primary long-term goals of a gender quota system – to develop a cadre of experienced women politicians who can compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts (Deininger et al, 2011) is not being realized to a significant degree. However, as I discuss at the end of this chapter, small changes to the reservation system could partially address these shortcomings.

### **Reservation Benefits**

As noted, across the narratives of female *parshads*, nearly everyone mentioned some degree of male sponsorship. However, this sponsorship was not always constraining, as many men provided initial assistance in campaigning or interacting with the bureaucracy and then

stepped aside, or they continued to assist in the daily activities of the office in a cooperative arrangement. While certainly suboptimal, especially given the veto power many of these men still have over the political career of their wives or daughters, this reality does not necessarily indicate a failure of the reservation system. Again, this indicates how critical it is. If women *parshads* are still this dependent two decades into the reservation system, it is difficult to imagine how much more difficult it would be without the gender reservation.

If we look at the state and national levels of government, where there are no gender reservations, not only are the numbers of women in office much lower, but the class of candidates is much different. High numbers of female politicians at these levels come from political families. For a woman, coming from a dynastic family helps overcome some of the barriers that make participation difficult for most women. These families provide the name recognition, contacts and funding that most aspiring women politicians lack (Jensenius, 2018). Furthermore, women who come from dynastic families tend to receive more support and encouragement than the average Indian woman, and their political participation is more likely to be socially accepted due to their status (Singer, 2007). Without gender reservations, we would likely see a similar selection effect at the local level as well.

Given the patriarchal context, regardless of whether we consider the gender reservation a success or not, the fact that millions of women have achieved positions of power across urban and rural governance institutions (Jensenius, 2018) is undeniably positive. Whether these women act as proxies, work in tandem relationships, or are fully independent, most of these women would likely not be in politics without the reservation. Varun, my research assistant, gave me his perspective on the need for reservations towards the end of our data collection:



Without reservations, I don't think women would run for *parshad* because it takes so much work to get elected – they have to go outside in the streets, for such a low position. Politics is a dirty profession. It's not for the soft-hearted who just want to help people. Its cut-throat, you must be ruthless to win, and women cannot always be like that. And, fathers will not encourage their daughters to go into politics if they themselves were not in politics. If he is in politics he can be her godfather and protect her from criticism and insults, and bring her into his position. But if not, then no, because he has to get her married, and grooms may not understand or be okay with them doing the *parshad* work.<sup>232</sup>

His comments likely reflect the views of most Indians on women in politics and it demonstrates how difficult it continues to be to encourage women to participate. Most of the women we interviewed claimed that they likely would not have been interested or able to pursue such a career without the gender reservation. Even male *parshads* agreed that the reservation has been critical to creating opportunities for women to succeed politically:

I believe that the gender reservation encourages female participation in politics. Since we are equal in population, we should have equal rights also. You have to give them a chance. Men and women are equal at every level, and this reservation gives them a platform to come forward. We [society] believe that they are not capable of doing the work, but if you will not give them a chance to be completely involved, then how will they become capable of doing this work?<sup>233</sup>

And the husbands of female *parshads*:

On the 30-percent reservation, I believe that women should be given a chance. If they are not given a chance then women will not come to understand the JMC. Let's say my wife, who was a housewife earlier. She would know nothing of the JMC without the reservation, but the reservation gave her the ticket, and now she is a *parshad* and knows everything about the JMC. She can talk to the officials and can address issues in the general board meetings. It makes a huge difference in their life, the reservation. Men already know about these things, the JMC, etc., but women need a chance to also learn about these things.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Research assistant comments after interview conducted on 12/8/2016 in Jaipur.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 02/04/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 4/8/2017 in Jaipur

Furthermore, the women who become independent or semi-independent provide societal exposure to female leaders that could encourage voters to revise stereotypes and prejudices regarding female political leaders, which has been cited as key to improving the political participation of young women Elder (2004). While these narratives do not speak to constituent behavior, other research has found that gender reservations are also effective at shifting perceptions, at least in the rural Indian context (Beaman et al, 2009). Several male *parshads* in the JMC were optimistic that the reservation was having this desired effect:

I believe that women *parshads* are as efficient as men can be. If we think that women are weak or cannot work, it is our own misconception. Take the example of our country. Whenever there is a work assigned to a woman, she has done it better than a man. This reservation has given them a chance to work. I believe that if you give her a chance, she will show you how efficient she can be. Without giving her a chance we can keep saying she is not capable of that, she cannot do any work... A lady who can manage a household, which is so hard to do, why would she face any complications with a field job?<sup>235</sup>

Furthermore, as stereotypes and gender restrictions are broken down, female political participation increases. Gleason (2001) found that MLA districts with a history of female representation have higher female voter participation. Alongside role models, greater societal acceptance in turn may further encourage female candidature as the social costs of political participation decrease.

### **Revised Expectations**

It must be reiterated that voters have not likely been deceived by *parshads* who are either highly dependent on, or in tandem arrangements with, their husbands or other supporting men.

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<sup>235</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/31/2017 in Jaipur.

These narratives illustrate electoral campaigns that regularly make it clear and obvious to constituents that their *parshad* will not be an independent actor. Therefore, by voting these candidates into office, often by large margins, most voters appear to accept this representative arrangement as appropriate and legitimate. In turn, this dynamic encourages further discussion on the concept of democratic representation. Specifically, is legitimate democratic representation limited to the elected individual listed on the ballot? Does the extension of representative power to individuals not listed on the ballot, but informally accepted by the voters to serve as their representative, delegitimize the democratic process? Within this discussion, considerable attention must be paid to the role of Western norms, particularly individualism and the preeminence of formal rules, in the generation of the concept of democratic representation. Given the more communal norms and greater acceptance of informal rules within South Asia, perhaps we should reconsider the blanket application of democratic concepts that were developed in the Western context.

These narratives demonstrate that patriarchal norms are stubbornly persistent, and change is extremely gradual. However, pessimism should be tempered by a consideration of how we are judging these arrangements. From a Western perspective, these narratives are particularly problematic, as we are accustomed to individual, elected representatives making independent decisions. However, even in the West that reality is certainly debatable, as no representatives are entirely independent. To differing degrees, all representatives rely on spousal, familial, and collegial support and advice as well. This support is just much less public and observable than it is in India. *Parshads* are much more comfortable advertising and acknowledging the role their family plays in their office because it is more socially acceptable in South Asia than it would be in the West. Perhaps we need to rethink what constitutes legitimate representation in the Indian

context. Debating whether communal representation is compatible with true democratic representation is likely a dead end. It is more useful to focus on outcomes. The key question is whether communal support, such as that provided by a husband, family, or other community member, facilitates or restricts a woman's legislative ability to act on her priorities. Using this standard, while many *parshads* were obviously restricted by their communal support, other women were enabled by their support networks to act on their own priorities. While still dependent to a degree on the men around them, this support allowed them to act on their own, likely at a level they would be unable to if that support was withdrawn.

Furthermore, we need to reconsider how we apply the concept of substantive representation. The narratives from Chapter Seven demonstrated that women can enter the JMC comparable in independence and capability to their male colleagues, and are thus evidence of the ability of gender quotas to improve substantive female representation in positions of power. However, the literature requires a direct connection between female representatives and their constituency (Mansbridge, 1999; Urbinati and Warren, 2008; Weldon, 2002), which ensures that the women elected continue to represent the interests of their constituents, particularly women's interests that have been historically neglected. The continued dependence, even for the most independent women *parshads*, on their male supporters and enablers makes this critical connection more tenuous. However, I argue that this does not mean that the gender quotas are unable to establish substantive representation for women in Jaipur, but it does indicate that once substantive representation is established, the possibility remains that it is not total and that it can be removed. Following the literature's early push to move beyond the simple dichotomy of descriptive representation to the more nuanced substantive representation, this dissertation has demonstrated that substantive representation itself is not dichotomous either. Depending on a

representative's autonomy, it can be partial or total, it may also be dependent on the support of another and thus revocable.

### Possible Institutional Improvements

This dissertation has illustrated the often-unexpected problems that emerge when embedding an institution within a society. We cannot assume either that the institution will be able to exclude or overcome normative influences, or that normative influences that we inherently rely on in other contexts will be present across all societies and voters. While we may expect Western voters to largely reject a *parshad-pati* candidate, there is no inherent reason we should expect all societies to do the same. These narratives have also demonstrated that gender quotas are not quick fixes, and often have unforeseen side-effects, such as the blocking of the disadvantaged candidates it was designed to support discussed in Chapter Three. However, gender quotas have been instituted in many different forms across the globe, and adjustments to the current system could provide improved outcomes. Below, I discuss three possible modifications to the quota system that might be particularly helpful in improving the independence of women who enter through the gender quota system: expanded quotas, removal of the ban on consecutive reservations, and pay and training increases.

*Expanded Quotas.* An increasing number of countries have instituted much more comprehensive gender quotas that apply broadly across government positions, such as cabinets, public administration and the judiciary, and even into the public sphere, such as labor union directorates, civil society organizations, and chambers of commerce (Piscopo and Muntean, 2018). As an example, France passed an electoral gender parity law in 2000, which mandated equal gender representation in Senate and European parliamentary elections, and eventually expanded in 2014 to all public institutions, including national theaters, agricultural associations,

and sports federations (Piscopo and Muntean, 2018). Following France's example, one alternative in India could be to expand the gender reservation at the local level to a higher number, such as 50-percent, to bring more women in and possibly encourage greater independence across all female members. However, this likely would not erase the *parshad-pati* phenomenon, as panchayati raj institutions in Rajasthan do have a 50-percent gender reservation and there are still reports of extensive spousal involvement and interference (Beaman et al, 2010). Furthermore, expanding the reservation does not address the lack of strong women candidates.

Expanding gender reservations to the state and national levels, or even further into more governmental institutions and/or into the parties themselves could partially improve the numbers of strong women candidates. Group reservations already extend across all governmental institutions. By massively expanding the number of women in positions of power, such a move could both help women develop the experiential knowledge they need to be politically competitive in the absence of a reservation, and would require parties to build up larger cohorts of women candidates to compete for these positions. However, by relying on a reservation-style system, women will continue to only compete against women, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, may not make them more competitive against men in the absence of a reservation. Furthermore, the expansion of the gender reservation could entrench an institution that is optimally temporary. Like the group reservation system, which has become politically untouchable, as the number of voters who benefit from a reservation increases, the more politically untenable it becomes for representatives to remove or modify it in the future. If the ultimate goal is to remove the gender reservation at some point in the future, after women have gained the necessary electoral foothold, then current expansion could jeopardize that.

Another alternative could be a shift from a reservation quota system to a candidate quota system for women. Such a system would require parties to grant a specified minimum number or percentage of nominations every election to women, but specific districts would no longer be reserved for women. Htun (2004) argues that candidate quotas make more sense for women, as gender “crosscuts” political cleavages, while reservations suit ethnic groups, as these groups tend to align within existing cleavages. Reservations work for ethnic minorities because they incentivize the establishment of group-centered parties that can cater to the collective interests of a minority group, but simultaneously can push women’s issues lower in priority. Instead, candidate quotas make space within existing parties that are already aligned along existing cleavages, which allows women to assume a more prominent role within the party. Such a system could force parties to develop stronger women candidates, as they would often have to compete with politically experienced men. However, such a system in India would likely face several problems.

First, candidate-quota systems cannot guarantee a minimum female representation, as all women candidates could theoretically lose, particularly if the party stands them in weak districts it expects to lose to protect its male candidates (Jenselius, 2018). Significant research in other countries has also shown that male-dominated parties have found many ways to subvert candidate quotas implementation (Jones, 1998; Jones, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Krook, 2010). Candidate quotas work better in party-list proportional representation systems, where parties can be required to place women higher on the list and thus in a more winnable position. This is not possible in India’s SMD system. Second, candidate quotas are often abused or ignored if not strictly enforced (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). In a country such as India, where parties are already notorious for ignoring the rule of law, it is easy to foresee candidate quotas being

disregarded. Finally, unless candidate quotas are attached to minority requirements, which would be difficult to do bureaucratically, then women from disadvantaged communities would likely be shut out (Hughes, 2011). As discussed in Chapter Three, women from the reserved communities (OBC/SC/ST) are already less likely than forward-caste women to challenge men in open elections.

*Allow Consecutive Gender Reservations.* Instead of attempting to institutionalize gender equality by extensively expanding proscriptive rules, several small adjustments to the current system could yield improvements over time. The first would be to remove the prohibition on consecutive gender-reservations for a single ward. As discussed extensively, women entering politics have very little public experience, particularly political experience, and therefore rely on men to rectify that deficit. Furthermore, low incumbency rates result in most female *parshads* leaving after only one term, which prevents them from developing the expertise and support needed to compete with men in open-gender elections. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the removal of a gender-reservation makes it much less likely a woman will return for a second term. By allowing a ward to be reserved consecutively, or even encouraging it by reserving a ward automatically for consecutive terms, the reservation system would likely increase the number of women with extensive political experience. It is notable that the group-reservation lottery has no restriction on consecutive reservations, and even weights certain wards to make it more likely they will be reserved for specific groups consecutively. The primary issue with expanding this to gender reservations is that while the group-reservation rules benefit men from those favored communities, these suggested changes would not benefit men and would therefore likely face significant resistance to implementation from those in power.



*Increase Pay and Training.* Another small adjustment would be to increase the capabilities of the women already in office, primarily by increasing pay and providing training. As discussed in Chapter Seven, even independent women are still dependent to a degree on their spouses and family for support, especially financially. *Parshads* are currently only paid a modest stipend to cover expenses, which is not nearly enough to support an individual. By providing better pay, women *parshads* would become more financially independent of their husbands and possibly more able to shed some of their household responsibilities as well by hiring domestic help.

Nearly every woman I interviewed brought up the considerable challenges they faced when they entered the JMC, both with public engagement and the bureaucracy. While it may be difficult to “train” *parshads* to be more comfortable in public, they can be trained in the functioning of the JMC bureaucracy. One of the key roles male supporters played for women *parshads* was to lead them through the bureaucratic maze, which most male *parshads* already had some experience with. Gajwani and Zhang (2008) also found that women *sarpanchs* in the rural PRIs also struggle to understand the large amount of paperwork and complex bureaucracy they have to deal with, and that training was generally inadequate and provided too late. By providing some initial training, women could be given a leg-up towards closing this experience gap. Several *parshads* suggested this themselves:

It’s very hard for the younger *parshads*, those with less experience, there should be training for them.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/25/2017 in Jaipur.

Some training apparently already exists. *Parshads* reported a training program in Delhi, five hours away, after the 2014 elections, but very few attended.<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, the parties themselves organize workshops prior to the general body meetings for their own *parshads*, but these were more centered on the agenda, speaking roles, and voting guidelines. Otherwise, *parshads* are just encouraged to go to the JMC library and teach themselves.<sup>238</sup> Therefore, a comprehensive training program focused on providing all *parshads* with an in-depth understanding of the institution, that was easily accessible in Jaipur, and provided regularly could be significantly helpful in helping new *parshads* establish themselves independently.

### **Future Improvement**

Overall, rapid improvement would require a combination of more highly-qualified women interested in competing politically and greater electoral censure of dependent less-qualified women would be required to push *parshad-patis* out. However, much of the impetus for such change cannot be instigated by the electoral institution itself. Change must occur socially. As long as patriarchal social norms continue to discourage the political participation of women and sanction *parshad-patis*, there will be issues suppling enough quality candidates to compete in the gender-reserved seats and men will continue to put their wives up as candidates. Still, given the electoral success of independent female *parshads*, there does not appear to be a comprehensive social stigma against independent women in politics. As the supply of independent female candidates increases, perhaps in the long-term they will even start to push

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with male *parshad* on 03/21/2017 in Jaipur.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with husband of female *parshad* on 11/16/2016.

out the *parshad-patis* electorally, particularly if combined with a campaign to encourage social censure.

Improving the Indian gender reservation system, and the overall effectiveness of gender quotas worldwide, will require additional research, particularly on the interaction between institutions and the society they are designed to modify. As this dissertation has demonstrated, electoral quotas do not operate in a normative vacuum, they are heavily influenced by societal norms, and therefore their effectiveness across cases, across societies, varies significantly. Future research should look to expand on this single-case study, both across India and cross-nationally, especially in less-studied non-Western societies.

Within India, understanding would be considerably improved by expanding research outside of the hard-cases – highly patriarchal societies such as Rajasthan, into the regions of south and north-east India where such norms still exist, but are less powerful. The challenges that restrict substantive representation in Jaipur should not be taken as universally applicable across India, as patriarchal norms vary regionally. This expansion will allow for comparison between environments, which will better define the specific societal dynamics that restrict, and the dynamics that empower, the development of female political independence within a gender quota system. Furthermore, while the depth of the single-case study allows for the investigation of the causal mechanisms that restrict women from developing political power, breadth through additional cases can allow us to begin to determine the actual causal effects of specific normative practices and institutional rules. India's federal system allows for some variation in reservation rules across states, such as minimum candidate qualifications. For example, variation in education requirements should be incorporated into future work to see if they can restrict *parshad-patis* and encourage independence.

This dissertation has illustrated the importance of critical gateways most women must pass through on the path to becoming a representative that can encourage or discourage independence, such as student politics, marriage traditions, and family practices. Each of these gateways were covered in this dissertation, but would benefit from a deeper analysis based in more comprehensive data. My interviews with student politicians demonstrated the potential value of a focused effort on one of these gateways in developing our understanding of the formative processes that can improve or restrict the supply of strong women candidates. Further research needs to be done on the effect increasing female participation at the university level can have on general political engagement as an adult. The university environment could be a prime opportunity to target female participation improvement, with an aim to boosting lifetime political engagement. Perhaps the most important gateway is the party nomination process. Nomination is generally decisive to electoral success, and as this dissertation and other research has shown, parties continue to resist the nomination of women outside of gender reserved seats. Several explanations have been proposed here and elsewhere centered on enduring patriarchal skepticism of women candidates and their ability to compete. However, very little is known about the perspectives and actions of key agents in the opaque nomination process. A qualitative investigation of nomination practices and the role of gatekeepers such as regional MLAs could provide insight into why parties nominate so few women to compete in open-gender seats. Of particular interest would be the rational calculus these gatekeepers make between nominating strong women candidates who can expand the party's reach, and nominating weaker candidates who are less likely to pose a future challenge to themselves.

Furthermore, as discussed, the establishment of a gender reservation at the local level has not led to a considerable improvement in female representation at the state and national levels.

To determine how and when the reservation can serve as a platform to higher office, a broad data collection effort that tracks the career pathways of successful women in state and national politics to determine how many started in a gender-reserved *parshad* ward is needed. Such research will contribute to determining if the gender reservation system is serving its intended function as a pipeline to develop female political talent to serve at the highest levels. If the *parshad* position is essentially a dead-end, with very few women progressing to higher levels of government, then it is not serving its purpose.

Along these lines, the literature would also benefit from historical examination of the rapid institution of the gender reservation system in 1992. This dissertation has shown that certain features of the reservation system, such as the restriction on consecutive gender reservations and limiting reservations to the local level, appear designed to protect the powerful male politicians who approved it. Archival research and qualitative interviews could provide insight into the decision-making process that designed the reservation system to investigate the possibility that the system was instituted primarily as a release valve to discourage future demands for larger gender quotas, particularly at higher levels, rather than to primarily improve female political representation. Quotas are never instituted by objective actors without self-interest, and such research would improve our understanding of why quotas are instituted and how concerns about power and job security can bias quota design.

Finally, this dissertation has posed several theoretical questions on the concept of democratic representation that should be addressed. Specifically, is legitimate democratic representation limited to the elected individual listed on the ballot? Does the extension of representative power to individuals not listed on the ballot, but informally accepted by the voters to serve as their representative, delegitimize the democratic process? Within this discussion,

considerable attention must be paid to the role of Western norms, particularly individualism and the preeminence of formal rules, in the generation of the concept of democratic representation. Given the more communal norms and greater acceptance of informal rules within South Asia, there needs to be greater discussion on the blanket application of democratic concepts that were developed in the Western context.

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