

How Ethnic Voting Works in India: New Evidence from a Vignette-Experiment

BY

SIMON CHAUCHARD

*Assistant Professor, Department of Government,
Dartmouth College*

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SIMON CHAUCHARD is an Assistant Professor in the Government Department at Dartmouth College, and a faculty affiliate in the Asia and Middle Eastern Studies program. Professor Chauchard received his Ph.D. in 2011 from NYU. His research and teaching focus on ethnic politics, voting behavior, clientelism, political representation, and politicians-citizens relations in India. Recent works have appeared or are forthcoming in *Political Opinion Quarterly* and in the *American Political Science Review*. His book manuscript, *Why Representation Matters: The Meaning of Ethnic Quotas in Rural India*, combines ethnographic work and a series of innovative surveys to explore the impact of caste-based reservation policies on everyday intergroup relations in India's villages. In his current work, he relies on a series of survey-experiments to determine what leads Indian voters to select candidates with controversial characteristics. He will spend 2014-2015 on a research leave in India, working on two new projects on clientelism.

About the Lecture:

Most scholars agree that Indian voters take ethnicity into account when deciding whether to support a political candidate. The specific way(s) in which voters take ethnicity into account is, however, unclear from an empirical standpoint. The main argument so far (Chandra 2004) suggests that voters “count heads” and opt for the party in which their co-ethnics are comparatively better represented. While it concurs that such party-level ethnic headcount is central to voters’ strategies, Professor Chauchard argues that ethnicity also matters in other ways. He first argues that voters value the ethnicity of candidates, in addition to the ethnic labels attached to parties. Second, he suggests that “ethnic voting” is not limited to a preference for co-ethnics; voters also make a difference among different types of non-coethnics and attach negative valence to candidates from particularly disliked groups. To test these propositions, Professor Chauchard uses a series of newspaper-based vignette-experiments (ran in August 2013 in Gonda and Faizabad districts) in which voters reacted to fictional but realistic political candidates.

LECTURE TIME: 12 noon to 1:30 p.m.

VENUE: CASI – 3600 Market Street, Suite 560 (5th floor) Philadelphia, PA 19104-2653

About CASI

Founded in 1992, the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) at the University of Pennsylvania is the first research institution in the United States dedicated to the study of contemporary India. The Center's key goals are to nurture a new generation of scholars across disciplines and to provide a forum for dialogue among the academic, business, and foreign policy communities.

