Does identity affect aspirations in rural areas? An examination from the lens of caste and gender

Introduction

Aspirations as a development indicator

Effect of identity on economic outcomes- external
◦ Discrimination

Relationship between identity and preferences- internal
◦ But identity effects not random- endogeneity
◦ Solution- randomly increase identity salience using priming

Causal impact of gender and caste salience on aspirations for self and children
◦ Gender priming increased women's aspirations for girl child
◦ Caste priming increased only low caste women's aspirations for daughters
◦ No effect of priming on aspired years of education for children

Priming in Social Sciences

What is priming?
- ◦ Increase identity salience using situational cues that activate mental concepts associated with notion being primed

Priming popular in social psychology

Recently being used by economists
- ◦ Benjamin et al. (2010)- Asian American and Black identity and risk preferences
- ◦ Afridi et al. (2015)- Hukou identity and performance of students
- ◦ Mukherjee (2017)- Caste priming and test performance
- ◦ Hoff and Pandey (2006)- Caste announcement and performance
- ◦ Callen et al. (2014)- Priming violence exposure and risk preference

Aspirations

What determines the formation of an individual's hopes and beliefs about her future

Aspirations failure and investment in building social and human capital
- Genicot & Ray (2012)

Identity and aspirations
- Beaman et al (2012)- local female leader and aspirations
- Bernard et. al. (2014)- documentaries featuring same community
- Janzen et al. (2017) – upward looking aspirations

Study Design

Study conducted in Odisha- Feb-April 2018

- ◦ Kalahandi and Kandhamal districts
- ◦ 84 villages, 980 households- one male and female each HH
- ◦ Low female literacy, predominantly tribal population
- ◦ Poor & drought prone districts

Random assignment of caste priming, gender priming and general questions- approximately 1/3rd each

Five priming (or general) questions followed by questions on aspirations.

Region deeply stratified along ethnic lines

- ◦ Priming exploits environmental cues on attire, appearance, physical and ritual segregation, marriage practices, decision making.

Measuring Aspirations

Aspirations for self

- ◦ Aspiration index- Bernard and Taffesse (2014)
- ◦ Current and aspirational status on four dimensions- income, education, assets and social status
- ◦ Self reported weights

$$Aspiration\ Index_i = \sum_{k=1}^{4} \left(\frac{a_i^k - \mu^k}{\sigma^k} \right) . \ \omega_i^k$$

- ◦ We use standardized aspiration z-score

Aspiration and belief for child's profession

Aspirations for children's education in years

Descriptive Statistics

1959 respondents-
- 647 gender primed
- 635 caste primed
- 677 control

Average age 41 years

70% literacy

58% tribal, Schedule caste 20%, Others 22%

Low dependency ratio, Average HH size 5.34.

Average plot ownership is 2.5 acres.

Gender Priming

Females have lower aspiration z-score

Pooled sample-Priming has no impact on aspirations for self and children

Female only sample- priming leads to higher aspirations for daughters

No effect on beliefs and aspired years of education

Gender Priming

Pooled Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter- Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
Female	-0.202*	3.680	0.612
	(0.1140)	(3.4949)	(0.3578)
Gender Prime	0.054	1.142	1.018
	(0.0638)	(0.3229)	(0.2248)
Female x Gender Prime	-0.036	1.563	1.009
	(0.0912)	(0.5483)	(0.3232)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.266	0.187	0.171
Observations	1301	841	841

Gender Priming

Female Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter- Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
Gender Prime	0.006	1.770**	1.038
	(0.0660)	(0.4480)	(0.2458)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.302	0.224	0.192
Observations	658	419	429

Male Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter- Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
Gender Prime	0.061	1.137	1.063
	(0.0639)	(0.3131)	(0.2585)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.233	0.175	0.199
Observations	643	409	409

Caste Priming

Definition of low caste- tribal (ST) defined as low caste
- Results similar if schedule caste and tribal jointly defined as low caste
- Established hierarchy between ST (lower) and SC (higher)

Tribal respondents have lower aspiration
- But no effect of caste priming on aspirations for self or children

No effect when looking at sub-sample of low and high-caste separately

Why?
- Is caste priming more salient for women? Low caste women experience more caste-based inequality- double discrimination.
- Is caste priming not salient or strong in homogenous communities?

Caste Priming

Pooled Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter-Aspiration	Daughter-Belief
ST	-0.203***	0.756	1.195
	(0.0623)	(0.1974)	(0.2953)
Caste Prime	0.111	0.782	1.177
	(0.0890)	(0.1995)	(0.3202)
ST x Caste Prime	-0.090	1.651	0.990
	(0.1105)	(0.6172)	(0.3092)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.301	0.157	0.171
Observations	1286	841	841

Caste Priming

ST Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter- Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
Caste Prime	0.023	1.331	1.183
	(0.0578)	(0.3354)	(0.2103)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.305	0.172	0.154
Observations	749	493	493

Non-ST Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter- Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
Caste Prime	0.129	0.747	1.209
	(0.0890)	(0.2052)	(0.3734)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.267	0.168	0.218
Observations	537	348	348

Caste Priming

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Heterogenous Effects– Caste Priming

Female sub-sample
- ST women have lower aspiration z-score
- No effect of priming on aspirations
- Priming ST women leads to higher aspirations for daughters
- Primed non-ST women display lower aspirations for daughters

Kalahandi sub-sample
- ST respondents have lower aspirations
- Priming leads to higher aspirations for daughters in ST-subsample
- No corresponding effect for non-ST
- Caste-priming leads to more aspired years of education for girls

Caste Prime– Female

Pooled Sample	Aspiration Index Z-Score	Daughter-Aspiration	Daughter- Belief
ST	-0.360***	0.480**	0.941
	(0.0844)	(0.1726)	(0.3261)
Caste Prime	-0.084	0.506**	0.768
	(0.0981)	(0.1785)	(0.2619)
ST x Caste Prime	0.116	3.493***	1.311
	(0.1233)	(1.6306)	(0.6045)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.377	0.191	0.188
Observations	646	417	426
ST Female			
Caste Prime	0.033	1.883*	1.083
	(0.0686)	(0.6536)	(0.3053)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.374	0.139	0.185
Observations	371	177	244
Non-ST Female			
Caste Prime	-0.083	0.440**	0.741
	(0.1006)	(0.1533)	(0.3055)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.360	0.208	0.248
Observations	275	180	182

Heterogenous Effects

Female ST sub-sample
- ST women have lower aspiration z-score
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Kalahandi sub-sample
- ST respondents have lower aspirations
- Priming leads to higher aspirations for daughters among ST
- No corresponding effect for non-ST
- Caste-priming leads to more aspired years of education for girls

Caste Prime-Kalahandi

Pooled- Kalahandi

	Aspiration Index Z-Score	*Daughter- Aspiration*	*Daughter- Belief*
ST	-0.173**	0.658	1.052
	(0.0785)	(0.1911)	(0.3304)
Caste Prime	0.071	0.687	1.167
	(0.1149)	(0.2044)	(0.3594)
ST x Caste Prime	-0.092	2.317**	0.966
	(0.1363)	(0.9913)	(0.3374)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.331	0.111	0.153
Observations	797	507	502
ST Sample			
Caste Prime	-0.011	1.665*	1.165
	(0.0720)	(0.4852)	(0.2450)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.357	0.103	0.142
Observations	428	266	266
Non-ST Sample			
Caste Prime	0.080	0.671	1.192
	(0.1103)	(0.2095)	(0.3981)
Adjusted/Pseudo R^2	0.296	0.131	0.191
Observations	369	238	236

Discussion and future work

Priming leads to behaviour away from the group norm- why?

- John Henry effect- priming leads to motivation?
- Priming questions do not enforce negative group norms
- Stronger priming may have stronger effect.

No effect of priming on aspirations for boys- already very high aspirations across all groups- very little variability

More information on local ethnic composition from other data sets.

More refined measure of aspiration

Exploring aspirations gap rather than aspiration level- Pasquier-Domer & Brandon (2015) Indigenous children exhibit higher aspirations