

# My History or Our History?

## Historical Revisionism and Entitlement to Lead

Nicholas Haas<sup>1</sup>

Emmy Lindstam<sup>2</sup>

October 17, 2021<sup>3,4</sup>

### Abstract

Ongoing, spirited debates from around the globe over statues, street names, symbols, and textbooks call for a greater understanding of the political effects of different historical representations. In this paper, we theorize that inclusive (exclusive) historical representations can increase (decrease) marginalized group members' perceived centrality to the nation, entitlement to speak on its behalf, and likelihood of becoming leaders. In an online experiment in India (N=1,592), we randomly assign participants exercises sourced from official state textbooks that contain either an exclusive, inclusive, or a neutral representation of history. We subsequently assess the supply of and demand for Muslim leadership using both an original, incentivized game and additional survey and behavioral measures. Consistent with our theory, we find that inclusive historical narratives increase Muslim participants' perceived centrality and entitlement, and their willingness to lead. Our findings indicate that battles over history may carry consequences for the descriptive representation of marginalized groups.

**Keywords:** Historical revisionism, textbooks, national identity, leader emergence, descriptive representation

**Word Count:** 11,965

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, email: nick.haas@ps.au.dk.

<sup>2</sup>PhD Candidate, School of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim, email: elindsta@mail.uni-mannheim.de. Corresponding author.

<sup>3</sup>The authors would like to thank Sofia Breitenstein, Sabine Carey, Carl Muller-Crepon, Florian Foos, Vicky Fouka, Patrick Kraft, Rajeshwari Majumdar, Vittorio Merola, Salma Mousa, Eva Ostergaard-Nielsen, Bhumi Purohit, Johanna Rickne, Harald Schoen, Kristina Bakkaer Simonsen, and Chagai Weiss, as well as participants at the NYU CESS Experimental Political Science Conference, EuroWEPS, EPSA and APSA 2021, and faculty at the University of Barcelona and Aarhus University for helpful comments, and Marten Appel for research assistance. Our study was pre-registered with the Center for Open Science and our pre-registration can be found [here](#). This study received Institutional Review Board approval.

<sup>4</sup>Authors listed in alphabetical order. Both authors contributed equally.

# 1 Introduction

*“I did not get history rewritten. I just got it rectified.”*

– Murli Manohar Joshi, as quoted in Pathak (2019)

Shortly following Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)’s rise to power in India in 1998, observers noted an elemental and sweeping shift in the state’s educational content: secular narratives of the nation’s history that highlighted its pluralism had in many places been replaced with accounts that portrayed India as a fundamentally Hindu nation to which Muslims had arrived as a “foreign” and “invading” force. Critics alleged that the changes were part of a radical effort by Education Minister Murli Manohar Joshi and his hand-picked allies at the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) to rewrite Indian history to fall in line with Hindutva, a nationalist ideology to which Joshi subscribed grounded in notions of Hindu supremacy (Thobani 2019). In the series of “education wars” that followed, Joshi and his defenders in turn responded that they were merely correcting the historical account.

As in India, political entrepreneurs in many countries today are locked in battles over which version of history should be promoted by the state and thereby which groups should be remembered, and how, in collective memory. Particularly visible are debates in the U.S and in Europe over statues, street names, and public symbols that honor leaders and movements that committed atrocities against marginalized communities (Tharoor 2020). These politics of the past suggest that there are different ways a country can portray its history and that political actors have a stake in presenting a particular narrative (Nussbaum 2009; Reicher and Hopkins 2000). Yet even as battles intensify, mobilizing passionate supporters on both sides, we still know little about the political effects of different historical representations.

Do different representations of a nation’s history affect which social groups seek out, and ultimately obtain, positions of power? In particular, can historical narratives that exclude marginalized communities deepen their underrepresentation in leadership roles? And could highlighting marginalized group members’ historical contributions to the nation encourage their political inclusion? We provide a theoretical framework and an empirical test aimed at increasing extant understandings of the link between historical representations and the

political marginalization of historically disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup> We hypothesize that exclusionary historical representations can undercut marginalized communities' perceived claim to the nation and entitlement to speak on its behalf, and thus make marginalized group members less willing to seek out leadership positions (*supply channel*) and greater society less disposed to support them when they do (*demand channel*). Consistently, we posit that an inclusive representation can serve to increase marginalized group members' perceived belonging and entitlement to make decisions that affect others in the nation. An implication of our theory is that political entrepreneurs may be motivated to promote a particular version of history in order to lay claim to control of the state, and to delegitimize other groups' claims. In this sense, deploying history may constitute more than a symbolic action designed to appease key supporters.

Our theory is rooted in the notion that history serves a crucial function in defining and legitimizing boundaries of national belonging and can therefore be used to promote politics of inclusion or exclusion (Liu and Hilton 2005; Sibley et al. 2008). According to Wodak (2009: 25), "Historical memory [...] is an indispensable prerequisite for national identity [...]. The further into the past the real or imaginary memories reach, the more securely national identity is supported." Tying together insights from literatures on history and the nation with work on entitlement and leadership emergence, we posit that history has both a descriptive and a prescriptive dimension: by describing who has participated in and contributed to the nation historically, prescriptions regarding who is entitled to make decisions on its behalf can be derived. Historical narratives that depict a group as having long-standing ties to a nation and positively contributing to its development might cast that group as part of the nation's *core constituency* endowed with a mandate to lead. In contrast, individuals from groups depicted as negative and "foreign" entities could be classified as *peripheral* with a mandate to follow.

We test our theory through a pre-registered, incentivized online experiment with 1,592 respondents in India, a country in which Muslims are heavily underrepresented in political institutions and where there is an active movement to minimize Muslim historical contributions and recast the country as a Hindu nation. In our experiment, Hindu and Muslim

---

<sup>1</sup>When developing our theoretical framework and empirical test, we focus in particular on how historical representations might affect the take-up of leadership roles by individuals from politically marginalized ethnic minority communities, as it is often these communities that are both underrepresented in leadership roles under the status quo and omitted from the nation's official historical narrative or ascribed a negative role. However, our expectation is that our hypotheses would generalize to other marginalized identity categories sharing these characteristics. In our writing, we refer to such groups to which we would expect our theory to apply as "marginalized" or "historically disadvantaged".

participants are tasked with completing several exercises sourced from real, official Indian school textbook material, for which they can earn additional incentives. We randomly assign participants a history exercise that either highlights the plural nature of Indian history and Muslims' historical contributions to the nation (*inclusive representation treatment*, promoted by the secular left), describes a glorious Hindu past and a dark period of Muslim invasions (*exclusive representation treatment*, endorsed by the Hindu right), or which details unrelated history on topics such as agriculture and the development of the railway system (*baseline condition*, not advocated for by one more than the other).

Following the history exercise, participants are randomly matched in groups of three and are told they must complete two additional school exercises with payoffs determined by group performance and all members earning an equal share. While they will complete both additional exercises, only one will count for payment for all group members, in accordance with the decision of a group representative. Our central outcomes of interest from this set of decisions are a participant's (1) willingness to volunteer as group representative (supply channel) and (2) their preference ranking of their group partners as group representative (demand channel). The tasks are immediately followed by questions designed to capture the same two channels using measures more directly linked to political behavior. Our rich set of outcome data allow us to evaluate our theory using both stated and revealed preferences, and using both an incentivized outcome over which we have a high degree of experimenter control as well as outcomes over which we have less control but which offer more clear real-world corollaries.

To evaluate our hypotheses, we consider whether, and how, views about individuals from a marginalized group (Muslims), their suitability for leadership roles, and whether they adopt such roles, change depending on respondents' random assignment to a historical representation (*inclusive*, *exclusive*, or *baseline*). Our findings reveal that historical representations can affect the perceived centrality of different groups to the nation: While exclusive renderings of history increase the perceived centrality of Hindus to the Indian nation, inclusive renderings increase the perceived centrality of Muslims. We also observe that historical representations can affect the supply of and demand for ethnic minorities in leadership positions. In particular, Muslim respondents who are exposed to inclusive representations of national history are more eager to take on a leadership role than are Muslim respondents exposed to an exclusive or a more neutral version of history. Inclusive representations also positively affect Muslim respondents' perceptions about their own and real-world Muslim politicians' entitlement to lead, and their

demand for real-world Muslim politicians. Unlike Muslim respondents, Hindu participants are largely unmoved by the inclusive treatment in their demand for Muslim leaders, indicating that shifting majority groups' views on minority leadership may constitute a greater challenge.

To our knowledge, our study represents the first quantitative assessment of the link between historical narratives and the descriptive representation of historically disadvantaged groups. As such, our paper sheds new light on the political consequences of historical revisionism, a topic of interest far beyond the Indian context with implications for ongoing real-world debates (Rozenas and Vlasenko 2021). While previous work examines the effect of textbook reforms on national identity (Chen, Lin and Yang 2018; Durrani and Dunne 2010) and political attitudes and beliefs (Cantoni et al. 2017), we contribute by exploring how different ways of portraying national history can shape marginalized group members' aspirations to attain leadership positions, and greater society's acceptance of their leadership. Our findings therefore illustrate how history can be employed to promote the exclusion or inclusion of historically disadvantaged groups and offer policy-relevant insights into how the political inclusion of marginalized communities may be encouraged.

Our research provides both theoretical and methodological contributions. By tying together heretofore distinct lines of study on social representations of history (Reicher and Hopkins 2000; Liu and Hilton 2005; Sibley et al. 2008), entitlement (Liddle and Michielsens 2000; O'Brien and Major 2009), and leader emergence (Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Conroy and Green 2020), our theory offers new insights into the mechanisms through which historical representations can shape the supply of – and demand for – descriptive representation. Our experimental design employs innovative methods to explore these mechanisms empirically, through the use of incentivized exercises and group tasks among participants represented by religiously identifiable avatars. In doing so, we follow recent calls to make surveys more engaging for participants by making them more “game-like” (Salganik 2019).

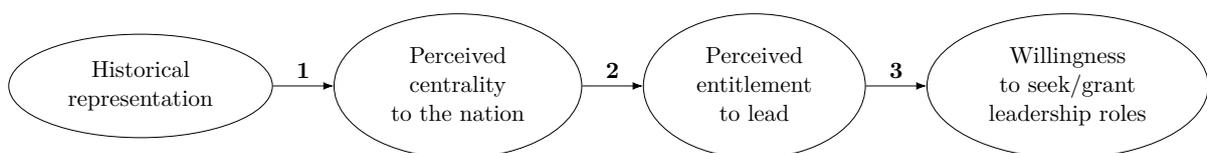
Finally, our paper contributes to additional strands of literature rarely in conversation. First, we contribute to work examining exclusion, national belonging, and political behavior among ethnic minorities. Our findings offer new and important insights into how minorities respond, socio-politically, to dynamics of exclusion (Abdelgadir and Fouka 2020; Simonsen 2021), under what conditions exclusion mobilizes or demobilizes (Hobbs and Lajevardi 2019; Oskooii 2018; Weiss, Siegel and Romney 2021), and how minority inclusion can be encouraged (Alrababah et al. 2019; Williamson et al. 2021). Second, we extend research on the

underrepresentation of historically disadvantaged groups by introducing a new theory for one way marginalization might be sustained (or reversed): historical representations (Bueno and Dunning 2017; Dancygier et al. 2019; Portmann and Stojanović 2019). Third, we test for both *supply* and *demand* channels driving underrepresentation, an advance on a body of research that has primarily focused on demand-side explanations. Our research thus speaks to a growing literature exploring how supply-side channels such as socialization (Bos et al. 2021), ambition (Bonneau and Kanthak 2020; Fox and Lawless 2014), confidence (Wolak 2020) and election aversion (Kanthak and Woon 2015) might explain the underrepresentation of marginalized groups.

## 2 Theory and Hypotheses

Do different portrayals of a nation’s history affect whether members of historically marginalized groups seek out, and ultimately obtain, positions of power? In this Section, we present our theory and pre-registered hypotheses. We propose that historical representations – namely, if and how different groups are represented in collective memory – can alter which individuals are perceived as belonging to a nation’s core constituency, entitled to represent the interests of other members of the nation. As a consequence, we posit, historical representations can have important implications for who is willing to seek out leadership positions, as well as who is more likely to be accepted as a leader by greater society. Taken together, our theoretical framework suggests that different depictions of history have the potential to change the degree of descriptive representation of various social groups in positions of power. Figure 1 displays the different stages of our theory, which draws on literatures on social representations of history (Sibley et al. 2008), identity and nationhood (Reicher and Hopkins 2000), entitlement theory (O’Brien and Major 2009) and leader emergence (Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Conroy and Green 2020). In what follows, we discuss each stage of our theory and state its associated hypotheses, before tying them all together at the end.

Figure 1: **Stages of Theory**



## 2.1 Historical Representations, the Nation, and Who Can Claim It

The first component of our theory asserts that historical representations can play a critical role in defining current conceptions of national identity and different groups' perceived claims to the nation, especially when reinforced or promoted by entities exerting authority over the nation (e.g., the state and its representatives). History is recognized by many scholars as a key ingredient in the creation and maintenance of the imagined community of nationhood, as well as for other socially constructed identity categories (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawn 1990). While nations may differ in the degree to which formal membership is explicitly tied to the past (notably, some countries ascribe citizenship by descent, others by civic criteria; see Brubaker (1992); Chandra (2012)), most if not all boast an origin story and historical narrative that helps to define a national identity and distinguish “us” from “them” (Brubaker et al. 2006; Horowitz 1985). Indeed, initial claims for nationhood were often justified by the assertion of “historic rights” (Brubaker et al. 2006) or a shared “mythic history” (Laitin 1995).

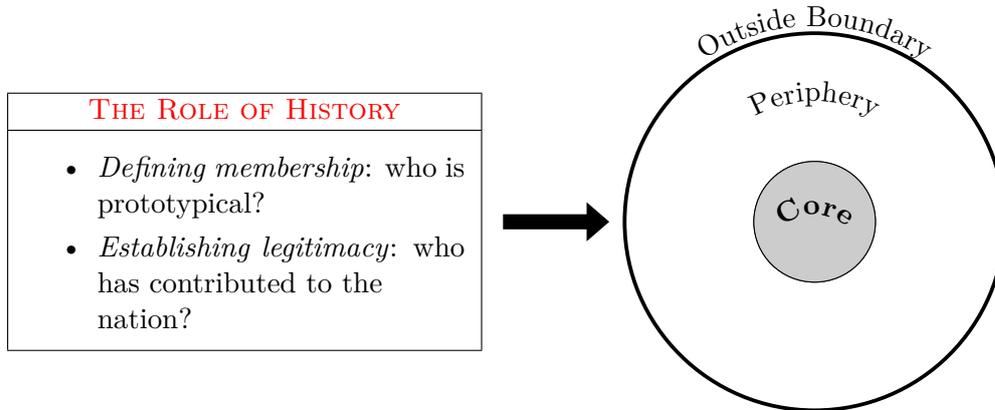
Building on this literature, we understand historical representations as one way that people draw boundaries between the nation’s “core” (the essential, natural, unquestioned members) and those relegated to the “periphery”; those “who might be allowed to be part of the nation, but ‘never quite’” (Pandey 1999: 608).<sup>2</sup> We identify two main channels through which history can affect different groups' perceived “centrality” to the nation and thus their right to claim membership in its core community (see Figure 2). First, through the incorporation of certain groups (and not others) into stories of national identity, historical narratives can *define* who is a “prototypical” in-group member and who is not (Reicher and Hopkins 2000; Sibley et al. 2008). Second, by highlighting or downplaying different groups' contributions to the nation, historical narratives can *legitimize* or *delegitimize* a society's current or projected social and political arrangements, including which groups are thought to have a “right” to core membership (Khan et al. 2017). Where minorities' contributions to the nation are undermined in historical accounts, individuals might internalize and accept the view that presently dominant groups

---

<sup>2</sup>Different schools of thought conceptualize different roles of history as regards the nation (see Kundra (2019) for a helpful overview). While we focus on history as one often used and effective strategy for establishing national identity boundaries, we do not claim that it is the only, or indeed most desirable, tool available.

are core members of the nation, and that marginalized communities are peripheral.<sup>3,4</sup>

Figure 2: **How historical narratives can shape perceived centrality to the nation**



We argue that by employing historical narratives to serve their purposes, political entrepreneurs can – through these two channels – alter the degree to which historically marginalized groups are seen as members of a nation’s core community. Entrepreneurs can selectively invoke certain events and people to establish “foundational myths” that endow “prototypical” in-group members with a shared ancestry, common traits, or a “golden age” (Guichard 2010). And they can omit others, or depict them as “enemies of the nation”, to justify their exclusion from the national community (Khan et al. 2017). Either channel could lead to an interrogation of whether an individual “truly” belongs to the nation: one, by questioning whether they fit the criteria for membership, and the second, by questioning whether have “earned” the right to be part of its core community.

In sum, our theory suggests that an *inclusive* historical representation that makes space for a social group in the nation and positively highlights its contributions establishes that group’s centrality to the nation and belonging as core, or full, members. In contrast, a historical retelling that excludes or actively attributes one’s group a negative role in the nation’s history suggests that individuals from that group either do not belong in the nation or do not belong fully (i.e., are situated outside the identity boundary or inside but on the “periphery”).

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Historical representations can shape the perceived prototypicality and historical contributions (“centrality”) of different social groups to the nation. Specifically:

<sup>3</sup>Where an existing social order is viewed as legitimate, we expect that both members of the nation’s core and the periphery are likely to accept the status quo system. This relates to the concept of “consensual discrimination” or a “self-policing system” where dominant and marginalized communities both adhere to the prevailing hierarchy. As described by Turner and Tajfel (1986: 280), under such circumstances, “subordinate groups often seem to internalize a wider social evaluation of themselves as ‘inferior’ or ‘second class.’”

<sup>4</sup>Research indicates that a feeling of national belonging is learned, not innate, and is not dichotomous (I belong or I do not) but continuous (how much I feel I belong) and varies with time and context (Kundra 2019).

- a) *Exclusive historical representations* will reduce the perceived centrality of marginalized groups to the nation
- b) *Inclusive historical representations* will increase the perceived centrality of marginalized groups to the nation

## 2.2 Claim to the Nation and Entitlement

The foregoing discussion brings us to our central theoretical claim: we posit that through shaping perceptions of who is a prototypical member of the nation, and who has contributed to the nation, historical representations can alter perceptions of who is entitled to speak on the nation's behalf. We define "entitlement" as the notion that a person, or category of people, should enjoy a particular set of rights by virtue of who they are (O'Brien and Major 2009). One can feel entitled to a nation's material resources such as welfare or jobs and also to less tangible psycho-social benefits, such as the right to judge others' behaviour or make decisions that will affect other members of the nation (Skey 2014).

Qualitative research provides suggestive support for our posited tie between a group's perceived centrality to the nation (their prototypicality and recognized historical contributions) and whether its members are viewed, and view themselves, as entitled to speak on the nation's behalf. Reicher and Hopkins (2000) observe that the more an individual conforms to a prototypical group member in terms of traits, norms and behavior, the greater their perceived right to speak in the group's name. Debates on immigration routinely feature arguments that certain citizens "deserve" more than others due to their prior contributions to the nation (Sainsbury 2012). Narratives that call into question a group's historical contributions could therefore "create group differences in perceived entitlement by enhancing the degree to which differential outcomes are seen as legitimate reflections of differential inputs" (O'Brien and Major 2009). In sum, by affecting perceived belonging, historical representations may affect different social groups' perceived entitlement, "so that 'I belong more than you' also means 'I deserve more than you'" (Skey 2014: 327).

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Historical representations can shape the perceived entitlement of different social groups to speak on behalf of the nation. Specifically:

- a) *Exclusive historical representations* will reduce the perceived entitlement of marginalized groups to speak on behalf of the nation

- b) *Inclusive historical representations* will increase the perceived entitlement of marginalized groups to speak on behalf of the nation

### 2.3 Entitlement and Leadership

The final building block of our theory posits that perceived entitlement to speak for the nation has consequences for who ultimately *does* speak for the nation. Specifically, we theorize that entitlement can affect individuals' willingness to assume leadership positions (*supply mechanism*), and of society to grant them the opportunity to lead (*demand mechanism*). Our theory draws on studies of leader emergence, which indicate that individuals who are perceived or perceive themselves as less entitled to lead can face significant internal and external hurdles when considering or attempting to obtain such leadership roles.

One barrier less entitled individuals often experience are doubts about their competence as leaders. Norris and Lovenduski (1995) observe that a lack of self-confidence in the ability to lead or feelings of being “unqualified” can weaken marginalized group members' willingness to seek leadership positions. Beliefs about incompetency also often underlie greater society's arguments against affirmative action policies aiming to increase the representation of marginalized communities: critics contend that empowered individuals would be less competent, implying that there are not enough “qualified” marginalized community members to fill government or other positions (Gulzar, Haas and Pasquale 2020; Jensenius 2015).

Individuals perceived as less entitled to lead may also face questions about their legitimacy and deservingness to serve in leadership roles. We argue that historical representations can endow certain groups with a greater claim to the nation, thus distinguishing “those who are recognised as having a legitimate entitlement to judge who and what is appropriate within the bounded territory of the nation”, from those who are not (Skey 2014: 109). Research suggests that aspiring leaders who do not view themselves as “natural leaders” struggle to gain acceptance in representative roles. As Liddle and Michielsens (2000: 128) note, if entitlement is not self-evident, “a sense of entitlement has to be both constructed for the self and publicly presented to others before the authority to exercise power is recognized.”

We thus expect that the perceived entitlement of groups to speak on behalf of the nation will have implications for whether group members actually speak for it. According to our theory, exclusive (inclusive) historical representations and resultant effects on belonging and entitlement could result in fewer (more) disadvantaged group members in leadership roles ei-

ther through altering marginalized group members' willingness to lead, or by changing greater society's receptivity to their leadership.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Exclusive historical representations* will reduce the presence of marginalized group members in leadership roles by:

- a) reducing the willingness of marginalized group members to seek out leadership roles (*supply channel*)
- b) reducing the willingness of greater society to grant them such roles (*demand channel*)

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Inclusive historical representations* will increase the presence of marginalized group members in leadership roles by:

- a) increasing the willingness of marginalized group members to seek out leadership roles (*supply channel*)
- b) increasing the willingness of greater society to grant them such roles (*demand channel*)

According to our theory, the effects of historical representations operate primarily through changing perceptions of who is a “core” member of the nation, and thus who is entitled to take decisions on behalf of such “true” members. Since historical representations are expected to alter perceived hierarchies of belonging, changes in marginalized group members' willingness to lead should mainly be observed when they are asked to speak on behalf of members of a different perceived “rank” within the nation. Our final hypothesis reflects this expectation.

**H<sub>5</sub> (Group Composition):** Effects of historical representations on marginalized group members' willingness to seek out leadership roles will be greater when the leadership position requires that marginalized group members speak on behalf of “unquestioned” core members of the nation, than where the position requires that they speak only on behalf of other marginalized group members.

## **2.4 Putting it All Together: Inclusive and Exclusive Historical Representations and Who Speaks for the Nation**

Political “identity entrepreneurs” from around the world are locked in battles over different versions of history and whether and how different groups should be represented in collective memory. We argue that these “education wars” are motivated in part by an understanding

that history can powerfully shape conceptions of who “really” belongs to the nation and thereby who is entitled to take decisions on its behalf. Who wins these battles may therefore have consequences not only for who depicts a nation’s past, but also who charts its future. The central role of history is clear when observing the urgency with which political actors seek to re-write history books and re-define symbols of collective memory. As textbooks are re-written, streets are re-named and different heroes are celebrated, new imagined boundaries of the nation crystallize.

Table 1 summarizes our central hypotheses and illustrates how exclusive and inclusive renderings of history are expected to affect the perceived centrality, entitlement, supply of, and demand for leaders from marginalized communities – among marginalized group members themselves, and among greater society. Taken together, our theoretical framework illustrates how historical narratives can affect who seeks out, and who obtains, positions of power.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1: **Summary of Hypotheses**

Predicted effects on _____ of/for marginalized groups	Population	Treatment		
		Exclusive History	Inclusive History	Core Member(s) Present
Centrality ( $H_1$ )	All	↓	↑	
Entitlement ( $H_2$ )	All	↓	↑	
Supply ( $H_{3a}, H_{4a}, H_5$ )	Marginalized	↓	↑	↑*
Demand ( $H_{3b}, H_{4b}$ )	Marginalized	↓	↑	
	Greater Society	↓	↑	

*Notes:* This table presents a summary of our hypotheses and associated empirical predictions. Our theory does not result in symmetric empirical expectations for marginalized and dominant groups; see Sections 2 and C.6 for more information. \*Refers to an expected moderating effect:  $H_5$  predicts that the effects of historical representations on marginalized individuals’ supply of leadership will be greater where the leadership position requires that they speak on behalf of “unquestioned” core members of the nation.

### 3 Empirical Setting: The Rise of Hindu Nationalism and Historical Revisionism in India

We conduct an experimental test of our theoretical argument in India, where conceptions of national identity are deeply contested and where two radically different, yet fully developed accounts of the nation’s history uneasily co-exist and are drawn upon by different actors to shape and justify their political agendas. On the one end, many on the secular left (notably,

<sup>5</sup>Appendix Section C.6 contains a list of additional empirical expectations and our reasoning behind them. While these expectations are not directly derived from our theoretical framework, they nevertheless address questions of import, such as whether and how we should expect historical narratives to affect the supply of and demand for dominant group members in leadership roles.

the Indian Congress Party (INC)) have long defended a version of history that emphasizes the plural nature of the Indian nation. On the other end, members of the Hindu right (prominently today, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)) promote a version of history in which Hindus have a unique claim to the Indian nation and which excludes and vilifies the country’s Muslim minority population (Thobani 2019).

### 3.1 The “Textbook Controversy”

History textbooks represent a particularly effective means of transmitting history and can provide sustained exposure to a particular narrative to many millions of students (Cantoni et al. 2017; Chen, Lin and Yang 2018). As Flåten (2016: 23) observes, “history textbooks may be construed as an attempt to establish an imagined community, centered on common conceptions of the past.” Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising that textbooks in India have been targeted since at least the 1990s both by the secular left and the Hindu right, with each accusing the other of re-writing content when in power to advance political aims. Changes to textbooks produced by the NCERT – a federal institution in charge of developing curricula and preparing model textbooks – reflect the push and pull of the “education war” era: textbooks written in the 1990s under INC were replaced in 2002 by a BJP-led coalition, only to be changed in 2006 and 2008 when INC took back control, and heavily modified once again when BJP returned to power in 2014 (Guichard 2010). Similar patterns are also visible with state-specific textbooks, which have been modified in numerous states in the last few years alone (Traub 2018).

As we elaborate on further in section 4.2, we use excerpts from official history textbooks as our experimental treatments. The selected passages provide clear, state-sponsored narratives corresponding to the two main historical visions summarized above; using them also increases our confidence that our treatments are ecologically valid (Morton and Williams 2010), and tell us something about the effects of ongoing battles over history in the real world.<sup>6</sup> Textbooks promoted by the Hindu right “construct a particular imagined community: one defined according to Hindu cultural similarity”, while those advanced by the secular left aim to “promote the building of a secular national identity” (Guichard 2010: 56). The history textbooks we draw on for our experimental treatments thus not only mirror, but are indeed central

---

<sup>6</sup>We conduct an experiment in order to provide a close, causally identified test of the different stages of our theory, but we are additionally working on a companion piece using observational data to evaluate the effects of “education wars” in India. See Appendix Section F.5 for an exploratory analysis of how exposure to real world narratives may have interacted with our experimental stimuli.

to, the ideological “battle over history” which “pits a Nehruvian narrative of India’s past, which stresses plurality, complexity, and tension, against a Hindutva narrative, which stresses internal purity and external danger” (Nussbaum 2009: 261).

## 4 Research design

We test our theory through an incentivized online experiment conducted with 1,592 Indian Muslim and Hindu respondents between June and August 2021. We randomly assign participants to either complete a history exercise with an exclusive, inclusive, or “neutral” (baseline) historical narrative.<sup>7</sup> Our main outcomes are the perceived centrality of Hindus and Muslims to the nation, as well as the perceived entitlement of, supply of, and demand for members of the Muslim minority in leadership positions.

### 4.1 Sample

Participants were recruited using an online panel from the market research company Lucid, which creates its panel by aggregating across a number of survey panels. Lucid is increasingly popular with social scientists, and validation efforts from the U.S. indicate that respondents recruited on the platform approximate national benchmarks, both demographically and behaviorally (Coppock and McClellan 2019). Quality checks include a GeoIP screener that allows researchers to verify respondent location (in our case, India) and prevent repeated completion. We supplemented these checks with a few other measures to ensure high data quality (see Appendix Section C.4): notably, we use pre-treatment attention checks suggested by Aronow et al. (2020) in a recent paper on inattentiveness among Lucid survey respondents, and we exclude respondents who take the survey very quickly (i.e., less than half the median soft launch completion time) or very slowly (i.e., more than twice the median time).

Our sample includes respondents from four Indian states: Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. India is an enormous, diverse country and restricting sampling to a few states allows us to maintain some control over the sociopolitical contexts in which respondents are embedded. Section C.3 describes the criteria we used when selecting these four states in detail. We screen out non-Muslims and non-Hindus, and we set quotas for each religious identity category as well as for men and women. Participants receive a participation fee,

---

<sup>7</sup>Results indicate that randomization was effectively implemented, as participants are balanced across treatments on observable characteristics (see Appendix Table E1).

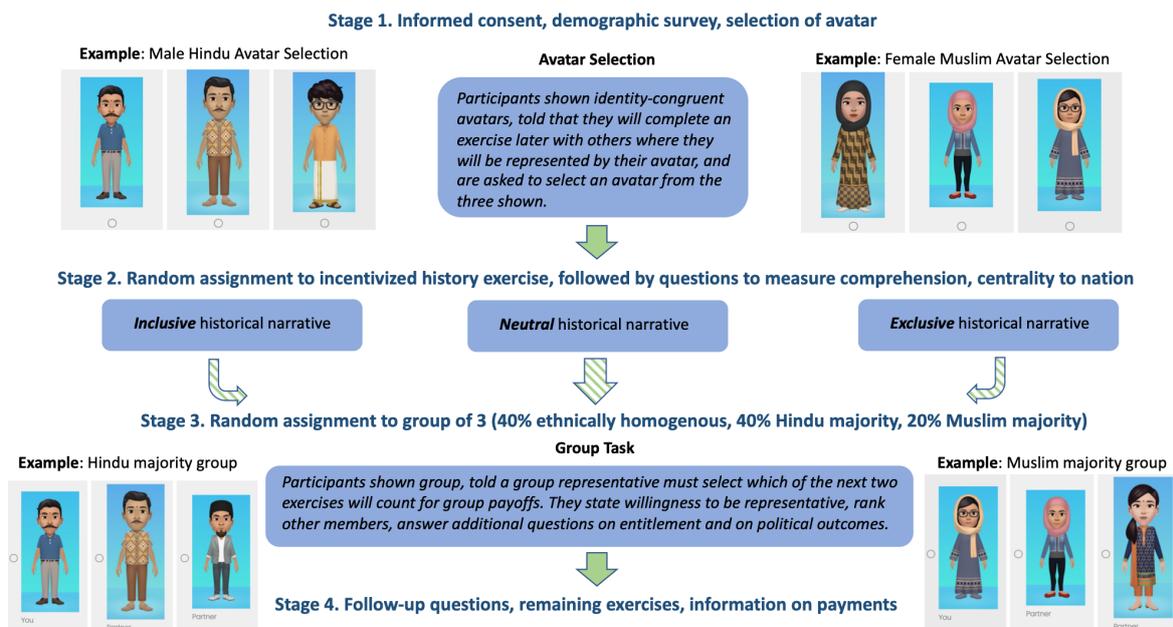
along with additional earnings based on their decisions, the decisions of others, and chance, in the form of e-rewards/e-currency. Participants could complete the study in English or Hindi.

## 4.2 Study Stages, Experiment Treatments, and Measurement

Figure 3 summarizes the four stages of our study (see Appendix B for experiment materials).

**Stage 1** In the first stage, participants complete a short demographic questionnaire, at the end of which they are asked to choose an avatar, which is visibly Hindu or Muslim, to represent them at a later stage in the study. Respondents are given a choice between three gender and religion congruent avatars, which we selected from a larger set due to their popularity with respondents and their high degree of religious identifiability in a pre-test (N = 60) we conducted in October and November 2020. To reduce the likelihood that respondents might have a negative reaction or feel that they were forced into being represented by a religious stereotype, we included some variation in avatars’ style of dress (in particular, modern versus traditional); importantly, we found in the pre-test that respondents overwhelmingly chose identity-congruent avatars when also given the option of identity-incongruent ones, and did not voice any concerns with avatars or the selection task (see Appendix Section D.1).<sup>8</sup>

Figure 3: Sequence of study stages



<sup>8</sup>We also collect data on participant experience of the study and find little to no evidence of individuals being upset by the avatar selection, treatment content, or other aspects of the study.

**Stage 2** In the second stage, participants are informed that the theme of the study is “Back to School”. They are randomly assigned a history text, sourced from real official school textbook material, that either highlights the plural nature of Indian history and Muslims’ historical contributions to the nation (*inclusive representation treatment*), describes a glorious Hindu past and a dark period of Muslim invasions (*exclusive representation treatment*), or which details history on non-politicized topics such as agriculture (*baseline condition*). Respondents are informed that the material comes from textbooks “approved by government educational boards in India.” Passages are followed by comprehension questions designed to highlight the critical elements of the texts and for which correct answers contribute to participants’ payoffs.

When identifying young adult textbook material using the websites of the NCERT and state educational boards, we tried to choose passages that clearly illustrated the different strategies identity entrepreneurs pursue to shape their preferred notion of nationhood, as outlined in section 3 and further detailed in section A of the Appendix (Guichard 2010; Khan et al. 2017; Nussbaum 2009). In particular, we focused on two periods, ancient and medieval India, that constitute critical historical moments and are interpreted very differently in the two competing narratives. For the Hindu right, *Ancient India* provides an opportunity to establish a Hindu “foundational myth” (Khan et al. 2017). According to this account, Hindus are the direct descendants of the indigenous Indo-Aryans, who – prior to Muslim invasions and colonial conquest – enjoyed a “golden age” of peace, harmony, cultural and scientific innovation and prosperity (Guichard 2010). *Medieval India*, on the other hand, is described as a dark period of Muslim invasion, destruction, violence, and Hindu subjugation.

The secular left offers a radically different version of Indian history in which *Ancient India* was characterized by significant heterogeneity and the coexistence of multiple religions. According to this version, the Mughal rulers of *Medieval India* positively contributed to the nation through their embrace of syncretic culture, contributions to the arts (poetry, architecture, cuisine), techniques of governance, and tradition of religious tolerance. Table 2 summarizes key characteristics and events associated with these two time periods according to the secular (*inclusive representation treatment*) and the Hindu nationalist (*exclusive representation*

*treatment*) versions of history, and as detailed in our experimental treatments.<sup>9,10</sup>

Table 2: **Historical representations**

Time Period	Hindu Right	Secular Left
<i>Ancient India</i>	Antiquity of unitary Hindu culture Glory of ‘golden’ Vedic age Aryan Civilization indigenous	Migrations & Ancient cities Aryan migration theory Classes and conflict
<i>Medieval India</i>	Muslim religious invasion Akbar the destructor Maharana Pratap and resistance	Trade and cultural exchange Akbar the great Tolerance during the Mughal Empire

To increase the salience of the treatment and maintain it through later stages of the study, and to make the study appear more natural to respondents by highlighting the topic matter, we additionally include as a banner content that a student might see in a classroom and which corresponds to our treatment material. Thus, in the *exclusive* treatment, subjects see images of Hindu historical figures on every page beginning in Stage 2, whereas in the *inclusive* treatment subjects see images of Mughal art. These images also come from real history textbooks (see Figure B2 in the Appendix).

Following the texts and comprehension questions, respondents answer two questions designed to measure the perceived centrality (prototypicality and historical contributions) of Hindus and Muslims to the nation ( $H_1$ ). To measure perceived contributions, we ask respondents to select from a list (drawn from our own history exercise treatments) which groups they believe most contributed in a positive way to the development of the Indian nation. Participants are asked to pick a total of five words from a list of 19. In our analysis, we count how many of the selected words are distinctly “Hindu” or “Muslim” in nature, with variables therefore ranging from 0-5 where ‘0’ indicates that no Hindu/Muslim words were selected and ‘5’ indicates that all words selected were Hindu/Muslim in nature. To measure prototypicality, we ask respondents to what extent they agree with the following two statements: (1) “I think it would be accurate if someone described me as a typical Indian” and (2) “I feel similar to other Indians”. The order in which the two questions appear is randomized.

<sup>9</sup>See Appendix A for more on the particular renderings of history which inform our experimental treatments.

<sup>10</sup>Given the political nature of these different historical narratives, a possible concern is that respondents may perceive the history exercises not as factual historical accounts, but as ideologically biased narratives. If respondents view the history treatments as factually incorrect, the treatments are unlikely to produce the intended effects and more likely to produce backlash. To deal with this concern, we asked respondents in our pre-test to read the history treatments and answer several questions about them, including whether or not they perceived the text as factually correct. As shown in Figure D7, the vast majority of respondents view the texts as “completely correct” or “mostly correct”. Participants also did not refer to historical revisionism or politics in their open-ended responses about the texts.

**Stage 3** Following Stage 2, participants are matched in groups of three and shown the religiously-identifiable avatars of their partners, who they are told were drawn “from a pool of participants that was chosen be broadly representative of the Indian nation (though certain communities may appear more or less than others).”<sup>11,12</sup> They learn that they must complete two additional school exercises on geography and sociology, but only one of them will count for payment.<sup>13</sup> Payoffs are determined by group performance and all members will earn an equal share: 1000 Indian rupees (INR) for each correct answer.<sup>14</sup> While respondents complete both additional exercises, a group representative will pick which of the two exercises will count for payment for all group members. We elicit individuals’ desire to be group representative by asking them to state from 1-4 their willingness to be group representative. Following Coffman (2014), we explain this decision in terms of reserving a “place in line” relative to one’s group partners, where “1” means that a respondent wishes to be first in line to be group representative and “4” means they do not even wish to be in line. After stating their number, participants are asked to rank from 1-3 (including themselves) their preference for which group member should be group representative, which they are told will be determinative in the event that multiple group members are equally most willing to be group representative.

The incentivized group task yields two outcomes that we use to evaluate the *supply of* and *demand for* different types of leaders ( $H_3$ - $H_5$ ), with leadership operationalized as taking a decision that will affect others (in a group broadly representative of the Indian nation): one that measures participants’ willingness to become group representative (*supply*) and a second that captures participants’ willingness to see other group members as representative (*demand*).<sup>15</sup> We expect these outcomes to be less vulnerable to social desirability bias than are stated preference questions, both because it is less clear what a socially desirable answer is

---

<sup>11</sup>We assign men and women to separate groups to control for potential gender interactions that might occur in mixed-gender groups, such as men (women) feeling more (less) entitled to take decisions over women (men).

<sup>12</sup>Participants are either randomly assigned to (1) a homogeneous group (all Hindu or all Muslim, 40% of compositions), a (2) a Hindu majority group (2 Hindus and 1 Muslim, 40%), or (3) a Muslim majority group (2 Muslims and 1 Hindu, 20%). We oversample the first two compositions to ensure sufficient power to make our central comparisons of interest, and because in a Hindu-majority country, we might view the Muslim majority composition as the least ecologically valid of the three. Within a composition, avatars and the order in which they appear is random. We compare effect sizes across homogeneous and mixed groups to evaluate  $H_5$ .

<sup>13</sup>We pre-tested different topics and chose geography and sociology because groups did not appear to be stereotyped as better or worse in these areas (Coffman 2014).

<sup>14</sup>Participants could earn up to 3400 INR in additional incentives: 100 INR for each correct answer to a comprehension question (stage 2), and 1000 INR for each correct answer by a group member in the topic area selected for payment by the group representative (stage 3). We then randomly selected 1 out of every 20 participants to receive their additional earnings, as the amount was substantial: 3400 INR is equivalent to approximately USD \$46 as of September 2021.

<sup>15</sup>Note that we do not mention the ranking exercise until after participants have stated their own willingness to be group representative. We make this design choice in order to minimize the risk that expectations of discrimination (demand) affect respondents’ eagerness to become group leader (supply).

and because the decisions are financially incentivized; they also offer a relatively high degree of experimenter control, as differences in interpretations and predispositions are less likely than in an area over which individuals already have established opinions or views.

While the “lab-like” group task thus offers some distinctive benefits, we also collect supplementary revealed and stated preference outcomes that relate more directly to real-world political behavior of import. To capture our supply-side channel, we explore the extent to which the different representations of history affect participants’ willingness to become engaged in politics. Notably, after informing respondents that recent studies on leadership and political engagement in India indicate that many people lack information about how to become politically active, we ask whether they would like to receive information on platforms and programs that work towards empowering citizens to participate in democratic and governance processes. Later, respondents who answer “yes” to this question receive a link to a website where, after entering their unique ID number, they are shown the promised information.

In order to further capture the demand side, we explore how exposure to the different representations of history affect evaluations of real Hindu and Muslim politicians. Several NGOs in India track politicians’ performance and publish “report cards” in order to improve accountability. We randomly assign respondents a report card issued by an NGO in Maharashtra for either a Hindu or a Muslim politician with a similar rating.<sup>16</sup> Respondents are asked to rate the politician on several different dimensions, such as qualification and worthiness for the office and how representative they are of India.

In stage 3, we also measure perceived entitlement to speak on behalf of others in the nation ( $H_2$ ) in two ways. First, we use two criteria on which respondents were asked to evaluate the Muslim politician in the report card exercise: perceived deservingness and qualification for office. Second, we ask respondents to share whether *they* feel (1) worthy and (2) qualified to be a group leader in the group task. These measures correspond closely to our conceptualization of entitlement as reflecting a person’s perceived *deservingness* as well as their perceived *ability* to be a group representative, by virtue of who they are. All item answers are elicited on 5-point agree-disagree scales. See Appendix Section B.3.3 for more details on stage 3 measurement.

**Stage 4** In the study’s final stage, participants complete the geography and the sociology exercises and, subsequently, receive information about payment. To simplify our design we

---

<sup>16</sup>Report cards are from the NGO Praja (see <https://www.praja.org/report-card>). Both politicians have an average rating (neither good nor bad).

allocate participants to groups, and calculate payments, ex post; we implement quotas for Muslims and Hindus so that there is no deception and individuals are assigned to groups with the members they were shown during the study. These design choices free us from having to conduct the study with simultaneous decision-making, which due to attrition and other challenges associated with an online experiment, would be challenging. Participants receive their participation fee and are given the details of a webpage where, after all participants have completed the study, they can redeem any additional gift card amount earned by entering a unique survey code. The experiment is thus entirely anonymous and does not require the collection of participants' personal information at any point.

## 5 Empirical Strategy and Ethics

### 5.1 Empirical Strategy

In our main analysis, we run a series of OLS regressions where we investigate effects of our *exclusive* and *inclusive* treatments (relative to the *baseline*), both for the overall respondent population, and – as is most relevant for evaluating our hypotheses – separately for Muslim and Hindu respondents. To evaluate  $H_5$ , we consider treatment effects conditional on the religious composition of a participant's randomly assigned group. Finally, we also present point estimates of the mean levels of our outcomes of interest. See Appendix Section C.1 for our pre-specified model specifications.

In order to evaluate the study design and to inform our power analysis, we conducted pilot sessions between December 2020 and March 2021 ( $N = 402$ ). Using means and standard deviations from the pilot and from a study on a different subject that used a similar group task outcome (Coffman 2014), our estimated sample size varied from as little as  $N \approx 400$  respondents to as many as  $N \approx 1,100$ , depending on the data source and outcome (see Appendix C.2). We took a conservative approach and sampled  $N = 1,592$  respondents.

### 5.2 Ethics

Given the sensitive nature of the topic under study, we took several steps to ensure that our design met a high ethical standard. First, in a post-experiment debrief, we explained to participants the purpose of our study and noted that the depictions they were shown are contested and should not be taken as fact. Second, in our pre-test ( $N = 60$ , October-November

2020; see Appendix D.1), we gauged whether there were any unanticipated ethical concerns that necessitated changes to our study design. Third, we shared our pre-analysis plan with Muslim and Hindu faculty at Indian institutions to receive their input on the study’s ethics. Fourth, our choice to use treatment material sourced from real Indian textbooks, in addition to furthering the study’s ecological validity, was made to ensure that participants did not face any psychological costs higher than those they were likely to experience in their daily life. Fifth, we asked participants to share their experience of the study, and we received overwhelmingly positive responses. Sixth, in addition to probing possible negative effects of exclusive representations, our study also considered whether inclusive representations can have positive impacts. The study has received IRB approval from the ethical board at ██████ University. See Appendix C.5 for a detailed description of the different steps taken to ensure that our study was conducted ethically.

## 6 Results

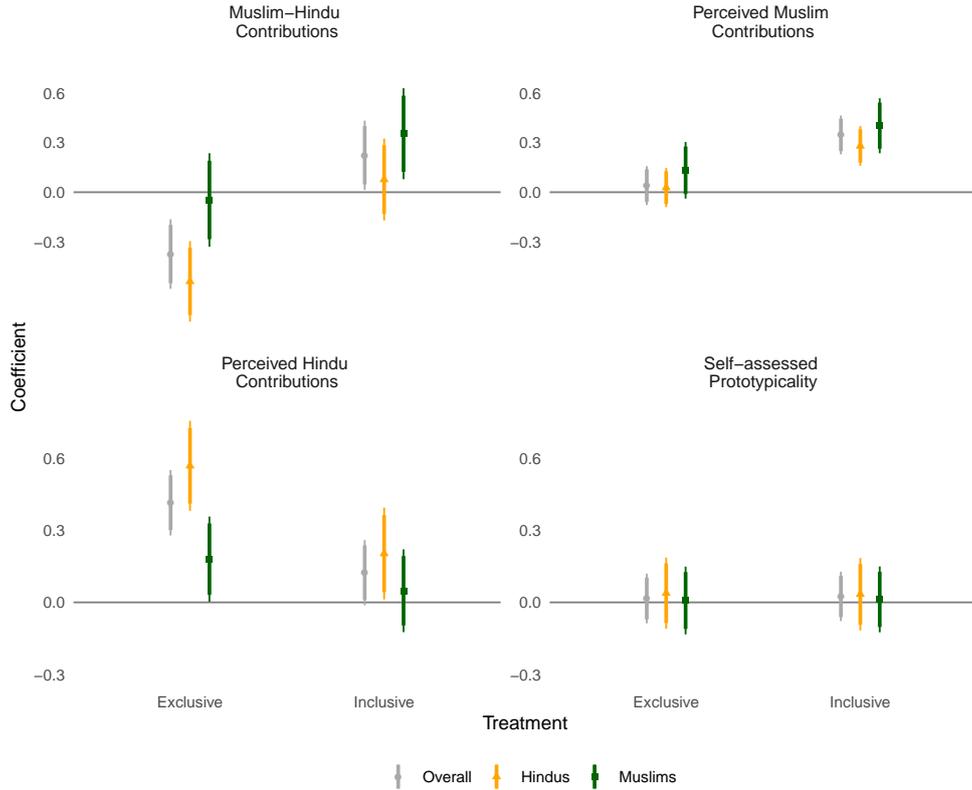
We organize the presentation of results around our stated hypotheses and the different stages of our theory laid out in Figure 1. We thus begin with an analysis of perceived centrality to the nation, before considering perceived entitlement to lead, the demand for and supply of different types of leaders, and the effects of different group compositions. Lastly, we also evaluate our assumptions and interpretation of results using participants’ open-ended responses.

### 6.1 Perceived Centrality to the Nation

Our first hypothesis states that historical representations shape the perceived centrality (historical contributions and prototypicality) of different groups to the nation, with *exclusive* narratives reducing the perceived centrality of marginalized groups ( $H_{1a}$ ) and *inclusive* narratives increasing their perceived centrality ( $H_{1b}$ ). Figure 4 presents effects of our *inclusive* and *exclusive* treatments (relative to the baseline), overall and split by respondent religion. We consider as outcomes perceived *relative* historical contributions of Muslims (top left panel), perceived contributions of Muslims (top right panel), perceived contributions of Hindus (bottom left panel), and individuals’ self-assessed prototypicality (averaged over two survey items on similarity to others and a typical Indian).

Results are largely supportive of  $H_1$ . Beginning with the top left panel, we observe that

Figure 4: **Perceived Centrality**



*Notes:* This figure shows treatment effects of historical representations on relative perceived historical contributions of Muslims versus Hindus (top left panel), on perceived contributions of Muslims (top right panel), and on perceived contributions of Hindus (bottom left panel), as well as on respondents' self-assessed prototypicality (bottom right panel; prototypicality is the average of the two survey items). We display both overall results, and results split by respondent religion. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown.

the *exclusive* treatment results in a decrease in the relative perceived centrality of Muslims ( $H_{1a}$ ; 95% confidence interval (CI) [-0.59, -0.16]), whereas the *inclusive* treatment results in an increase in their relative perceived centrality ( $H_{1b}$ ; 95% CI [0.01, 0.43]). Shifts in perceptions are starkest where they reflect a positive shift in the relative centrality of an individual's group: overall increases in relative Muslim centrality under the *inclusive* treatment are driven by Muslim respondents, and overall increases in relative Hindu centrality under the *exclusive* treatment are driven by Hindu participants. However, as the panels on perceived Muslim (top right) and Hindu (bottom left) contributions demonstrate, both groups respond to the treatments, evaluating Muslim centrality as higher under the *inclusive* treatment and Hindu centrality as higher under the *exclusive* treatment. Effect sizes are often of substantial magnitude: the number of Hindu groups chosen by Hindu respondents, for instance, jumps from an average of 1.76 in the baseline treatment to an average of 2.33 in the *exclusive treatment*,

an increase of nearly a third.<sup>17</sup>

While our findings indicate that our treatments affected perceived contributions in the expected direction, we find little evidence for corresponding shifts in perceived prototypicality of different groups to the nation (bottom right panel). While we can only speculate as to the reasons for this difference, one could be the framing of our questions: whereas our contributions question asked explicitly about perceived contributions of different *groups* to the nation, our prototypicality questions asked respondents to evaluate their *own* prototypicality to the nation. Explicit self-assessments might be more difficult to shift in the short-term, and might not fully capture the idea of perceived group-level prototypicality; the personal nature of the questions also may have provoked unexpected responses. An item capturing more implicit associations of groups and the Indian nation may very well have produced different results.

## 6.2 Perceived Entitlement to Lead

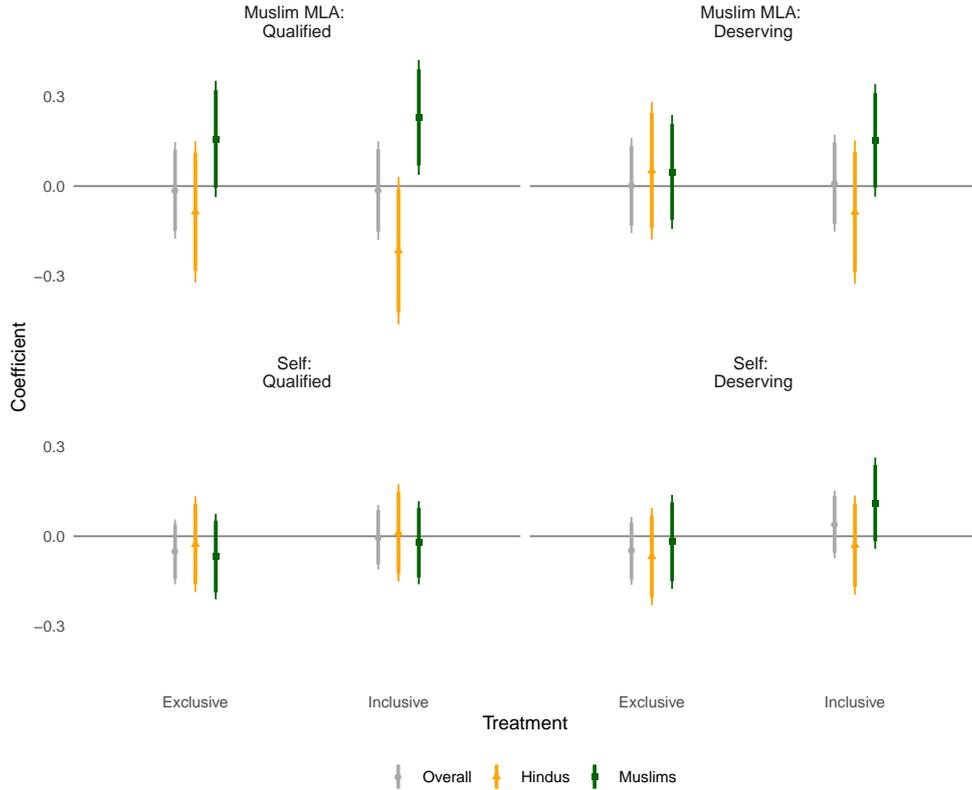
According to our second hypothesis, historical representations will shape perceived entitlement of different groups to the nation, in particular by reducing marginalized group members' perceived entitlement where a representation is *exclusive* ( $H_{2a}$ ) and increasing their perceived entitlement where a representation is *inclusive* ( $H_{2b}$ ). Figure 5 presents results, with the top row corresponding to individuals' evaluations of whether the Muslim MLA politician shown in the report card is qualified and deserving of office, and the bottom row corresponding to participants' self-assessments of their own qualifications and worthiness of serving as group representative. As before, we display overall treatment effects, and by respondent religion.

We find weak support for  $H_2$ . In particular, we observe that Muslim respondents in the *inclusive* treatment are significantly more likely to evaluate the Muslim MLA as qualified for office ( $H_{2b}$ ; 95% CI [0.04, 0.42]) and deserving of office ( $H_{2b}$ ; 90% CI [-0.00, 0.31]). We also observe that Muslim respondents report feeling more deserving (“worthy”) to act as group representative, though this difference – an increase from 4.42 on average in the baseline condition to 4.53 in the *inclusive* condition – is not statistically distinguishable from zero at conventional levels ( $p = 0.15$ ). Lastly, there appears to be some evidence of backlash among Hindu respondents, who become less likely to view the Muslim MLA as qualified in the *inclusive* treatment ( $p=0.08$ ), a point to which we return in Discussion Section 7.

---

<sup>17</sup>Recall that this variable ranges from 0 groups to a maximum of 5 groups in total.

Figure 5: **Perceived Entitlement**



*Notes:* This figure shows treatment effects of historical representations on whether individuals perceived the Muslim MLA shown in the report card (top row) as qualified (left) or deserving (right) of office, as well as whether individuals perceived *themselves* (bottom row) as qualified (left) or deserving (right) of serving as group leader. We display both overall results, and results split by respondent religion. 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown.

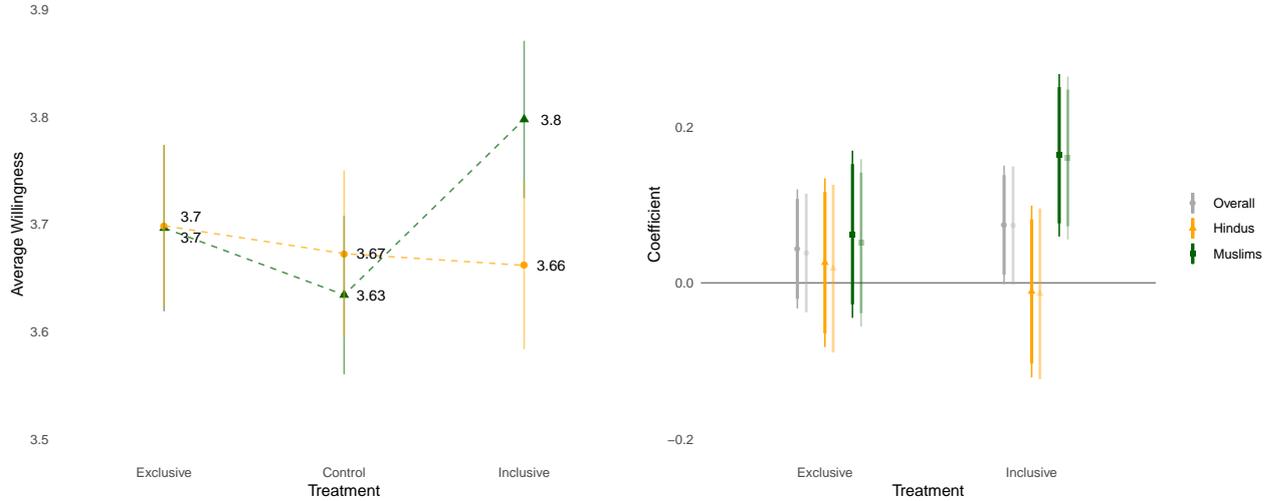
### 6.3 Who Becomes Leader? Considering Effects on Supply and Demand

Thus far, we have found that historical representations can affect perceived historical contributions of different groups to society (their “centrality”) as well as their perceived qualifications (their “entitlement”) to lead. Next, we consider whether and how historical representations affect the *supply of* and *demand for* different types of leaders ( $H_3$  and  $H_4$ ), and to what degree patterns are conditional on the composition of the group one would be tasked with leading ( $H_5$ ). We first evaluate effects on leadership using our incentivized group task outcomes, before turning to additional questions with more explicit ties to real-world behavior.

#### 6.3.1 Incentivized Behaviour in the “Lab”

**Supply of Leadership** Beginning first with the supply-side,  $H_{3a}$  predicted that *exclusive* historical narratives should decrease the willingness of marginalized group members to as-

Figure 6: **Treatment Effects on Supply of Leadership**



*Notes:* This figure displays treatment effects of historical representations on willingness to take on a leadership role, with the left panel showing means with 95% intervals and the right panel showing output from linear regression models excluding controls (bright colours) and including sociodemographic controls (dim colours). The outcome variable ranges from 1 (not at all willing) - 4 (very willing).

sume a leadership role, whereas  $H_{4a}$  predicted that *inclusive* narratives should increase their willingness. Results are reported in Figure 6. We find strong support for  $H_{4a}$ : exposure to an *inclusive* narrative significantly increases Muslim respondents’ willingness to volunteer as group representative (95% CI [0.06, 0.27]). Muslims in the inclusive treatment are even more willing to lead than are Hindus.<sup>18</sup> Results are not consistent with history as a “zero sum” game: while greater historical inclusion of marginalized groups increases the supply of potential leaders from those communities (Muslims), it does not have any discernible effect on the supply of the dominant group (Hindus). Indeed, we observe that the increase in Muslims’ willingness to volunteer as representative is sufficiently large that it results in an *overall* increase in respondent willingness to lead (95% CI [0.00, 0.15]).<sup>19,20</sup>

While the *inclusive* history treatment positively affects the supply of minority leadership, we do not observe the expected outcomes among those exposed to *exclusive* renderings of history; the exclusive history treatment has a small, positive, and statistically indistinguishable from zero effect on minority members’ willingness to lead. Although it is unclear why we do not observe a negative effect of exclusive history ( $H_{3a}$ ), as we discuss in Section 7, one

<sup>18</sup>3.80 versus 3.66; the t statistic using a two-tailed test is 2.65,  $\text{Pr} < 0.01$ .

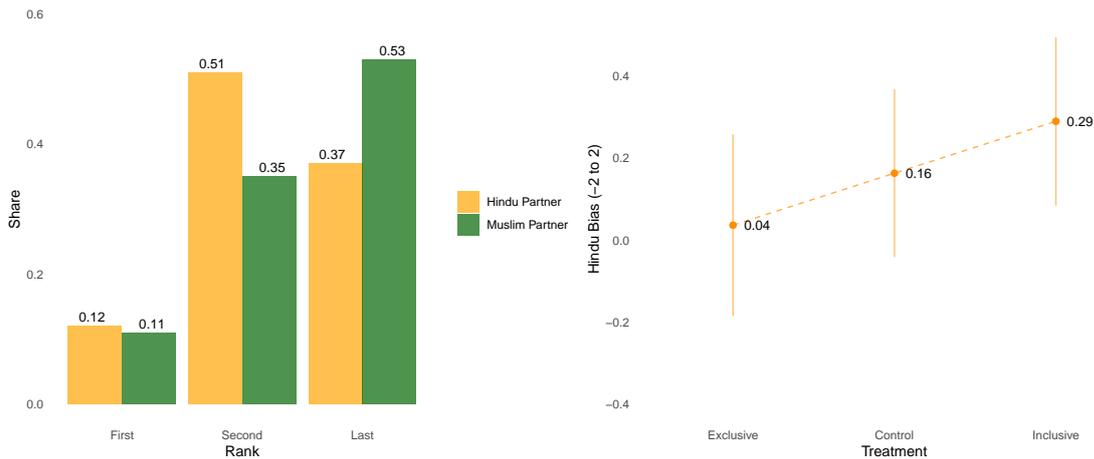
<sup>19</sup>Our sample contained N=839 Hindu (53%) and N=753 (47%) Muslim respondents.

<sup>20</sup>Table F2 in Appendix F reports results from a regression in which we interact treatment assignment with respondent religion; we find that differences in treatment effects for Hindus and Muslims are statistically distinguishable from zero.

potential explanation could be that the exclusive historical narrative is currently very salient in Indian discourse and therefore does not have an equally powerful impact on respondents' attitudes and behavior.

**Demand for Leadership** Hypotheses  $H_{3b}$  and  $H_{4b}$  concern the role of historical representations in shaping Hindus' *demand* for Muslim group leaders. We posited that exclusive renderings of history would negatively affect demand for Muslim leaders, and inclusive renderings would positively affect demand. As described in Section 4.2, participants were asked to rank their group members according to how much they would like to see each of them as group leader in the event of a tie. We examine demand for Muslim group leaders by observing how Hindus who were randomly matched with one Hindu and one Muslim partner (in their group of 3) rank their Muslim group member.

Figure 7: Demand for Muslim Leaders among Hindu Respondents



*Notes:* The left panel shows how Hindus in Hindu-majority groups ranked their Hindu and Muslim group members. The values indicate the proportion of Hindus who ranked their group member as first, second or last. The right panel shows expected pro-Hindu bias in the different treatment conditions. 95% confidence intervals are shown.

The panel on the left of Figure 7 shows how Hindus in Hindu-majority groups ranked their partners. As can be observed, Hindu respondents rank their Hindu partners higher than their Muslim partners in this exercise. While Hindu respondents rank their Hindu partner last 37% of the time, they rank their Muslim partner last 53% of the time.<sup>21</sup> However, as is clear from the right panel, we do not find any evidence that our treatments affect this apparent pro-Hindu bias, which we calculate by subtracting the rank given to a Muslim partner from

<sup>21</sup>A two-tailed test of proportions show a z statistic = 4.37, Pr=0.00.

the rank given to a Hindu partner.<sup>22</sup> Treatment effects are indistinguishable from zero, and if anything, point in the opposite direction of what was expected: point estimates of pro-Hindu bias are larger in the inclusive treatment group, and smaller in the exclusive treatment group, as compared with the baseline condition. As we discuss in Section 7, these findings may be consistent with a pattern of majority population backlash against the *inclusive* treatment.<sup>23</sup>

**Group Composition** According to our theory and the results presented thus far, historical representations can affect perceived belonging to the nation and entitlement to speak on the behalf of its “true” members. Building on this logic, our fifth hypothesis posits that the effects of historical representations on marginalized group members’ willingness to seek out leadership roles will be greater when the leadership requires that marginalized group members speak on behalf of unquestioned “core” members of the nation, than where the position requires that they speak on behalf only of other marginalized group members. To evaluate this hypothesis, we randomly assigned participants to either religiously homogeneous groups or religiously mixed groups. We expect the effects of both exclusive and inclusive historical narratives to be stronger where group compositions are mixed.

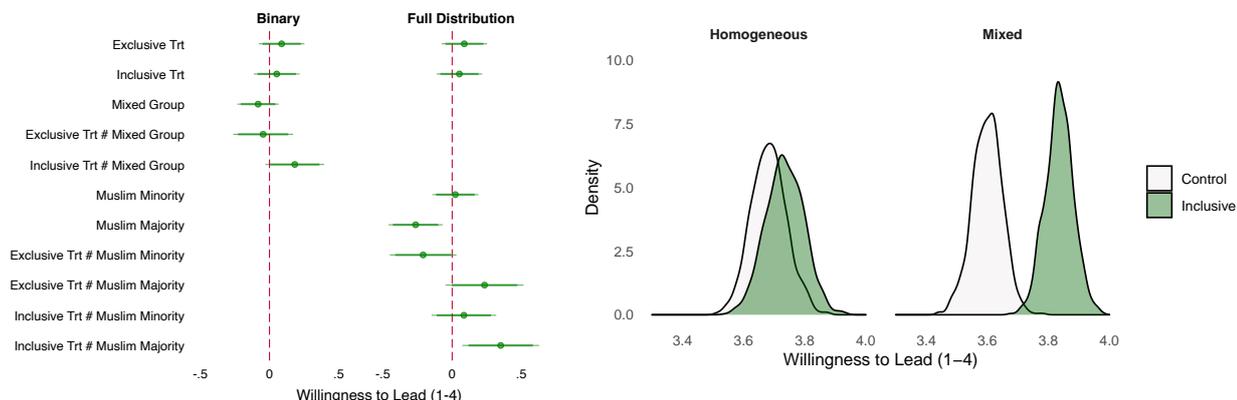
Figure 8 shows the relationship between group composition, our history treatments, and Muslim respondents’ willingness to lead. The left panel displays regression output where we interact treatment assignment with either an indicator for whether one was randomly assigned to a religiously mixed or homogeneous group (“binary” column), or with a categorical variable that additionally distinguishes between Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority mixed groups (“full distribution” column). Consistent with  $H_5$ , we can see in the “binary” column that Muslim respondents are particularly likely to supply leadership when they are assigned both to the *inclusive* treatment and a religiously mixed group, a result that is statistically distinguishable from zero at a 10 percent level. Interestingly, the “full distribution” column shows that this effect is driven by mixed Muslim *majority* groups ( $p = 0.01$ ), which may reflect a higher threshold to increasing minority individuals’ perceived entitlement to lead where the

---

<sup>22</sup>The resulting variable ranges from -2 to 2, with more positive values indicating a stronger preference for Hindu partners.

<sup>23</sup>We focus on Hindus in our evaluation of  $H_{3b}$  and  $H_{4b}$  firstly because we are primarily concerned with demand for minority representation amongst the majority group, and secondly because, as in the real world and by design in our study, we had more Hindu majority (N=654) than Muslim majority (N=302) groups. However, treatment effects on pro-Muslim bias can also tell us something about demand for minorities among greater society. Results with Muslims are consistent with  $H_{4b}$ , as we observe that Muslim respondents’ pro-Muslim bias increases in the *inclusive* treatment as compared with the baseline (.04 versus 0.34; one-tailed test shows  $t=1.28$ ,  $Pr = 0.10$ ), but we do not find that the *exclusive* treatment suppresses demand ( $H_{3b}$ ).

Figure 8: Group Composition and Willingness to Lead Among Muslims



*Notes:* The left panel displays regression output where we interact treatment assignment with a binary (“binary” column) or categorical (“full distribution”) indicator for the religious composition of a participant’s randomly assigned group (homogeneous, mixed Muslim majority, or mixed Muslim minority). The right panel shows simulated sampling distributions for respondents in the control and inclusive treatment conditions, by their group composition. The outcome in both cases is willingness to lead and analysis is limited to Muslims.

majority group constitutes a larger portion of the population under the leader’s authority. We do not find much evidence of an interaction effect with the exclusive treatment, though we do observe that Muslim respondents are less willing to lead where they are randomly assigned both to the exclusive treatment and a Muslim minority group ( $p = 0.08$ ).<sup>24</sup>

We further investigate the relationship between the *inclusive* treatment and group composition in the right panel of Figure 8. Specifically, we use results from our study to simulate sampling distributions of the expected willingness to lead among Muslim respondents in the control and inclusive treatment conditions and by group composition.<sup>25</sup> We see that exposure to inclusive history does not increase willingness to lead among Muslim respondents in groups where all members are Muslim. In mixed groups, however, a clear difference emerges: respondents in the inclusive history treatment are significantly more willing to volunteer as group representative than are respondents in the control condition. The difference between inclusive treatment and control increases from 0.05 (95% CI [-0.10; 0.21]) in homogeneous groups to 0.24 (95% CI [0.11, 0.36]) in mixed groups. This lends additional support for  $H_5$ .

**Open-ended Responses** Answers to follow-up questions on why participants elected to serve as group representative or not are consistent with a number of our assumptions and interpretations. First, they indicate that participants viewed the group representative position

<sup>24</sup>See Table F5 in Appendix F for the full regression models.

<sup>25</sup>We simulate sampling distributions by taking 1000 random draws from a multivariate normal distribution with means corresponding to the coefficients and variance corresponding to the variance-covariance matrix.

as a leadership role. A number of respondents said that they wanted to be representative because they viewed themselves as leaders; the comment by one participant that they wished to be representative because “I have leadership qualities” was a common refrain. Second, in justifying their qualification for the role, participants often stated their deservingness and worthiness for the role – matching exactly our conceptualization of perceived entitlement to lead.<sup>26</sup> One participant wrote “I am qualified to be group leader and i am worthy of being group leader.” Another said they wanted to be group leader “because I think I truly deserve it.” A lack of perceived entitlement also underlied responses for why individuals did *not* want to be group leader; as one respondent wrote, “Because I’m not sure if I’m worthy of it or not.”

Third, there were indications that respondents viewed entitlement to serve as group representative as related to the Indian nation, and their perceived belonging within it. One participant said that they wanted to be group leader because “as an Indian, I want to represent my country.” Certain individuals indicated that they felt that their social group had a particularly strong claim to the nation’s core community. One wrote that they wanted to be representative because “my group represents India and Indian religions.” And multiple respondents said that they wanted to serve as leader simply “because I am Hindu.”

### 6.3.2 Outcomes with Real-World Political Corollaries

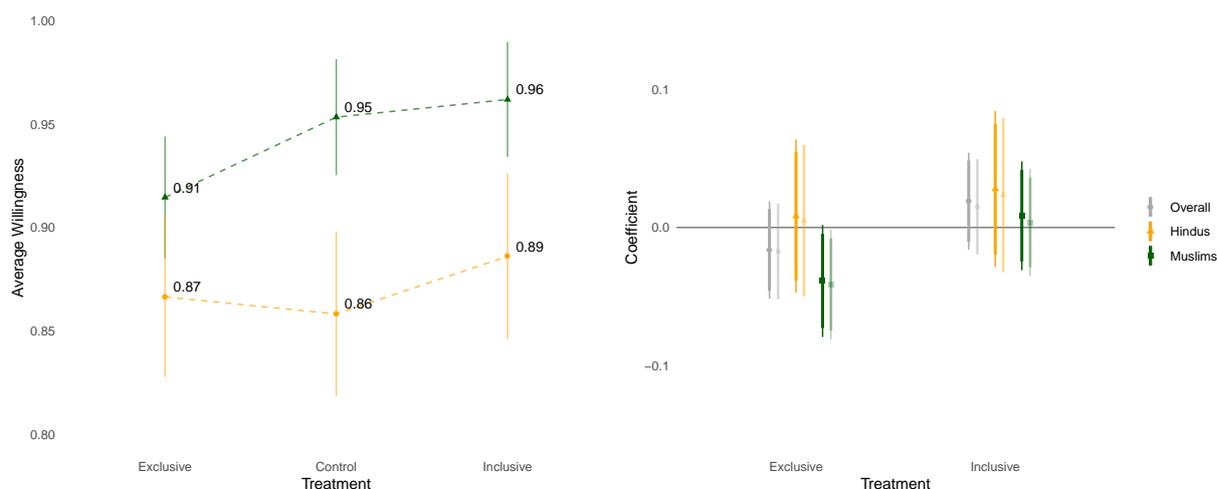
As described in Section 4.2, in addition to the incentivized decision tasks we also measure outcomes that relate more explicitly to real-world behavior of import. To capture the supply-side channel, we examine how the history treatments affect respondents’ political engagement; to capture the demand-side channel, we assess how exposure to different representations of history affect evaluations of real Hindu and Muslim politicians.

**Supply of Leadership (Political Engagement)** To measure the supply of leadership, we offer participants information about how to become politically involved and provide a website at the end of the study to those who request the information. Figure 9 shows effects of our treatments on the likelihood that respondents elected to receive the information. We find that the *exclusive* treatment has a small, negative effect on Muslims’ political engagement (95% CI [-0.08, -0.00]); while 95% of Muslim respondents request information in the control

---

<sup>26</sup>Note that while we asked participants about their perceived deservingness and worthiness, we did so after the open-ended questions. This suggests that our survey questions are unlikely to have primed participants to think along these lines.

Figure 9: **Treatment Effects on Political Engagement**



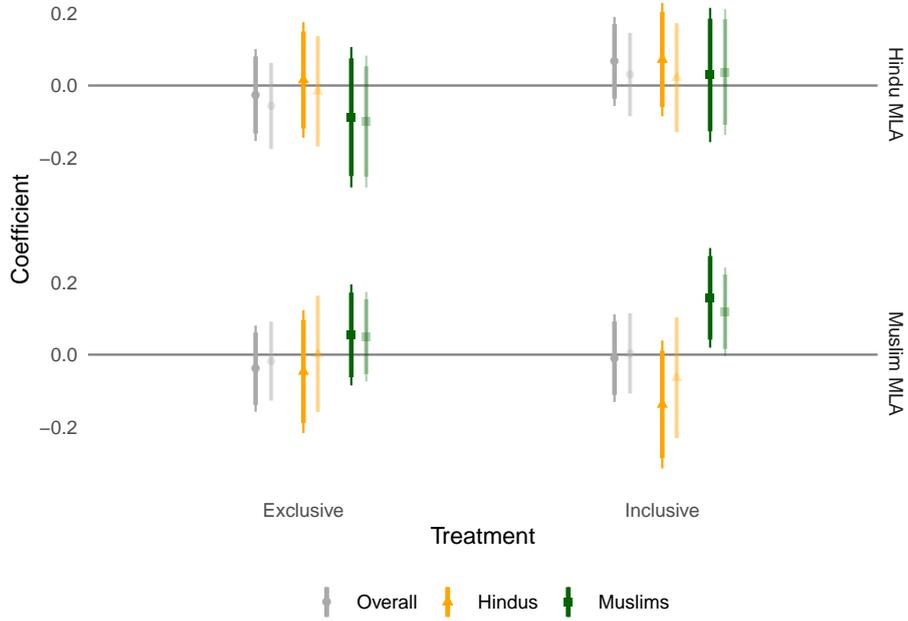
*Notes:* This figure displays treatment effects of historical representations on willingness to receive information on how to become politically involved (dummy 0-1). The left panel shows means with 95% intervals and the left panel shows output from linear regression models excluding controls (bright colours) and including sociodemographic controls (dim colours). The outcome variable ranges from 1 (not at all willing) - 4 (very willing).

condition, this percentage declines to 91% in the *exclusive* treatment. While political interest is very high in our sample overall, the findings nevertheless lend support to the theoretical argument that exclusive renderings of history can demobilize ethnic minorities politically and reduce their supply of leadership ( $H_{3a}$ ). However, we find no corresponding effect with inclusive representations and willingness to receive political information, potentially because willingness is very high at the baseline.<sup>27</sup>

**Demand for Leadership (Evaluation of Politicians)** As an additional measure of demand, we randomly assigned participants report cards for either a real Hindu or Muslim politician and asked them to evaluate the politician on seven different dimensions. These dimensions include whether the politician is perceived as qualified, deserving of office, representative of his constituents, representative of India, popular, typical (similar to other politicians) and whether respondents report feeling comfortable being represented by this politician. The Hindu and Muslim politicians in this exercise both have a similar rating (see Appendix Section B.3.3 for details). Using inverse covariance weighting (Anderson 2008), we create an index (“overall evaluation”) capturing to what extent respondents evaluated a politician positively.

<sup>27</sup>We were able to use individuals’ randomly generated survey ID codes to track whether they visited the website with political information, as they were required to provide this code to enter. Although quite a few respondents visited this website (13%), we find no evidence that our experiment treatments affected their probability of doing so (see Table F4 in Appendix F).

Figure 10: **Treatment Effects on Politician Evaluations**



*Notes:* This figure displays treatment effects of historical representations on evaluations of Hindu and Muslim politicians (MLAs). Coefficients are based on linear regression models excluding controls (bright colours) and including sociodemographic controls (dim colours). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. The outcome variable ranges from 1-5.

As shown in Figure 10, the history treatments did not affect how respondents evaluated the Hindu politician. However, we do observe a significant increase in positive evaluations of the Muslim politician among Muslim respondents assigned to the *inclusive* treatment (95% CI [0.02, 0.30]): being exposed to an inclusive history enhances ratings of the Muslim candidate from an overall evaluation of 4.22 (95% CI [4.12; 4.31]) to 4.37 (95% CI [4.28; 4.47]) on a 1-5 scale. These results offer additional support for  $H_{4b}$ .<sup>28</sup>

## 7 Discussion

Thus far, we have presented evidence consistent with a number of our theoretical expectations. We observed that historical representations can affect the perceived centrality of different groups to the nation ( $H_1$ ), found inconsistent evidence that representations can affect perceived entitlement to lead ( $H_2$ ), and saw support for our expectation that representations can affect the supply of and demand for marginalized group members in leadership positions ( $H_3$  and  $H_4$ ) – particularly those that demand leadership over ethnically heterogeneous groups

<sup>28</sup>Figure F10 in Appendix F shows disaggregated index results among Muslim respondents.

( $H_5$ ). We find the strongest support for our theory when considering the *inclusive* treatment among Muslim respondents, which led to increases in the perceived centrality and entitlement of Muslims, increases in their supply of leadership (especially in mixed groups), and increases in demand for their leadership (as measured by evaluations of Muslim politicians). We observe lesser effects among Hindus and in the *exclusive* treatment – which, while it increases the perceived centrality of Hindus and diminishes the supply of leadership (as measured by political engagement) among Muslim respondents, otherwise has little discernible impact.

Why did we not observe stronger effects among Hindus and from our *exclusive* treatment? We find support for multiple possible interpretations. As we noted in our pre-analysis plan regarding the former question, the implications of our theory for ethnic majority groups is not entirely clear. In particular, the greater historical inclusion of minority groups does not necessarily imply changes in how majority groups are remembered. Further, if majority group entitlement is not sourced in a comparison with minority group members, changes in perceived minority group entitlement to lead could have no effect on perceived majority group entitlement. According to this line of thinking, it might be unsurprising that we did not observe stronger effects among Hindu respondents.

A second possible reason for the lack of observed effects among Hindu respondents could be that it is attributable to a “backlash” effect, wherein some Hindu respondents responded negatively to the *inclusive* treatment, and thus drove down its potential positive impacts. There is some evidence consistent with a backlash effect: Hindu respondents in the *inclusive* treatment are less likely to view a Muslim politician as qualified for office (Figure 5), and we find suggestive evidence of a higher pro-Hindu bias for leaders among Hindus in the *inclusive* treatment (Figure 7). Where bias against members of the minority is very strong and resistant to change, it is possible that renderings of history which highlight the contributions of members of the minority may provoke backlash among the dominant group.

We speculate that one potential explanation for the comparatively weak effects of our *exclusive* treatment concerns the status quo. Specifically, people in India have recently been inundated with exclusive historical narratives. As we note in our Introduction and in Section 3, history has been an active battlefield in India for some time, and an ambitious revisionist campaign is well underway. If people had already been exposed to exclusive historical narratives, then our *exclusive* experimental treatment may have not provided sufficient new information for them to update their beliefs or perceptions. If true, then we would also expect

*inclusive* narratives that contrast with status quo teachings in many areas to have a greater impact, which is what we observe.<sup>29</sup>

A final, more complex explanation for observed results is that participants' real world experiences affect how receptive they are not to *all* narratives, but only those narratives that display a positive bias toward their social group; in the short-term, no matter their real world exposure, individuals will always be resistant to narratives with a negative bias. Exploratory analyses presented in Appendix Section F.5 and Figure F13 are consistent with this supposition: while the *inclusive* treatment effect is greatest for Muslim participants with fewer years of real world education under BJP state governments (a proxy for exposure to an exclusive historical narrative), the *exclusive* treatment effect is greatest for Hindu participants with more exposure to BJP education. Real world exposure does not alter effects of treatments with a negative bias towards one's social group, and individuals are not moved by treatments with a positive bias where the narrative contrasts with their real world history education. According to this explanation, a sample of Muslims (Hindus) exposed to less (more) BJP education would respond more positively to the inclusive (exclusive) treatment, but real world exposure would have little impact on their response to the exclusive (inclusive) treatment.

In Appendix Section F, we consider some alternative explanations for our findings. In particular, we evaluate two alternative explanations for one of our central findings that inclusive renderings of history increase marginalized group members' willingness to take on leadership positions. First, inclusive renderings of history may simply improve Muslim respondents' overall experience with – and engagement in – the survey. Muslim respondents may thus choose to volunteer as group representative not because they feel more entitled to take decisions on behalf of others, but because they are enjoying the survey and are more eager to participate actively in it. Second, Muslim respondents may score better in the inclusive history exercise because they are more familiar with the material and/or find the correct responses to be more consistent with their worldview. If this were the case, Muslim minorities may be more likely to volunteer because they believe more strongly in their performance in the exercises.

In Table F6 of Appendix F we examine how the history treatments affect firstly overall engagement with the study (we asked respondents to what extent they were involved with the study), and secondly respondents' scores in the history exercises. The findings reveal that the

---

<sup>29</sup>Appendix Figure F11, which plots treatment effects alongside respondent distributions, provides consistent evidence that the lack of an exclusive treatment effect does not appear to be due to an increased number of respondents at high and low values “cancelling each other out,” but rather to little movement across outcome categories relative to the baseline condition.

inclusive history treatment does not increase Muslim respondents' overall engagement with the study. Muslim respondents also did not score better in the inclusive history exercises. In light of this evidence, it seems unlikely that engagement or performance could better explain why minorities volunteer more when exposed to inclusive history.

## 8 Conclusion

Across the world, political “identity entrepreneurs” are engaged in battles over which version of history should be enshrined in the official record. Different versions of national history underpin different ways of imagining the nation (Reicher and Hopkins 2000). Policy decisions about how to remember a nation’s past may thus carry important implications for who will shape its future.

In this article, we propose that historical representations – such as those communicated in textbook material – can have important implications for which groups are perceived as central to the nation, and, consequently, whether individuals from those groups feel entitled to speak on its behalf. While our experimental treatments source exclusive, inclusive, or politically neutral historical narratives from real, state-sponsored Indian textbooks, we expect our theory to speak more widely to current debates on history education, the demolition of statues, and the renaming of streets. We argue – and our results indicate – that these debates should not be taken lightly, as historical narratives have the potential to promote or constrain ethnic minorities’ ability to participate in the public sphere.

We find support for our theory: Inclusive historical narratives increase Muslim participants’ perceived centrality and entitlement, and their willingness to lead. Our findings contribute to many lines of research that, while related, are rarely in conversation, such as those on candidate emergence (Portmann and Stojanović 2019), national belonging and behavior (Abdelgadir and Fouka 2020; Simonsen 2021), and responses to exclusionary policies (Weiss, Siegel and Romney 2021). From a policy perspective, our findings suggest that highlighting minority groups’ historical contributions to the nation can be an important way to encourage political participation among marginalized groups. However, our findings also suggest that changing ethnic majorities’ acceptance of leaders from minority communities can be more difficult to achieve.

While our findings represent an important contribution to the field, additional questions

remain. More work could probe the external validity of our findings to other contexts and populations and further explore the theory's scope conditions. We expect that our theory should apply to marginalized communities in many countries and contexts, especially among communities that are severely underrepresented in politics and therefore do not derive a sense of entitlement to lead from contemporary political role models. Further research is needed to better understand whether this is the case, and to examine what other conditions render historical representation more or less important. Is it necessary that an ethnic minority group be of a certain size, have made contributions of a certain magnitude, or have been resident in a country for a long time? Future research could also explore whether inclusive historical representations can increase the demand for minority leadership among greater society in contexts where minorities face less hostility and discrimination, or where the political climate towards ethnic minorities is less charged.

Future research could also consider the effects of exposure to textbook material in more natural settings, and with more representative samples. We chose to conduct a controlled experiment to facilitate causal inference and to clearly measure different stages of our theoretical framework. While our sample is representative on gender and includes individuals from different socio-economic classes, states, caste backgrounds, and political orientations, it is not representative of India, and adults who have already received a history education – and who were likely to have prior beliefs about Indian history – were overrepresented.

Finally, more research is needed to understand additional ways other than history through which political entrepreneurs can shape national identity and affect different groups' perceived place in the nation. It is difficult to completely disentangle history from narratives, as the latter is by necessity a component of the former. However, an interesting question is whether narratives about contemporary contributions to the nation can also change perceptions of belonging and entitlement to lead. According to our theoretical framework, history should be a particularly effective tool for changing conceptions of national identity, but it is certainly not the only one in the toolbox. Overall, more work is needed in order to understand whether and how historical representations – transmitted through textbooks, statues, songs, or symbols – impact political aspirations among marginalized groups and thereby who will speak on our behalf, in the future.

## REFERENCES

- Abdelgadir, Aala and Vasiliki Fouka. 2020. "Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West: Assessing the Effects of the French Headscarf Ban." *American Political Science Review* 114(3):707–723.
- Alrababah, Ala, William Marble, Salma Mousa and Alexandra Siegel. 2019. "Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes."
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. "Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism."
- Anderson, Michael L. 2008. "Multiple Inference and Gender Differences in the Effects of Early Intervention: A Reevaluation of the Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Early Training Projects." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 103(484):1481–1495.
- Aronow, Peter, Josh Kalla, Lilla Orr and John Ternovski. 2020. "Evidence of Rising Rates of Inattentiveness on Lucid in 2020." *SocArXiv Papers* .
- Bonneau, Chris W and Kristin Kanthak. 2020. "Stronger Together: Political Ambition and the Presentation of Women Running for Office." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 8(3):576–594.
- Bos, Angela L, Jill S Greenlee, Mirya R Holman, Zoe M Oxley and J Celeste Lay. 2021. "This One's for the Boys: How Gendered Political Socialization Limits Girls' Political Ambition and Interest." *American Political Science Review* pp. 1–18.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea. 2006. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton University Press.
- Bueno, Natália S and Thad Dunning. 2017. "Race, Resources, and Representation: Evidence from Brazilian Politicians." *World Politics* 69(2):327–365.
- Cantoni, Davide, Yuyu Chen, David Y Yang, Noam Yuchtman and Y Jane Zhang. 2017. "Curriculum and ideology." *Journal of Political Economy* 125(2):338–392.

- Chandra, Kanchan. 2012. *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Wei-Lin, Ming-Jen Lin and Tzu-Ting Yang. 2018. “Curriculum and National Identity: Evidence from the 1997 Curriculum Reform in Taiwan.”
- Coffman, Katherine Baldiga. 2014. “Evidence on Self-stereotyping and the Contribution of Ideas.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129(4):1625–1660.
- Conroy, Meredith and Jon Green. 2020. “It Takes a Motive: Communal and Agentic Articulated Interest and Candidate Emergence.” *Political Research Quarterly* 0(0).
- Coppock, Alexander and Oliver A McClellan. 2019. “Validating the demographic, political, psychological, and experimental results obtained from a new source of online survey respondents.” *Research & Politics* 6(1).
- Dancygier, Rafaela, Karl-Oscar Lindgren, Pär Nyman and Kare Vernby. 2019. “The Pipeline Is Not the Problem: A Case–Control Study of Immigrants’ Political Underrepresentation.” *Working Paper* .
- Durrani, Naureen and Máiréad Dunne. 2010. “Curriculum and National Identity: Exploring the Links between Religion and Nation in Pakistan.” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 42(2):215–240.
- Flåten, Lars Tore. 2016. *Hindu Nationalism, History and Identity in India: Narrating a Hindu past under the BJP*. Taylor & Francis.
- Fox, Richard L and Jennifer L Lawless. 2014. “Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition.” *American Political Science Review* 108(3):499–519.
- Guichard, Sylvie. 2010. *The Construction of History and Nationalism in India: Textbooks, Controversies and Politics*. Vol. 17 Routledge.
- Gulzar, Saad, Nicholas Haas and Benjamin Pasquale. 2020. “Does Political Affirmative Action Work, and for Whom? Theory and Evidence on India’s Scheduled Areas.” *American Political Science Review* 114(4):1230–1246.
- Hobbs, William and Nazita Lajevardi. 2019. “Effects of Divisive Political Campaigns on the Day-to-Day Segregation of Arab and Muslim Americans.” *American Political Science Review* 113(1):270–276.

- Hobsbawn, Eric. 1990. "Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality."
- Horowitz, Donald. 1985. "Ethnic Groups in Conflict, university of california press ed."
- Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1999. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with special reference to central India)*. Penguin Books India.
- Jensenius, Francesca Refsum. 2015. "Development from representation? A study of quotas for the scheduled castes in India." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7(3):196–220.
- Kanthak, Kristin and Jonathan Woon. 2015. "Women Don't Run? Election Aversion and Candidate Entry." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3):595–612.
- Khan, Sammyh S, Ted Svensson, Yashpal A Jogdand and James H Liu. 2017. "Lessons from the Past for the Future: The Definition and Mobilisation of Hindu Nationhood by the Hindu Nationalist Movement of India."
- Khilnani, Sunil. 2004. *The idea of India*. Penguin Books India.
- Khosla, Rishabh. 2011. "Caste, Politics and Public Good Distribution in India: Evidence from NREGS in Andhra Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly* 46(12).
- Kinnvall, Catarina. 2007. *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security*. Vol. 46 Routledge.
- Kray, Laura J, Laura Howland, Alexandra G Russell and Lauren M Jackman. 2017. "The Effects of Implicit Gender Role Theories on Gender System Justification: Fixed Beliefs Strengthen Masculinity to Preserve the Status Quo." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112(1):98.
- Kundra, Nakul. 2019. "Understanding Nation and Nationalism." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 21(2):125–149.
- Laitin, David D. 1995. "National Revivals and Violence." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie/European Journal of Sociology/Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* pp. 3–43.

- Liddle, Joanna and Elisabeth Michielsens. 2000. Gender, Class and Political Power in Britain: Narratives of Entitlement. In *International Perspectives on Gender and Democratisation*. Springer pp. 125–148.
- Liu, James H and Denis J Hilton. 2005. “How the Past Weighs on the Present: Social Representations of History and their Role in Identity Politics.” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44(4):537–556.
- Major, Brenda. 1993. “Gender, Entitlement, and the Distribution of Family Labor.” *Journal of Social Issues* 49(3):141–159.
- Meier, Kenneth J, Paula D McClain, Jerry L Polinard and Robert D Wrinkle. 2004. “Divided or together? Conflict and cooperation between African Americans and Latinos.” *Political Research Quarterly* 57(3):399–409.
- Morton, Rebecca B and Kenneth C Williams. 2010. *Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab*. Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, Pippa and Joni Lovenduski. 1995. *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 2009. *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India’s Future*. Harvard University Press.
- Oskooii, Kassra AR. 2018. “Perceived Discrimination and Political Behavior.” *British Journal of Political Science* pp. 1–26.
- O’Brien, Laurie T and Brenda Major. 2009. “Group Status and Feelings of Personal Entitlement: The Roles of Social Comparison and System-justifying Beliefs.” *Social and psychological bases of ideology and system justification* pp. 427–443.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. 1999. “Can a Muslim be an Indian?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(4):608–629.
- Pathak, Vikas. 2019. “Joshi Bows Out, but Tells Voters the Party Asked him not to Contest.” *Asiavilleneews* .  
**URL:** <https://www.asiavilleneews.com/article/joshi-bows-out-but-tells-voters-the-party-asked-him-not-to-contest-3534>

- Portmann, Lea and Nenad Stojanović. 2019. “Electoral Discrimination Against Immigrant-Origin Candidates.” *Political Behavior* 41(1):105–134.
- Reicher, Stephen and Nick Hopkins. 2000. *Self and Nation*. Sage.
- Rozenas, Arturas and Anastasiia Vlasenko. 2021. “The Real Consequences of Symbolic Politics: Breaking the Soviet Past in Ukraine.” *Available at SSRN 3633272* .
- Sainsbury, Diane. 2012. *Welfare States and Immigrant Rights: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*. Oxford University Press.
- Salganik, Matthew J. 2019. *Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age*. Princeton University Press.
- Sibley, Chris G, James H Liu, John Duckitt and Sammyh S Khan. 2008. “Social Representations of History and the Legitimation of Social Inequality: The Form and Function of Historical Negation.” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38(3):542–565.
- Simonsen, Kristina Bakkær. 2021. “Politics Feeds Back: The Minority/Majority Turnout Gap and Citizenship in Anti-Immigrant Times.” *Perspectives on Politics* 19(2):406–421.
- Skey, Michael. 2014. “Boundaries and Belonging.” *Nationalism, Ethnicity and Boundaries: Conceptualising and Understanding Identity Through Boundary Approaches* p. 103.
- Tharoor, Ishaan. 2020. “U.S. Protests push Europe to Face its own Histories of Injustice.” *The Washington Post* .  
**URL:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/06/09/us-protests-push-europe-face-its-own-histories-injustice/>
- Thobani, Sitara. 2019. “Alt-Right with the Hindu-right: long-distance nationalism and the perfection of Hindutva.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(5):745–762.
- Traub, Alex. 2018. “India’s Dangerous New Curriculum.” *South Asia Journal* .  
**URL:** <http://southasiajournal.net/indias-dangerous-new-curriculum/>
- Turner, John C and Henri Tajfel. 1986. “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior.” *Psychology of intergroup relations* 5:7–24.
- Varshney, Ashutosh. 2014a. *Battles Half Won: India’s Improbable Democracy*. Penguin UK.

- Varshney, Ashutosh. 2014*b*. “Hindu Nationalism in Power?” *Journal of Democracy* 25(4):34–45.
- Weiss, Chagai M, Alexandra Siegel and David Romney. 2021. “How Threats of Exclusion Mobilize Palestinian Political Participation.”
- Williamson, Scott, Claire L Adida, Adeline Lo, Melina R Platas, Lauren Prather and Seth H Werfel. 2021. “Family Matters: How Immigrant Histories can Promote Inclusion.” *American Political Science Review* 115(2):686–693.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2009. *Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Wolak, Jennifer. 2020. “Self-confidence and Gender Gaps in Political Interest, Attention, and Efficacy.” *The Journal of Politics* 82(4):1490–1501.

# Online Appendix

## Table of Contents

---

<b>A</b>	<b>Background: Exclusive and Inclusive Historical Narratives in India</b>	<b>A2</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Experiment Materials</b>	<b>A3</b>
B.1	Stage 1. Consent, Demographics, Selection of Avatar . . . . .	A3
B.2	Stage 2. Experiment Treatments . . . . .	A4
B.3	Stage 3. Outcomes, Mechanisms, Remaining Exercises . . . . .	A11
B.4	Stage 4. Follow-up Questions and Conclusion . . . . .	A15
<b>C</b>	<b>Additional Information on Research Design</b>	<b>A15</b>
C.1	Empirical Specification . . . . .	A15
C.2	Power Analysis . . . . .	A15
C.3	Sampling . . . . .	A16
C.4	Attention Checks . . . . .	A17
C.5	Ethics . . . . .	A17
C.6	Pre-specified Empirical Expectations . . . . .	A18
<b>D</b>	<b>Pretest and Pilot Results</b>	<b>A20</b>
D.1	Results from Pretest . . . . .	A20
D.2	Results from the Pilot . . . . .	A21
<b>E</b>	<b>Summary Statistics and Balance</b>	<b>A22</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>Additional Results and Robustness</b>	<b>A23</b>
F.1	Additional Results . . . . .	A23
F.2	Treatment effects with distributions . . . . .	A26
F.3	Alternative explanations . . . . .	A27
F.4	Additional Empirical Expectations . . . . .	A28
F.5	The role of pre-treatment history education . . . . .	A29

---

## A Background: Exclusive and Inclusive Historical Narratives in India

The contrasting versions of Indian history advocated for by different political entrepreneurs today can largely be traced back to the 1920s-1940s, when leaders in the fight for independence from Great Britain were “immersed in an ideological and ontological conflict as to how to define the impending independent Indian nation state” (Khan et al. 2017: 478). Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru of the INC put forward an inclusive vision of the nation whereby ethnic, and in particular religious, majorities and minorities could be considered equal members of the nation. These political thinkers were well aware that achieving broad acceptance of their vision required the promotion of an inclusive historical narrative (Khilnani 2004; Varshney 2014a). Notable Hindu nationalist ideologues V.D Savarkar and M.S Golwalkar provided a strikingly different alternative telling of India’s “foundational myths”. Their efforts to provide historical accounts that lent legitimacy to the notion that India was and should be a Hindu nation from which non-Hindus such as Muslims and Christians must be excluded were heavily inspired by German ethnic nationalism of the pre-World War II period (Jaffrelot 1999; Kinnvall 2007).

In the following we provide a more detailed summary of the different renderings of historical periods by the Hindu right and the secular left used to design our experimental treatments:

### Ancient India

Hindu nationalist identity entrepreneurs use descriptions of *Ancient India* to create a particular “foundational myth”, representing the Hindu people as a homogeneous entity, with roots in the subcontinent and claims to the land. Particularly important to Hindu nationalists is the idea that Hindus are indigenous to the subcontinent and constitute a “race” (with shared blood ties). Hindu nationalists explicitly contest traditional theories about Indo-Aryan migration to the subcontinent, arguing instead that the Aryan race was indigenous to the Indian subcontinent (Guichard 2010). Hindu nationalists also heavily emphasize the “glory” of ancient Vedic civilization, depicted as a “golden age”, and its many contributions to science and arts (Nussbaum 2009). Identity entrepreneurs defending a secular conception of India depict a very different picture of ancient India, one in which no group has a particularly strong claim to the nation. According to this representation, Aryans came from outside India (and were therefore not fully “indigenous” to the land). Moreover, the inhabitants of ancient India were not a homogeneous people, living in peace and harmony. Rather, conflict was commonplace as a result of social hierarchies and heterogeneity (Flåten 2016).

### Medieval India

Depictions of *Medieval India* serves the Hindu nationalist project of excluding Muslims from the national project by describing them as “foreigners” or “the enemy” (Varshney 2014b). According to the Hindu nationalist representation of history, the Vedic Hindu “golden age” came to an abrupt end with the Islamic invasions. For instance, in the writings of Golwalkar which are heavily drawn upon by Hindu nationalists today, the “invasions of murdering hordes of mussulman free-booters” is contrasted with the “glorious period of Hindu revival under the great Shiwaji and the whole illustrious line of Hindu warriors” (Khan et al. 2017: 492). Recasting the Muslim as a “foreigner” and an enemy to the nation serves to justify the exclusion of Muslims from ideas of Hindu nationhood. For secular entrepreneurs, on the other hand, Medieval India constitutes an opportunity to elaborate on Muslim contributions to Indian culture. By describing Muslim contributions to architecture, governance, literature, music and city planning, the inclusion of Muslims in the definition of nationhood can more easily be justified. Secular representations of history also emphasize the religious tolerance and syncretic culture among Mughal rulers (Nussbaum 2009).

## B Experiment Materials

### B.1 Stage 1. Consent, Demographics, Selection of Avatar

Participants' informed consent is obtained prior to the start of the study. Prior to giving their consent, they learn about the different parts of the study, guaranteed and potential earnings, and broadly about the topic of the study: namely, that they will be asked to complete exercises on a number of school topics. We then collect demographic data on participants' gender, religion, caste/community, age, education, political party identification, and income. Participants are screened to continue in the study depending on quotas for Muslim and Hindu respondents, and region of residence. In addition to our screening protocol, only subjects above 18 years of age, who provide their consent, and who pass quality checks will be allowed to proceed. Participants are then be asked to choose an avatar to represent them in Stage 3 of the study. They will have a choice among three identity-congruent avatars. Figure B1 illustrates what these choices look like.

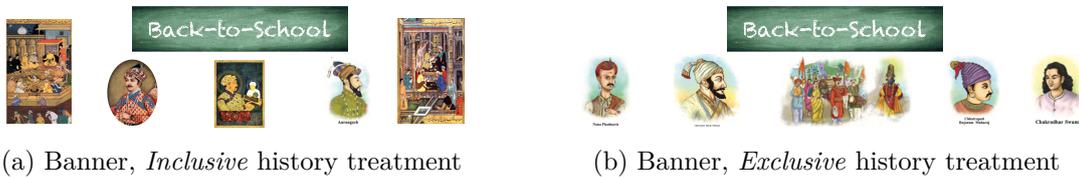
Figure B1: Avatar Selection



## B.2 Stage 2. Experiment Treatments

In Stage 2 of the study, participants are randomly assigned an *inclusive*, *exclusive*, or *control* history exercise (see Section 4.2). Participants learn that they have been asked to complete history exercises taken from official Indian state textbooks and that they have the opportunity to earn up to INR 400 for correct answers. Beginning in Stage 2 of the study, participants will see a banner on every page that corresponds to the general theme of the exercises (school) as well as their randomly assigned treatment (*inclusive*, *exclusive*, or *control*). Thus, for an *exclusive* treatment, they see the image which highlights the school theme (“Back to School”) along with images of Hindu heroes which are taken from real revised textbooks pushed by the BJP). In the *inclusive* treatment, they see a banner with Mughal rulers and art taken from older history textbooks (see Figure B2.).

Figure B2: **Banners**



The following pages contain the text and incentivized follow up questions for the three historical time periods and for our three treatments (see Table 2 for more information).

# Inclusive Representation Treatment

## **Ancient India:**



**The Aryans:** The Aryans came from outside India, from north-eastern Iran and the region around the Caspian Sea. The Aryans came as pastoral nomads, that is, they kept large herds of cattle, which was their means of livelihood, and they wandered from place to place.

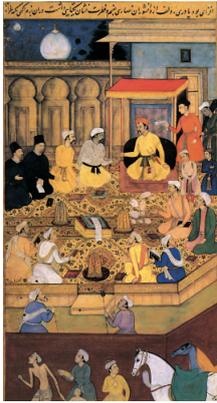
**The Dasyus:** When the Aryans first arrived in India, they had to fight for land with the people already living in India. These people they called the Dasyus. The Dasyus did not worship the same gods as the Aryans. They spoke a language which the Aryans did not understand, because the latter spoke Sanskrit. The Aryans who fought and defeated the Dasyus did not treat them kindly and enslaved many of them.

**Religion:** Religious ideas from the north, such as the worship of the Vedic gods and doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism were known to the people of the south. Some of them followed these religions, but most people still worshipped their older gods. Traders from western Asia brought with them in the first century A.D. some teachers of a new religion which arose in western Asia. This was Christianity.

## **Questions:**

1. Where did the Aryans live before coming to India?
  - (a) Indonesia
  - (b) **North-eastern Iran**
  - (c) China
2. True or False? There were many religions in ancient India
  - (a) **True**
  - (b) False

## Medieval India



**Global India:** In the fourteenth century, the subcontinent was part of a global network of communication. Arab merchants, for instance, frequented ports along the western coast in the first millennium CE, while Central Asian people settled in the north-western parts of the subcontinent during the same period. From the seventh century, with the advent of Islam, these regions became part of what is often termed the Islamic world.

**The Mughal Empire:** The Mughal Empire was established in the sixteenth century. The Mughals came to regard themselves as emperors of not just Muslims but of all peoples. They were concerned with the welfare of India. Mughals were not interested in converting large numbers of Indians to their religion. There were already many Muslims in India. All Mughal emperors gave grants to support the building and maintenance of places of worship. Even when temples were destroyed during the war, grants were later issued for their repair.

**Akbar the Great:** Akbar was a great ruler not because he ruled a vast empire, but because of his concern for the country and the people. Akbar's great dream was that India should be united as one country. People should forget about their differences about religion and think of themselves only as people of India.

### Questions:

1. True or false? The Mughals came to regard themselves as emperors of not just Muslims, but of all people?
  - (a) **True**
  - (b) False
2. What was Akbar's dream?
  - (a) To rule the world
  - (b) To convert people to Islam
  - (c) **That India should be a united country, irrespective of religion**

## Exclusive Representation

### Ancient India:



**Maharshi Valmiki**

**Mahaishi Ved Vyas**

**A Glorious Past:** Indian civilization and culture, religion, society, art, literature and science has always been great. In ancient times, India had the status of teacher in the world. If we talk about economic prosperity, India was called the sparrow of gold. The greatness of Indian culture and Indian history has not only been mentioned in our own texts but western historians and scholars have also spoken about the greatness of Indian culture.

**The Vedas:** The Vedas are the oldest texts among Brahman literature. The Vedas have been counted among the greatest literature of the world. This literature was the foundation of the Vedic civilization. Aryans were the founders of this civilization. Vast knowledge has been comprised in the ancient Vedic texts of Aryans. Their language was Sanskrit. Sanskrit language is the glory of Indian civilization. There is no language as enriched as Sanskrit in the whole world.

**The Aryans:** Although western scholars have identified Aryans as foreign invaders, on the contrary in fact Aryans were natives of India. Nowhere in the Vedic literature have Aryans been called foreigners. Aryans praised their Indian mother land and called the rivers their mother. Aryan did not come from foreign lands, but they went to Iran and Europe from India

### Questions:

1. True or False? Sanskrit was spoken in Ancient India
  - (a) True
  - (b) False
2. Where did the founders of Vedic civilization (the Aryans) live before coming to India?
  - (a) Indonesia
  - (b) China
  - (c) **They were natives of India**

## Medieval India:



**Muslim Invasions:** No country in the world has endured the invasions of Arabs or Turks as long and successful as in the Middle Ages. Islam united the Arab people and ignited a fierce feeling to promote their religion. Much like in other countries, they wanted to promote it in India. This is what motivated them to invade India. After the 8th century Arab invasions, India was safe from Muslim invasions for almost two centuries. It was only in the second half of the 10th century in that Muslim invasion restarted in India.

**Akbar and the Attack on Chittor:** Babur established the Mughal empire in India in 1526 A.D. He set his eyes on India looking for that stable rule. On 23rd October 1567 AD, during the reign of Uday Singh II, Chittorgarh fort was attacked by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Uday Singh's commanders tried to successfully protect the fort but after being surrounded for 4 long months by the Mughal army, the fort was breached using gunpowder.

**Maharana Pratap:** Maharana Pratap was the eldest son of Uday Singh. Pratap did not surrender before Akbar and rather gave importance to the independence of his motherland and took the path of struggle, maintaining the prestige and glorious tradition, the way his forefathers did. He was a freedom lover. Despite many hardships, he was not ready to submit to Akbar at any cost. Protector of dharma, Maharana Pratap later became an inspiration for freedom fighters like Shivaji, Chhatrasal and freedom fighters against the British.

### Questions:

1. True or False? The Arab people wanted to promote Islam in India
  - (a) True
  - (b) False
2. Who was Maharana Pratap?
  - (a) A Mughal emperor
  - (b) **Son of Uday Singh and a resistance fighter against the Mughals**
  - (c) Father of Uday Singh and a freedom fighter against the British

## Baseline

### **Ancient India:**

*A terracotta bull*



**Diet:** People in ancient India ate a wide range of plant and animal products, including fish. Archaeologists have been able to reconstruct dietary practices from finds of charred grains and seeds.

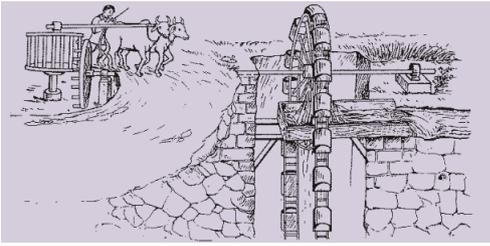
**Agricultural practices:** While the prevalence of agriculture is indicated by finds of grain, it is more difficult to reconstruct actual agricultural practices. Were seeds scattered on ploughed lands? Representations on seals and terracotta sculptures indicate that the bull was known, and archaeologists extrapolate from this that oxen were used for ploughing.

**Drains:** One of the most distinctive features of India's ancient cities was the carefully planned drainage systems. Roads and streets were laid out along an approximate "grid" pattern, intersecting at right angles. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them. If domestic waste water had to flow into the street drains, every house needed to have at least one wall along the street.

### **Questions:**

1. What animal was often represented on seals and terracotta sculptures in ancient India?
  - (a) The wolf
  - (b) **The bull**
  - (c) The alligator
2. True or False: the drainage system in Harappan cities indicates town planning
  - (a) **True**
  - (b) False

## Medieval India:



**Agrarian Society in the sixteenth century:** The basic unit of agricultural society was the village, inhabited by peasants who performed the manifold seasonal tasks that made up agricultural production throughout the year – tilling the soil, sowing seeds, harvesting the crop when it was ripe.

**Agriculture:** Seldom did the average peasant of north India possess more than a pair of bullocks and two ploughs; most possessed even less. Cultivation was based on the principle of individual ownership. Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners. The abundance of land, available labour and the mobility of peasants were three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture.

**Irrigation:** Monsoons remained the backbone of Indian agriculture, as they are even today. But there were crops which required additional water. Artificial systems of irrigation had to be devised for this. Irrigation projects received state support as well. For example, in northern India the state undertook digging of new canals and also repaired old ones.

### Questions:

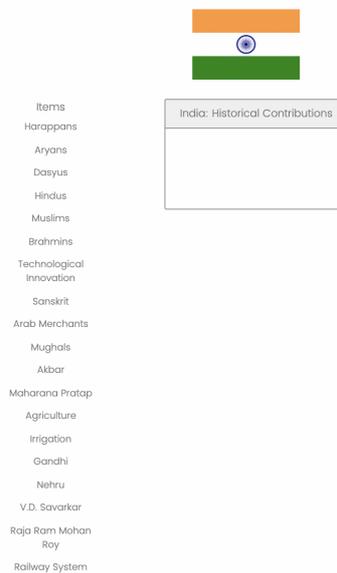
1. What three factors accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture in Medieval India?
  - (a) **The abundance of land, available labour and the mobility of peasants.**
  - (b) The abundance of land, connection to the silk road and the discovery of the wheel.
  - (c) The abundance of land, climate change and the availability of elephants.
2. True or False: irrigation projects existed in Medieval India.
  - (a) **True**
  - (b) False

## B.3 Stage 3. Outcomes, Mechanisms, Remaining Exercises

### B.3.1 Mechanisms

In Stage 3 of the study, we first ask two questions meant to capture our theorized mechanisms: namely, that historical representations can alter the perceived “prototypical member” of the nation and the perceived contributions of different groups. Our prototypicality question asks participants to what extent they agree with the following two statements: (1) “I think it would be accurate if someone described me as a typical Indian” and (2) “I feel similar to other Indians”. To measure perceived contributions, we show participants list of groups, drawing on our treatments.<sup>30</sup> The item asks them the following: “From the list below, please select the 5 groups, individuals, or other items that you believe have most **positively contributed** to the *development of the Indian nation*. Drag the words into the box labeled “India: Historical Contributions”. Then rank them from 1-5, where 1 is “most positively contributed” and 5 is “least positively contributed”.<sup>31</sup> Figure B3 reproduces the question answer options.

Figure B3: Perceived Contributions



### B.3.2 Behavioral Outcomes

After completing the two mechanism questions, participants are told that they have been assigned to groups of three and that payoffs will be determined by group performance, with all group members earning an equal share. Participants are told that they will complete two additional exercises, on geography and sociology, however, only one of these two exercises will count for payment, as determined by a group representative. They are then told: “In this part of the study, you have been matched in a group with two other survey participants. Like you, these participants chose to be represented by avatars. Below, you can see yourself and your two partners along with their chosen avatars.” Figure B4 provides an example of what this could look like for a Muslim man assigned to a Hindu majority group. Note that this information will be displayed to participants while they make each of their decisions regarding who should be group representative.

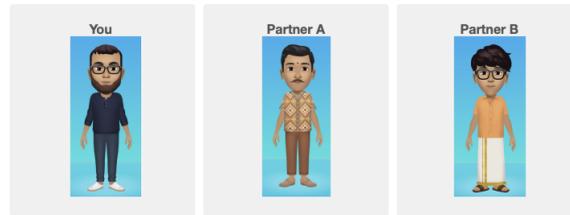
Participants will then be asked to make three decisions. First, they select which exercise they would choose to count for payment were they group representative. After stating their

<sup>30</sup>The order in which our two mechanism questions appear will be randomized.

<sup>31</sup>The order in which the words appear will be randomized

### Figure B4: Example of Group Composition

As a reminder, you have been matched in a group with two other group members. Your group was selected to be broadly representative of the Indian nation, although this is imperfect and certain communities may appear more or less than others.



choice, participants are asked to state their willingness to be group representative. Willingness is explained in terms of choosing a place in line (Coffman 2014), where choosing 1 means that one wants to be first in line in the group and choosing 4 means that one does not even want to be in line to be group representative (i.e., they do not want to be group representative). Participants are told that the person who is most willing will be chosen as group representative, and they are shown the following text:

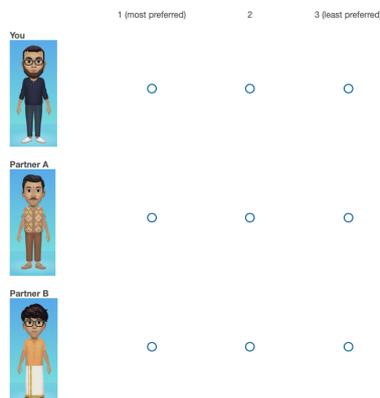
“How willing are you to represent the group and to have your choice determine which of the two exercises may count for payment? Please indicate your desired place in line. The person who is first in line will be chosen as group representative. Remember, if you are selected as group representative and your choice is implemented, it affects not only your potential earnings, but potentially the earnings of your partners as well.”

After participants answer their willingness to be group representative question, they see the following text:

“In the event that multiple group members are equally most willing to be group representative, we will have a tie. To determine who is representative in the event of a tie, we will now ask you to rank, from 1-3 where 1 is most preferred and 3 is least preferred, how much you prefer that each of the group members (including yourself) is the group representative. The person who is ranked highest by all group members will become group representative in the event of a tie.”

Figure B5 provides an example of what this ranking might look like for a given group:

### Figure B5: Ranking Group Members by Preference: Group Representative



After indicating their own willingness to become group representative, and after ranking their

fellow group members, participants are asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statements: “I am qualified to be group representative” and “I am worthy of being group representative”.

### **B.3.3 Political Outcomes**

**Political Engagement** In order to probe whether the treatment affects respondents’ sense of *political engagement* (supply) above and beyond their willingness to be a group leader, we explicitly ask them about their levels of political interest. Specifically we ask them the following question:

“Recent studies on leadership and political engagement in India indicate that people lack information about how to become politically active and influence policy making. A first step to becoming more engaged is to learn more about the many different platforms, organizations and programs that exist in India, which work toward empowering citizens to participate in democratic and governance processes.

Would you like to find out more information about different programs and platforms? Those selecting “yes” will receive information on different programs and platforms promoting citizen engagement in India at the conclusion of this study.”

Respondents who answer “yes” to this question are provided with a link to a webpage with information on different platforms and programs related to promoting citizen engagement. Respondents who visit the webpage are asked to introduce their unique ID number (assigned to them at the end of the study), allowing us to examine who visited this website during the days and weeks following the completion of the study.

**Evaluations of Hindu and Muslim Politicians** In order to examine whether the results generalize to perceptions of political candidates, we include an outcome measure where respondents are asked to rate a real politician on a number of dimensions. We show respondents a politician’s “report card” published by an independent NGO in Maharashtra. We then ask respondents to rate the politician’s performance based on this card. Respondents are randomly assigned either the Muslim MLA’s report card *or* the Hindu MLA’s report card. Respondents are randomly assigned either a Hindu or a Muslim politician with a similar (mid) ratings. The exercise also helps us distinguish between perceptions of entitlement, quality, popularity etc. Respondents are asked the following question:

“Several non-partisan organizations in India publish “report cards”, which rank city councilors and MLAs on their annual performance, with the aim of making elected representatives more accountable for performance of their key duties.

Please read the following description of a real MLA in Maharashtra and answer the follow-up questions.” To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- The candidate is qualified for political office
- The candidate is deserving of political office
- The candidate represents the interests of his constituents
- The candidate represents India
- The candidate is likely to be popular among greater society
- I would be comfortable if this MLA represented me in a legislative assembly
- The candidate seems similar to other politicians

Figure B6: Evaluation of Politicians



Hindu MLA

Muslim MLA

## Geography:

After subjects have responded to these questions, they complete the geography and sociology exercises:

**Population:** Patterns of population distribution and density help us to understand the demographic characteristics of any area. The term population distribution refers to the way people are spaced over the earth's surface. Broadly, 90 per cent of the world population lives in about 10 per cent of its land area.

### Questions:

- Which statement is true?
  - 10 percent of the world population lives in about 90 per cent of its land area.
  - (b) 10 percent of the world population lives in about 10 per cent of its land area.
  - 90 percent of the world population lives in about 10 per cent of its land area.**
  - 90 percent of the world population lives in about 90 per cent of its land area.

## Sociology:

In every society, some people have a greater share of valued resources – money, property, education, health, and power – than others. These social resources can be divided into three forms of capital – economic capital in the form of material assets and income; cultural capital such as educational qualifications and status; and social capital in the form of networks of contact and social associations.

### Questions:

- What constitutes “social resources”
  - Economic capital, political capital and social capital
  - Social stratification
  - Economic capital, cultural capital and social capital**

## B.4 Stage 4. Follow-up Questions and Conclusion

In Stage 4, participants are first asked a few follow up questions. Questions include whether they think certain social groups are better or worse on average at history, geography, and sociology, and to what extent they enjoyed and felt engaged with the study. Participants are then be reminded how payoffs will be calculated and how they will find out, and within what time frame, how much they have earned in additional incentives. They will earn their participation fee immediately.

## C Additional Information on Research Design

### C.1 Empirical Specification

To estimate our main treatment effect, we first present point estimates of the mean levels of our outcomes of interest across treatment conditions and subsets of the respondent population (most notably, Muslim versus Hindu respondents, and a respondent’s randomly assigned group composition).

In our analysis, we also run a series of OLS regressions. In order to examine heterogeneous treatment effects given group composition, we will interact treatment assignment with a variable indicating whether or not the respondent was assigned to a homogeneous or a mixed group. The main empirical specifications are detailed below:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{1,i} + \beta_2 T_{2,i} + \times Z_i + \psi \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_{1,i} + \beta_2 T_{2,i} + \beta_3 (T_{1,i} \times Z_i) + \beta_4 (T_{2,i} \times Z_i) + \psi \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where  $Y_i$  is the outcome for individual  $i$ ,  $T_{1,i}$  is a treatment indicator variable that equals 1 if individual  $i$  was randomly assigned to the *exclusive* treatment condition and  $T_{2,i}$  is a treatment indicator variable that equals 1 if individual  $i$  was randomly assigned to the *inclusive* treatment.  $Z_i$  represents the value for individual  $i$  of a variable that we will interact with treatment assignment, such as a participant’s randomly assigned group composition. We control for all constituent terms of interactions in regression models with interactions.  $\mathbf{x}_{ig}$  is a vector of control variables for individual  $i$ ,  $\epsilon_i$  is unexplained variance, and  $\alpha$  is the intercept.

### C.2 Power Analysis

We conduct our power analysis using the **power** function in Stata version 16. We determine the sample size needed to obtain a power of 0.8 given an alpha of 0.05. We estimate sample sizes for a two-sample means test. To determine the expected treatment effect size, we draw on two sources of data:

1. In our experiment, we use the same scale for our central outcome of interest as Coffman (2014), where an individual’s willingness to put forward their decision on behalf of a group is explained in terms of reserving a “place in line” relative to one’s group partners, where “1” means that a respondent wishes to be first in line to be group representative and “4” means they do not even wish to be in line. Although Coffman’s research design and question both differ substantially from our own – she evaluates the willingness of women versus men to have their decisions “count” for payment in a group of two on a variety of topics that differed in how male- or female-stereotyped they were – because her outcome is measured on a similar scale as our own, the effect size she observes can be used as a helpful reference point when estimating expected treatment effect sizes for our own study.

2. We piloted our experiment, first with a sample of men from December 7 to December 20, 2020, and then with a sample of women from March 22 to March 29, 2021. 185 men, and 199 women, completed the pilot in its entirety. Although we made some modifications between pilots, and between the pilots and our planned full study, we can nevertheless also use results from these pilots to derive expected treatment effect sizes.

Using the first data source, (Coffman (2014), p.1640) finds that differences in the average position in line between men and women ranged across the topics from .04 to .58, with an average of .19 pooling across topics ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $n = 460$ ). Using this albeit imperfect measure for our expected treatment effect size, along with the means and standard deviations from the Coffman (2014) study, indicates that we require a sample size of at least  $n = 115$  in each treatment condition, or  $n = 345$  across all three conditions. As explained in Appendix Section C.1 and based on our theory, we will investigate treatment effects separately for Hindu and Muslim respondents. A power analysis indicating a required sample size of  $n = 345$  across treatments should thus be doubled, which results in a sample of approximately  $n = 690$ .

Our pilot results should be interpreted with caution, due to the relatively small sample size and because we made some adjustments to our design between our pilot with men and with women; we also do not include any controls in our analysis. However, among Muslim men, we observe a treatment effect size for the *inclusive* treatment of approximately 0.40 on the 1-4 scale: the average place in line is 1.75 in the control group, and 1.37 in the *inclusive* treatment group. Results are thus in the direction predicted by  $H_{2a}$ , as Muslim participants in the *inclusive* treatment, as compared with the control group, become more willing to seek out leadership roles.<sup>32</sup> Using means and standard deviations from our pilot and an estimated effect size of 0.375 indicates that we require a sample size of at least  $n = 90$  in each treatment condition, or  $n = 270$  across all three conditions; this number increases to a total sample size of  $n = 540$  when considering both Muslim and Hindu respondents.<sup>33,34</sup>

In addition to the 1-4 place in line measure, we also observed expected effects on a number of other variables. Among Muslims, we observe that the *inclusive* treatment increases self-perceived qualification to be group representative by roughly 0.30 points on a 5 point scale.<sup>35</sup> Using the effect size, means and standard deviations of this variable yields a sample size of at least  $n = 64$  in each treatment condition, or  $n = 192$  across all three conditions and  $n = 384$  when taking into account separate analyses for Hindu and Muslim respondents. We also observe that the *exclusive* treatment decreases Muslim respondents' self-ranking on the 1-3 demand scale by approximately 0.25 points; using these data yields a sample size of  $n = 192$  in each treatment condition, or  $n = 1,152$  when considering both Muslim and Hindu respondent populations.

Our estimated sample sizes thus range widely, from as little as  $n = 384$  total to as many as  $n = 1,152$ . We take a conservative approach and plan to sample approximately  $n = 1,500$  respondents, which should provide us sufficient power to consider our specified interactions. We will also compute post-data collection minimum detectable effect (MDE) sizes.

### C.3 Sampling

We chose states based on three criteria: 1) overall population size or the presence of a “mega city”, 2) a sizeable Muslim community, and 3) a history of textbook reforms. The first two

<sup>32</sup>For the purposes of our power analysis, we consider here results from the pilots that are in the direction predicted by our theory.

<sup>33</sup>Pooling across our pilots with Muslim men and women, we observe a treatment effect size for the *inclusive* treatment of 0.17, similar to the pooled average of 0.19 in Coffman (2014). Using pooled data results in a larger estimated sample size of approximately  $n = 300$  per treatment condition.

<sup>34</sup>Among Hindu women, the *inclusive* decreases willingness to lead, and results in a total estimated sample size – pooling across Muslim and Hindu respondents – of  $n = 606$ .

<sup>35</sup>We observe similar expected effects, across both the *inclusive* and *exclusive* treatments, when considering evaluations of Hindu and Muslim MLAs among both Hindu and Muslim respondents.

criteria help to facilitate survey sampling and increase our confidence that our findings would generalize to large parts of the Indian population, and the third criterion helps to ensure that there is within-state variation in the type of history education respondents will have received. Our resultant target population includes residents of the two largest Indian cities (Mumbai and Delhi) as well as the two most populated states (Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra). All states have sizeable Muslim populations (the proportion of Muslims in our target states range from 9.67% (Gujarat) to 19.26% (Uttar Pradesh)), and have undergone important textbook reforms in the past.

#### C.4 Attention Checks

As a first check, we inform respondents that careful attention to the survey questions is critical. Only respondents who answer “I understand” to this statement are allowed to proceed to take the survey. Second, at the end of the demographics section of the questionnaire, we include the following item: “*People are very busy these days. We are testing whether people read questions. To show that you’ve read this much, answer both “extremely interested” and “very interested”.*” Respondents who do not answer both “extremely interested” and “very interested” are excluded from the survey. Finally, right before assigning respondents to treatments, we include a final attention check. We inform respondents that in the next part of the survey, they have the possibility of earning an additional 400 INR and that whether or not they receive this amount depends both on luck and whether they pay attention to the material. Following this, we ask respondents to indicate how much they have the possibility of earning in the next part of the study. Only respondents who answer “400 INR” are allowed to continue taking the survey.

#### C.5 Ethics

First, we have made sure that all the material used for the study is sourced from official textbook material, published either by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) or different states’ educational boards. For instance, the material used to design the exclusive history treatment is currently in use in history textbooks in Rajasthan. Although designed to active feelings of exclusion, our treatment therefore does not expose participants to psychological costs higher than those they are likely to face in daily life. Second, we include a debrief at the end of the study, providing respondents with information about the study’s content and purpose. The debrief states clearly that no texts should be taken as facts and that the historical depictions to which they were exposed are contested. The debrief also provides contact information for the main investigators on the project and provides links for interested respondents to learn more about Indian textbook content and the political controversy surrounding it. Third, we have pre-tested the treatment exercises in a small sample of 60 respondents, to gauge whether there are any unanticipated ethical concerns that necessitated changes to our study design. Specifically, respondents were given the opportunity to give open-ended responses on how the texts made them feel, whether they found the text upsetting, or anything else they wished to say (see Section D.1 of the Appendix). Fourth, in order to attest the ethics of the study according to local norms and standards, we have shared our pre-analysis with Muslim and Hindu faculty and Indian institutions to receive their input on the ethical aspects of the study. The study has also received IRB approval from the ethical board at ██████ University. Finally, our theoretical framework and research design take into account not only on the possible negative consequences of exclusive historical representations on ethnic minority communities, but also the possible positive consequences of *inclusive historical representations*. Our findings may therefore provide clear policy implications of how minority inclusion and representation could be improved, through historical narratives and textbook reforms. Such positive implications suggest that this study

may provide clear benefits for members of marginalized communities.

## C.6 Pre-specified Empirical Expectations

This section specifies additional empirical expectations not directly derived from our theoretical framework. While support for these empirical expectations is not used as direct evidence in favour of or against our proposed theoretical argument, we take the opportunity to further explore important questions related to factors such as gender, caste, and group consciousness and their potential moderating and conditioning effects. We chose to pre-register these empirical expectations and to use them as a guide for our exploratory analyses.

First of all, we expect that under the status quo in our study location, marginalized group members will already be accustomed to exclusive historical representations, among other factors, that promote a status hierarchy that distinguishes between an ethnic majority that is perceived as entitled to lead and an ethnic minority that is mandated to follow.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, we might expect that prior to the administration of any experimental treatments, the demand for and supply of minority individuals in leadership positions might already be lower than for majority members. In sum, *ceteris paribus, the supply of and demand for ethnic minorities in leadership positions will be lower than for ethnic majorities, particularly where such positions require that leaders speak on behalf of members from the ethnic majority group ( $E_1$ )*.<sup>37</sup>

How should we expect historical narratives to affect the supply of and demand for ethnic majority individuals in leadership roles? Theoretically, varying historical narratives of minority groups need not have any implications for the narratives surrounding majority groups, or their perceived entitlement to lead. Because history is not zero sum, the greater inclusion or exclusion of minority members does not necessarily imply changes in how majority members are remembered. Similarly, if majority group entitlement is not sourced in a comparison with minority group members, changes in perceived minority group entitlement to lead could have no effect on perceived majority group entitlement.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, we expect that should historical narratives of minorities matter for majority members, then effects are likely to be symmetric: by undermining the perceived entitlement to lead of minority members, exclusive historical representations might lead majority members to view themselves as the only or primary group entitled to lead. Inclusive historical representations, on the other hand, may increase perceptions that minorities have a similar (if not equal) right to speak on behalf of members of the nation. In sum, we expect that *exclusive (inclusive) historical representations will increase (decrease) the supply of and demand for ethnic majority individuals in leadership positions ( $E_2$ )*.

There are a number of other identities that might shape one’s perceived belonging to the nation and entitlement to speak on behalf of others. While our experimental design allows

---

<sup>36</sup>In our pre-specified empirical expectations we distinguish between ethnic minorities and majorities under the assumption that ethnic majorities are unquestioned core members of the nation, and ethnic minorities are considered “peripheral”. However, our theoretical expectations also apply to other groups that could be considered “peripheral”, such as racial minorities or women.

<sup>37</sup>For simplicity, we detail our empirical expectations in this Section with reference to the demand for and supply of individuals in leadership positions; however, we would expect corresponding effects as regards groups’ perceived centrality to the nation and entitlement to speak on its behalf (see Section 2). For example, as regards  $E_1$ , we would similarly expect that, *ceteris paribus*, minority individuals will be perceived as having lower centrality to the nation and being less entitled to speak on its behalf.

<sup>38</sup>While less descriptive representation for some groups necessarily means more representation for other groups – assuming that the number of leadership positions remains constant – it need not be the case that lower representation for one minority group would translate to greater representation for the majority group. Indeed, some scholars argue that gains in representation for one minority group primarily come at the expense of other minority groups with whom they are in competition, and thus should have little impact on majority group members (Meier et al. 2004; Khosla 2011). Further, even where decreases in minority representation do translate to increases in majority representation, it need to be the case that such changes are accompanied by absolute (but rather relative) shifts for majority members in their perceived belonging to the nation and entitlement to speak on its behalf, or in the supply of or demand for majority members in leadership positions.

us to abstract away from other considerations to a great degree, one intersecting identity that remains present and which research indicates may be relevant is gender. We posit that our historical representation treatment effects will be lesser among women because gender is a separate status system, legitimized through other system-justifying beliefs (Kray et al. 2017). As a consequence, women tend to feel less entitled than men to an array of outcomes (Major 1993), including a sense of entitlement to exercise power (Liddle and Michielsens 2000). Although inclusive historical representations may enhance women’s sense of entitlement as a *minority member*, they are less likely to enhance their sense of entitlement as *women*. This may be so, in particular, because women are largely absent (as compared to men) in most historical narratives – whether they be exclusive or inclusive with regard to ethnicity – in our case study and around the world. Therefore, we expect that *effects of the historical representations on ethnic minorities’ willingness to seek out leadership roles will be lesser for women as compared with men (E<sub>3</sub>)*.

Not all minority members may feel equally included by a more inclusive historical narrative. Just as women appear much less frequently in most historical representations, individuals from lower social classes may feel that historical depictions of kings and noblemen from the past do not represent them. Attachments to historical leaders belonging to the royalty and nobility may be especially weak among minority members from lower social classes in contexts where lower and upper social class minority individuals differ on a number of additional salient dimensions which together increase the likelihood that class divisions will extend to associations with historical figures. In India, for instance, upper caste Muslim “Ashrafs” claim to be direct descendants of India’s medieval Mughal rulers and take pride in this background. Most of India’s lower caste Muslims, however, are Hindu converts and do not share this direct historical link with Muslim political leaders of the past. We therefore expect that *effects of the historical representations on ethnic minorities’ willingness to seek out leadership roles will be lesser for individuals from lower social classes/castes as compared with those from upper social classes/castes (E<sub>4</sub>)*.

Finally, we acknowledge the possibility that *inclusive* and *exclusive* historical representations could generate backlash. Contrary to our stated hypotheses, *exclusive* representations might serve to *mobilize* minorities who are outraged or upset by the depiction; on the other end, *inclusive* representations might similarly mobilize majorities. We expect that such an effect would be more likely among participants who have a strong sense of “group consciousness” (i.e., a strong sense of group identity, a sense of being treated unfairly, and a willingness to mobilize politically). Individuals with high levels of group consciousness are expected to be more likely to interpret certain historical representations as *ideology*, rather than as objective historical accounts, and thus to respond quite differently from those with lower levels of consciousness when exposed to the same narratives. This could possibly neutralize the expected effects of the historical representations. We therefore expect that the *effects of exclusive historical representations on ethnic minorities’ willingness to seek out leadership roles will be lesser for minority members with high levels of group consciousness (E<sub>5a</sub>)*. We also expect that the *effects of inclusive historical representations on ethnic majorities’ willingness to grant ethnic minorities leadership roles will be lesser for majority members with high levels of group consciousness (E<sub>5b</sub>)*.

Backlash may also occur when individuals are exposed to a historical narrative that is very different from the one they received earlier in life, for instance as children in school. If depictions contrast sharply, individuals are more likely to view historical representations as false.<sup>39</sup> This could also neutralize the expected effects of exposure to different historical

<sup>39</sup>One could imagine alternatively that effects are greater where a historical narrative constitutes new information, and therefore where it differs from the narrative one learned earlier in life. While possible, we think it more likely that individuals will be comparatively more resistant to a narrative that contrasts with what they have learned beforehand, especially given that participants receive a lesser “dosage” of our treatment as compared against years of formal education and socialization.

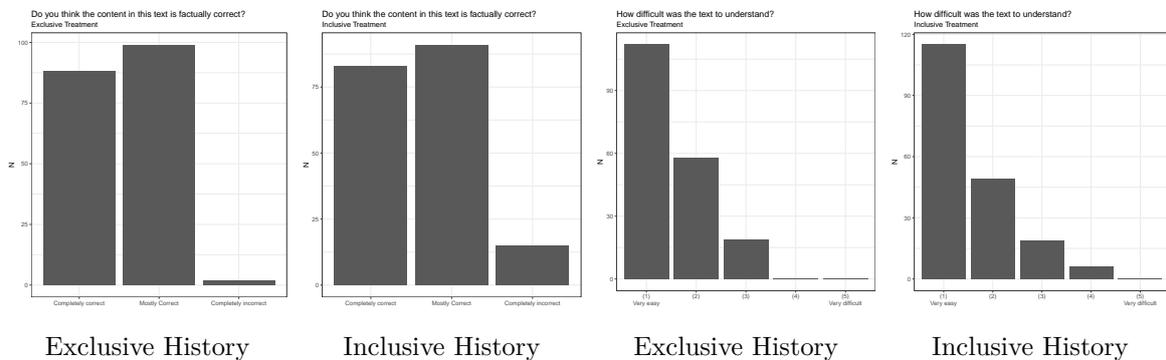
representations. For instance, we expect that *the effects of exclusive historical representation on ethnic minorities’ willingness to seek out leadership roles will be lesser for minority members who have had an inclusive history education (E6a)* and *the effects of inclusive historical representations on ethnic majorities’ willingness to grant ethnic minorities leadership roles will be lesser for majority members who have received an exclusive history education in school (E6b)*.

## D Pretest and Pilot Results

### D.1 Results from Pretest

We carried out a pre-test (N = 60) between October and November 2020 in order to ensure that individuals from our target groups responded well to both the treatments and the avatars. In terms of the treatments, we were concerned with the possibility that participants might perceive the history texts as false, political propaganda rather than official historical accounts. In order to better understand how our target groups perceive the history texts used in our treatments, we therefore asked a smaller group of respondents to read all our history treatments and answer several questions about them. Results from this pre-test suggest that the vast majority of respondents view the history texts as ‘completely correct’ or ‘mostly correct’. We also asked respondents whether they found the texts easy to comprehend, finding that the majority of respondents find them ‘very easy’ to comprehend. We also asked respondents about the types of emotions provoked by texts, finding that very few respondents felt strong negative emotions such as feeling offended or angry.

Figure D7: Perceived factual correctness and ease of comprehension



In terms of the avatars, we wanted to make sure that these avatars successfully signal religious identity. We also wanted to make sure that the avatars were popular choices among our respondents, if given the choice to select from a larger pool of avatars. In order to examine whether the avatars signal religious identity, we asked the respondents to indicate from what religious group they perceived the avatar to be. The perceived religion of the different avatars included in our study can be seen in figure D8. We also asked respondents to select an avatar from a large pool of avatars, including identity-incongruent choices. We find that the vast majority of respondents selected identity-congruent avatars (signalling their religious identity). The final selection of avatars to be included in our study was based on both (1) how well the avatar signalled religious identity and (2) how popular the avatar was as a choice among respondents in our pre-test.

Figure D8: Avatar Evaluations

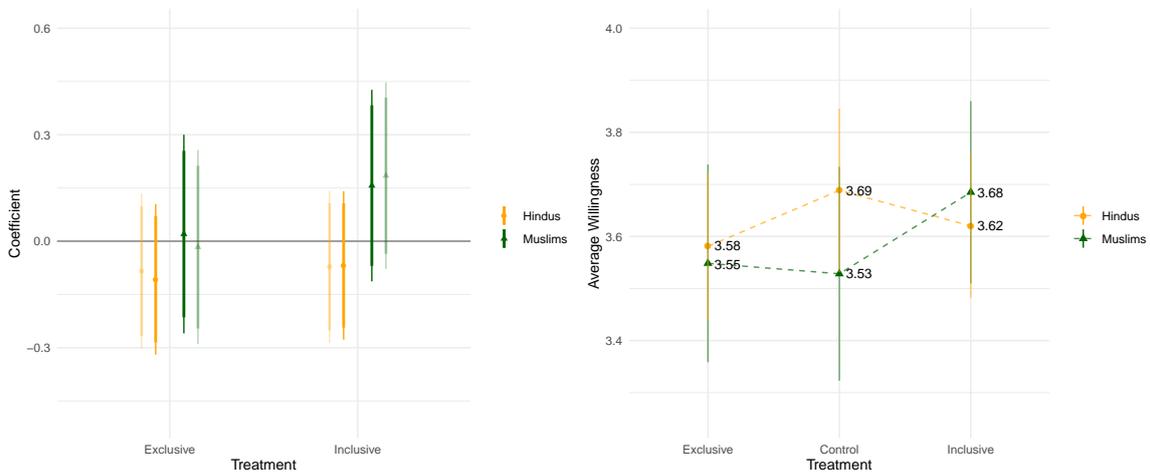


Female avatars (\* Female Muslim Choice 2 and 3 were added after our pre-test, in response to our findings.)

## D.2 Results from the Pilot

Figure D9 illustrates our central result from the pilot study. The pilot study was carried out between December 2020 and March 2021 and included 402 respondents. The results illustrate a positive effect of the inclusive history treatment on Muslim minorities' willingness to take on the leadership role.

Figure D9: Treatment effects of historical representations on willingness to take on a leadership role



Notes: N=402. Coefficients are based on linear regression models excluding controls (bright colours) and including sociodemographic controls (dim colours). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. The outcome variable ranges from 1-4.

## E Summary Statistics and Balance

Table E1 shows that randomization was effectively implemented, as participants are balanced across treatments on observable characteristics.

Table E1: **Balance Across Treatments**

Variable	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	Baseline Treatment		Exclusive Treatment		Inclusive Treatment		T-test Difference	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	(1)-(2)	(1)-(3)
% Female (vs. Male)	532	0.52 (0.02)	526	0.53 (0.02)	534	0.55 (0.02)	-0.02	-0.04
Age (avg.)	532	33.27 (0.42)	526	33.24 (0.46)	534	33.59 (0.44)	0.03	-0.32
% Muslim (vs. Hindu)	532	0.48 (0.02)	526	0.44 (0.02)	534	0.49 (0.02)	0.04	-0.01
% Gujarat	532	0.14 (0.01)	526	0.16 (0.02)	534	0.13 (0.01)	-0.02	0.01
% Maharashtra	532	0.31 (0.02)	526	0.27 (0.02)	534	0.32 (0.02)	0.04	-0.01
% Delhi	532	0.32 (0.02)	526	0.33 (0.02)	534	0.34 (0.02)	-0.02	-0.02
% Uttar Pradesh	532	0.24 (0.02)	526	0.23 (0.02)	534	0.21 (0.02)	0.00	0.03
% Lower Caste	532	0.43 (0.02)	526	0.39 (0.02)	534	0.42 (0.02)	0.04	0.01
% Resident Large City	532	0.78 (0.02)	526	0.77 (0.02)	534	0.81 (0.02)	0.01	-0.03
% 12th Grade or Higher	532	0.84 (0.02)	526	0.84 (0.02)	534	0.86 (0.01)	-0.00	-0.02
% Voted BJP	410	0.60 (0.02)	401	0.65 (0.02)	405	0.66 (0.02)	-0.05	-0.06
% Homogeneous Group	532	0.40 (0.02)	526	0.44 (0.02)	534	0.36 (0.02)	-0.04	0.04
% Hindu Majority	532	0.42 (0.02)	526	0.37 (0.02)	534	0.44 (0.02)	0.05	-0.02
% Muslim Majority	532	0.18 (0.02)	526	0.19 (0.02)	534	0.19 (0.02)	-0.01	-0.01
Group Consciousness Index (avg.)	532	0.74 (0.01)	526	0.75 (0.01)	534	0.74 (0.01)	-0.01	-0.00

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. T-test values represent the differences in the means across groups.

\* indicates  $p < 0.05$ .

## F Additional Results and Robustness

This Section presents results from additional analyses and robustness tests.

### F.1 Additional Results

Table F2 reports results from a regression in which we interact treatment assignment with respondent religion; we find that differences in treatment effects for Hindus and Muslims are statistically distinguishable from zero.

Table F2: **Effect of historical representations on willingness to lead.**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Willingness to Lead	
	(1)	(2)
Exclusive*Muslim	0.036 (0.078)	0.033 (0.078)
<b>Inclusive*Muslim</b>	<b>0.174**</b> (0.077)	<b>0.177**</b> (0.077)
Exclusive	0.026 (0.053)	0.018 (0.053)
Inclusive	-0.011 (0.054)	-0.014 (0.054)
Muslim	-0.038 (0.055)	-0.091 (0.057)
Controls	No	Yes
Observations	1,592	1,592
R <sup>2</sup>	0.007	0.027
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table F3 shows that the inclusive history treatment positively affects Muslim respondents sense of being worthy to lead – especially among those with high levels of group consciousness.

Table F3: **Effects of historical representations on perceptions of feeling qualified and worthy to lead**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Qualified <i>Muslims</i>	Worthy <i>Muslims</i>	Qualified <i>Hindus</i>	Worthy <i>Hindus</i>	Qualified <i>Muslims</i>	Worthy <i>Muslims</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Exclusive	-0.068 (0.073)	-0.019 (0.080)	-0.027 (0.081)	-0.067 (0.083)	-0.087 (0.351)	0.119 (0.385)
Inclusive	-0.022 (0.071)	0.110 (0.077)	0.011 (0.083)	-0.029 (0.084)	0.053 (0.322)	-0.532 (0.353)
Group Consciousness					0.398 (0.292)	0.057 (0.320)
Exclusive*Group Consciousness					0.017 (0.432)	-0.172 (0.473)
Inclusive*Group Consciousness					-0.092 (0.400)	0.823* (0.438)
Observations	753	753	839	839	753	753
R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.004	0.0003	0.001	0.008	0.016
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01					

We were able to use individuals' randomly generated survey ID codes to track whether they visited the website with political information, as they were required to provide this code to enter. Although quite a few respondents visited this website (13%), we find no evidence that our experiment treatments affected their probability of doing so. Table F4 shows that the history treatments did not affect whether or not individuals actually visited the website with information on how to become politically engaged.

**Table F4: Effects of historical representations on behavioral measure of political engagement**

<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
Visited Website		
	(1)	(2)
Exclusive	0.010 (0.026)	0.035 (0.032)
Inclusive	-0.036 (0.025)	-0.005 (0.033)
Observations	753	839
R <sup>2</sup>	0.005	0.002
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

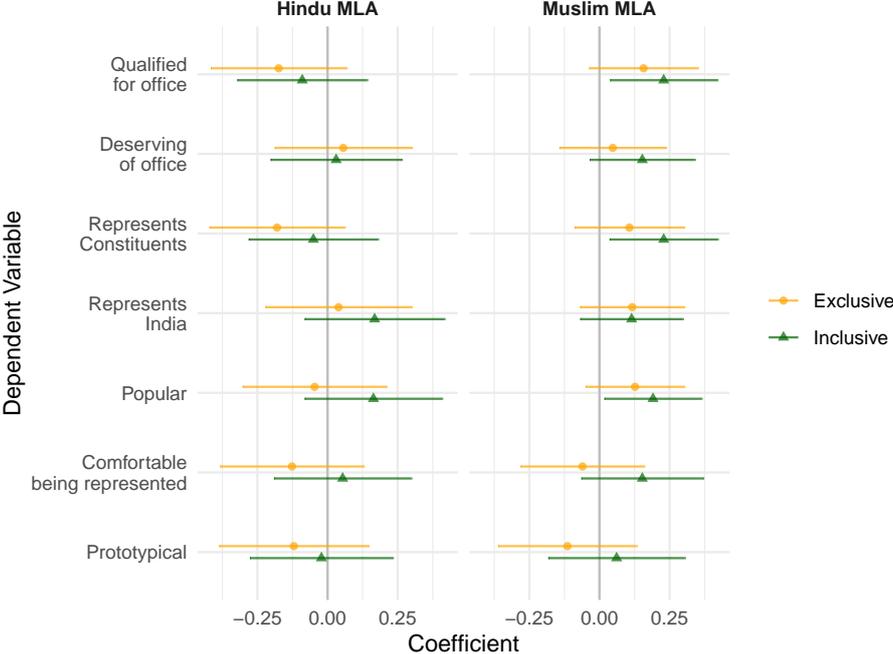
Table F5 shows that the inclusive history treatment positively affects Muslim respondents' willingness to take on the leadership position among respondents assigned to mixed group compositions (including at least one Hindu partner).

**Table F5: The conditional effect of group composition**

<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
Willing to Lead		
	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>
	(1)	(2)
Exclusive*Mixed	-0.046 (0.110)	0.109 (0.112)
<b>Inclusive*Mixed</b>	<b>0.183*</b> (0.108)	0.107 (0.116)
Exclusive	0.088 (0.084)	-0.041 (0.086)
Inclusive	0.052 (0.084)	-0.077 (0.093)
Mixed Group	-0.082 (0.076)	-0.098 (0.081)
Observations	753	839
R <sup>2</sup>	0.020	0.002
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Figure F10 shows how the inclusive and exclusive treatment affect evaluations of the Hindu and Muslim MLA (politician) for each separate dimension. Among Muslim respondents, inclusive history positively affects perceptions that the MLA is qualified, representative of his constituencies and popular.

Figure F10: Treatment effects of historical representations on perceptions of Hindu and Muslim MLAs.

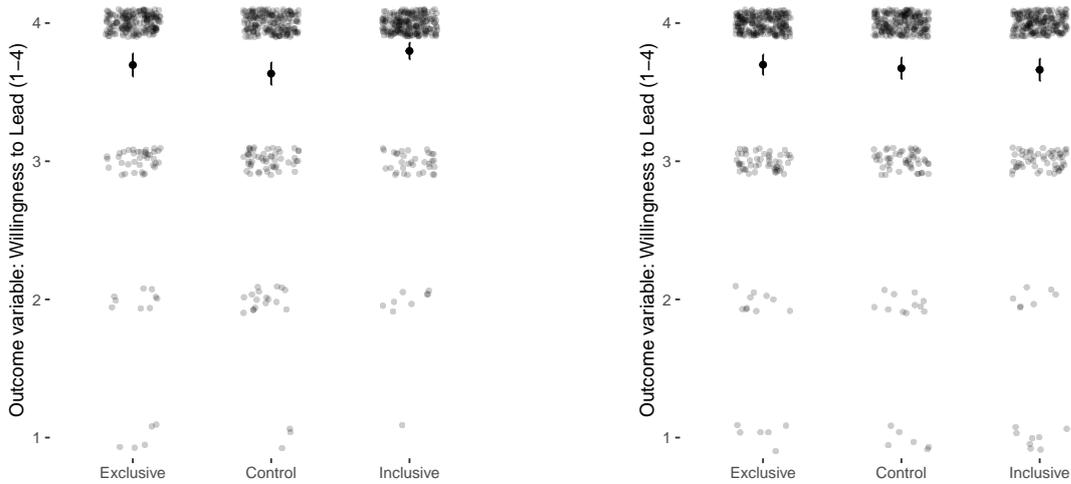


Notes: Coefficients are based on linear regression models excluding controls (bright colours) and including sociodemographic controls (dim colours). 95% (thin line) and 90% (thick line) confidence intervals are shown. The outcome variable ranges from 1-5.

## F.2 Treatment effects with distributions

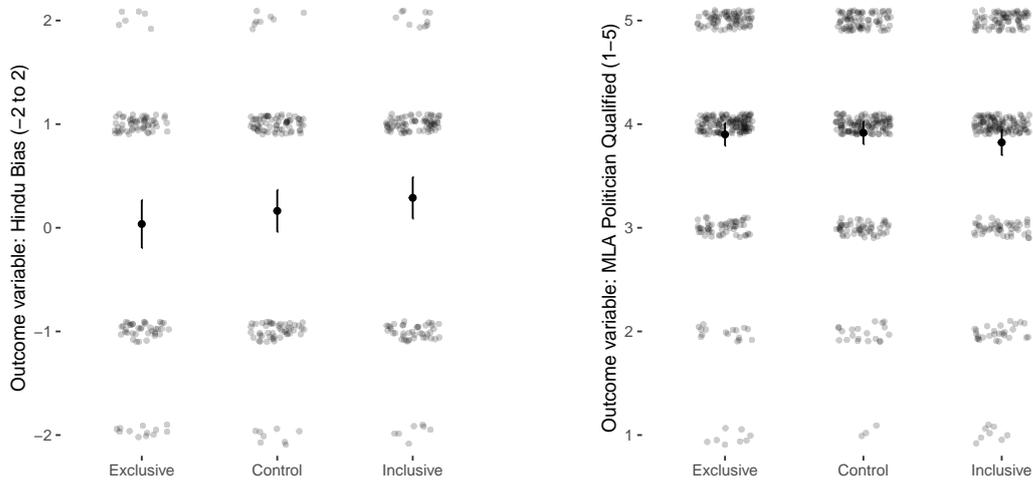
Figure F11 displays treatment effects of historical representations on Muslim participants' willingness to lead (top left panel), Hindu participants' willingness to lead (top right panel), Hindu participants' pro-Hindu bias (bottom left panel) and Hindu participants' evaluations of the qualification of the Muslim MLA (bottom right panel). Individuals are plotted, along with means 95% confidence intervals. The results show that the lack of an exclusive treatment effect does not appear to be due to an increased number of respondents at high and low values "cancelling each other out," but rather to little movement across outcome categories relative to the baseline condition.

Figure F11: **Treatment Effects (with Distributions)**



Notes: Treatment effects of historical representations on Muslim participants' willingness to lead.

Notes: Treatment effects of historical representations on Hindu participants' willingness to lead.



Notes: Treatment effects of historical representations on Hindu participants' pro-Hindu bias (demand channel).

Notes: Treatment effects of historical representations on Hindu participants' evaluations of the qualification of the Muslim MLA politician.

### F.3 Alternative explanations

Table F6 shows how the history treatments affect firstly overall engagement with the study measured through an item asking respondents to what extent they were involved with the study, and secondly respondents' score in the history exercises. The findings reveal that the inclusive history treatment does not increase Muslim respondents' overall engagement with the study. Muslim respondents also did not score better in the inclusive history exercises. In light of this evidence, it seems unlikely that engagement or performance could better explain why minorities volunteer more when exposed to inclusive history.

Table F6: **The effect of historical representations on reported engagement in the study and score in the history exercises**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Engagement		Score	
	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Exclusive	0.082 (0.066)	-0.001 (0.080)	-0.213*** (0.072)	-0.058 (0.061)
Inclusive	0.011 (0.065)	-0.044 (0.081)	-0.401*** (0.070)	-0.211*** (0.062)
Observations	753	839	753	839
R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.0005	0.042	0.015

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## F.4 Additional Empirical Expectations

Table F7-F8 evaluates some of the empirical expectations outlined in Section C.6. We observe that the effects of our treatments do not differ according to respondents' gender nor caste. We also observe that exclusive historical representations increase Muslim respondents' willingness to lead among BJP supporters (e.g., among Muslims with low levels of group consciousness).

Table F7: **Heterogeneous effects given gender and caste identity**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Willingness to Lead			
	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Exclusive	0.016 (0.079)	0.075 (0.080)	0.028 (0.079)	0.005 (0.066)
Inclusive	0.160** (0.077)	0.057 (0.083)	0.166** (0.080)	-0.036 (0.067)
Woman	0.009 (0.075)	0.089 (0.079)		
Exclusive*Woman	0.088 (0.109)	-0.093 (0.110)		
Inclusive*Woman	0.006 (0.106)	-0.128 (0.113)		
Low Caste			0.007 (0.076)	-0.151* (0.084)
Exclusive*Low Caste			0.068 (0.109)	0.051 (0.119)
Inclusive*Low Caste			-0.005 (0.107)	0.056 (0.123)
Observations	753	839	753	839
R <sup>2</sup>	0.015	0.002	0.014	0.007

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table F8: **Heterogeneous effects given BJP support and levels of group consciousness**

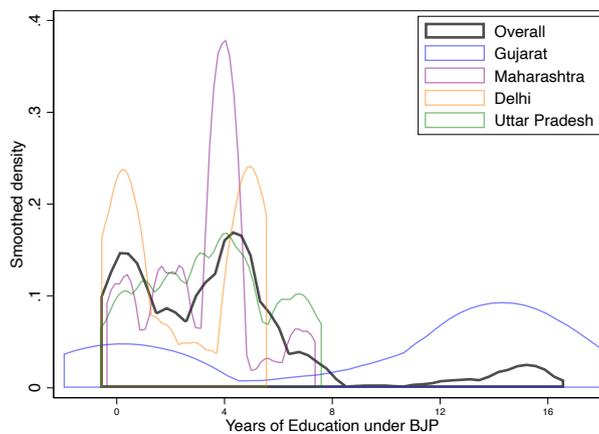
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Willingness to Lead			
	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Hindus</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Exclusive	-0.009 (0.076)	0.240* (0.127)	0.074 (0.264)	0.180 (0.228)
Inclusive	0.131* (0.075)	0.211 (0.134)	0.260 (0.242)	-0.093 (0.227)
BJP Vote	-0.117 (0.079)	0.106 (0.095)		
Exclusive*BJP Vote	0.217* (0.115)	-0.223 (0.141)		
Inclusive* BJP Vote	0.095 (0.111)	-0.194 (0.148)		
Group Consciousness			0.295 (0.219)	0.547** (0.224)
Exclusive*Group Consciousness			-0.019 (0.325)	-0.235 (0.317)
Inclusive*Group Consciousness			-0.120 (0.301)	0.109 (0.318)
Observations	608	608	753	839
R <sup>2</sup>	0.022	0.007	0.018	0.020

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## F.5 The role of pre-treatment history education

In order to investigate possible pre-treatment effects of real-world exposure to different historical narratives and how they might interact with our experimental treatments, we sampled states with different histories and timings of textbook reforms (see Section 4.1). We calculate the years of education under BJP state governments as a proxy for exposure to an exclusive historical narrative, as it is against these governments that accusations of rewriting history have most recently and often been levied.<sup>40</sup> While Gujarat shifted to BJP state-level government control in 1995 and has not changed since, periods of control differed in Maharashtra (1995-1999, 2014-present), Uttar Pradesh (1991-1993, 1997-2002, 2017-present), and Delhi (1993-1998). Consistently, as Figure F12 illustrates, years of education under BJP state governments are comparatively higher for respondents from Gujarat.

Figure F12: **Years of BJP Education, Overall and by State**



*Notes:* This graph displays the densities of participants' years of education under BJP state governments, overall and by state.

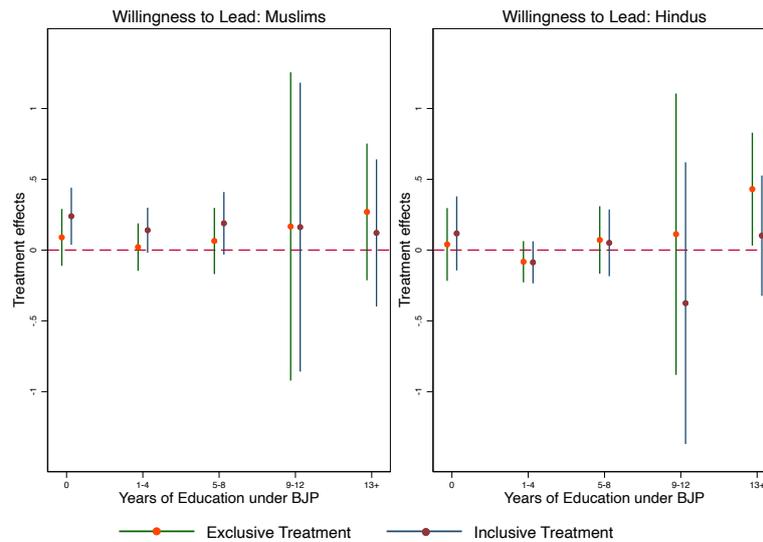
Figure F13 plots treatment effects on Muslims' (left panel) and Hindus' (right panel) willingness to lead, over participants' estimated years of exposure to an exclusive historical narrative (as proxied by years of education under a BJP state government). We observe that the positive effect of the *inclusive* treatment on Muslims' supply of leadership is particularly strong for those Muslim participants with fewer years of education under the BJP. We do not observe a relationship between years of education under the BJP and effects of either the *exclusive* treatment on Muslims' willingness to lead, or the *inclusive* treatment on Hindus' willingness to lead. Lastly, we observe that the *exclusive* treatment has a positive effect on the supply of leadership among Hindus with more years of education under BJP governments.<sup>41</sup>

How should we interpret these results? First, it could be that participants are (at least in the short term) primarily receptive to teachings from versions of history with which they are familiar, so long as that history *contains a positive bias toward their social group*. Such an interpretation could explain why Muslims (Hindus) with lesser (greater) exposure to an exclusive history in the real world increase their supply of leadership comparatively more in response to our *inclusive* (*exclusive*) experimental treatments. It could also explain why Hindu and Muslim respondents register little change in response to treatments that are inconsistent

<sup>40</sup>Specifically, we calculate years of education for which BJP and/or BJP allies held a plurality of the state legislature and thus the chief minister position, using data from <https://lokdhaba.ashoka.edu.in/> (accessed October 11, 2021), as well as participants' stated ages and educational attainments, and assuming that they began formal state schooling at the age of six as is standard in India.

<sup>41</sup>The interaction between the inclusive treatment and years of education under the BJP, not shown here to retain space, is statistically distinguishable from zero among Hindu respondents.

Figure F13: Treatment Effects by Years of BJP Education, Hindus and Muslims



*Notes:* This graph displays treatment effects on willingness to lead for Muslims (left panel) and Hindus (right panel), by the number of years of education under BJP state government. Regressions include controls for age, state, years of total education, and whether the participant attended a public (government) school.

with their real world exposure, or which portray their social group with a comparatively more negative bias. One important implication would be that an exclusive historical telling can decrease receptivity to alternative, inclusive historical narratives *even among minority groups that would seemingly benefit from them*.

A second alternative interpretation is that Muslims with lesser exposure to an exclusive narrative will be more receptive to an alternative (inclusive) narrative that displays their social group positively because they are less likely to have a strong prior as to which narrative is correct. While possible, we think it more likely that educated Muslims with little exposure to an *exclusive* narrative received a comparatively more *inclusive* narrative, as opposed to no narrative at all; this interpretation would also not explain the positive effect of the *exclusive* treatment on supply of leadership among Hindus with high exposure to BJP-led education.

Third, it is possible that *all* participants are familiar with the *exclusive* historical narrative, conveyed through textbooks or some other medium, which reduces the impact of the *exclusive* treatment except for those who most fervently believe the material due to very high levels of exposure and thus reject all alternatives (including the politically neutral *baseline* narrative). In contrast, an *inclusive* narrative might have an impact among those with the greatest reason to be receptive to its teachings (in our study, Muslims).

Fourth, differences across years of exposure to BJP education could be driven by other factors. Although we control for a respondent's age, years of total education, state, and type of education, there may be other, unaccounted-for differences between those receiving more or less BJP education that drive results. We also have comparatively few participants with a high number of years of BJP schooling, and thus can be less certain of estimates for those at higher levels of exposure. We treat the evidence presented above as largely speculative, and as noted in the text, we intend to conduct a follow-up observational study to evaluate the impact of textbook reforms in India on identity.

Despite these latter caveats, we note that the evidence discussed in this section suggests that real world historical narratives *can matter* and interact meaningfully with experimental stimuli, in particular by shaping individuals' perceptions about which historical narratives are valid and which are not.