Social Engineering Through Schools*

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Abstract

Political movements build enduring influence through institutions that connect their political projects to everyday community life. We study this process through the nationwide school network of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), India's principal Hindu nationalist organization. Combining new data on school locations and establishment dates with constituency- and village-level electoral designs, we find that greater exposure to RSS schools is followed by persistent gains in support for the Bharatiya Janata Party. These political gains are accompanied by changes in cultural practices: increased vegetarianism among upper-caste and Other Backward Class households and greater use of Hindu deity names, concentrated in names associated with Vishnu and his incarnations. A survey of RSS and nearby private schools reveals more extensive religious programming and community engagement in RSS schools, involving parents and residents beyond enrolled students. Together, the findings suggest that movement-affiliated institutions provide durable infrastructure for cultural transmission and political organization. Their reach extends beyond education into the identities, practices, and social relationships that underpin political allegiance. The paper highlights how institutions embedded in everyday life can help political movements build a lasting social foundation for electoral support.

Keywords: Political Mobilization, Cultural Transmission, Religious Nationalism.

JEL codes: D72, I21, P16, Z12, Z13.

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1 Introduction

Across democracies, political movements build durable support not only through elections, campaigns, or mass persuasion, but also through organizations embedded in everyday community life. Existing research explains support for right-wing parties through sociocultural cleavages (Suryanarayan, 2019; Varshney, 2002; Iyer and Shrivastava, 2018; Blakeslee, 2018), economic shocks and inequality (Autor et al., 2020; Dippel et al., 2022; Frey et al., 2018; Thachil, 2014), and persuasion and information (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Strömberg, 2015; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020; Madestam et al., 2013; Ahmed et al., 2025). We focus on a less studied source of durable political change: the local institutions through which political movements become embedded in the social life of communities.

We call these organizations *community-embedded institutions*. They are rooted in particular localities and sustain repeated, face-to-face contact with residents through education, welfare provision, religious programs, and civic engagement. Their influence can extend across generations and beyond the individuals who directly consume their services. Their political influence may operate through two related processes. By organizing rituals and circulating shared symbols, they can shape cultural practices and strengthen a common social identity. By connecting staff, families, and other residents, they can build networks that facilitate coordination and political mobilization. In the language of Acemoglu and Robinson (2025), they may help select and stabilize a cultural configuration while linking it to a political project.

Schools provide a particularly useful setting in which to study these processes because they combine service provision with sustained contact among students, families, and local communities. Similar forms of engagement appear in Catholic parish networks in Poland, veterans' associations in France, evangelical congregations in Brazil, and religious schools in Pakistan (Szelewa, 2021; Millington, 2012; Smith, 2019; Boas, 2023; Iqtidar, 2011; Bazzi et al., 2020). Establishing their influence is difficult, however, because political movements may build institutions where residents already sympathize with their goals or seek strategic expansion opportunities.

We study these processes through the nationwide network of schools affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a century-old Hindu nationalist volunteer organization behind the origin and success of India's incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Although the RSS does not itself contest elections, its affiliates operate across educational, religious, labor, student, and civic life, making it a central organizational force behind Hindu nationalism in India. Its schools are embedded local institutions that, in addition to educating children, organize religious programs, civic activities, and events involving

parents and other residents. Existing research documents an association between RSS school presence and majoritarian violence (Milliff and Read, 2024). We assemble new data on the expansion of this school network to assess its political and cultural effects.

Using difference-in-differences designs at the assembly-constituency and village levels, we find that RSS school presence increases support for the BJP. We classify a constituency as treated if its RSS school stock in 1988 exceeds the 75th percentile of the distribution within its state. Relative to other constituencies in the same state, treated constituencies experience gains of 0.8–1.3 percentage points in BJP vote share and 2.9–4.2 percentage points in the probability of a BJP victory. These gains persist across subsequent elections. At the village level, RSS school openings increase BJP vote share by 0.5–1.9 percentage points, with smaller gains farther from the school. The two designs thus connect both the established school network and new school openings to stronger electoral support.

The findings are robust to alternative treatment definitions and estimators. They hold after accounting for historical Hindu nationalist support, exposure to religious television programming, and proximity to the 1990 *Rath Yatra*, a major Hindu nationalist mobilization campaign. The constituency results show no evidence of differential pre-trends. A complementary close-election design finds no evidence that a narrow BJP victory increases subsequent RSS school construction, addressing the possibility that electoral success itself drives strategic school expansion.

We next examine whether these political gains are accompanied by changes in cultural practices through which Hindu identity is expressed. We begin with vegetarianism, a practice historically associated with upper-caste Hindu status that the RSS promotes as part of a shared Hindu identity. Among Hindu households within two kilometres of an RSS school, vegetarianism increases by 8–13 percentage points relative to households more than ten kilometres away. The increase is concentrated among upper-caste and Other Backward Class households, with no comparable increase among non-Hindus. Baseline vegetarianism does not significantly predict subsequent school openings, providing reassurance against selection on pre-existing dietary practices.

We then examine religious naming. Names can signal which identities are valued by parents, and the traditions they hope to pass on to their children (Edwards and Caballero, 2008; Drewski and Tuppat, 2021). If schools make particular deities and traditions more salient, they may sharpen religious boundaries and make names stronger ethnic markers, influencing naming choices even among families whose children do not attend those schools. We treat a postal-code area as exposed once RSS schools account for at least 1 percent of its schools. Crossing this threshold is followed by a 0.13 percentage point in-

crease in the share of boys given Hindu deity names. This increase is concentrated in names associated with Vishnu and his incarnations, including Ram and Krishna; there is no statistically detectable change in names associated with other Hindu deities. The concentration in Vishnu-related names is consistent with the RSS's effort to organize Hindu religious life around a narrow set of shared symbols, especially Ram, and homogenize identity across diverse caste and regional traditions (Rajagopal, 2001; Jaffrelot, 1996; Thapar, 1997; Hansen, 1999).

How might schools produce these broader changes? Beyond shaping students through classroom instruction, schools may influence adults through *community socialization*—drawing them into religious and civic activities—and support political organizing through *organizational activation*, providing networks and physical space for meetings, training, and outreach. To examine community socialization, we surveyed RSS schools and nearby non-RSS private schools in four districts of Bihar. Despite similar basic facilities, RSS schools organize more Hindu religious events and more often involve parents and other local residents. They also engage more actively in community education and local social organizations. Qualitative accounts also describe school premises and staff being used for meetings, cadre training, and electoral outreach (Iwanek, 2022; Jha, 2021). Thus, while this suggests a complementary organizational channel, our survey does not directly establish its contribution to the electoral effects.

Together, the findings are consistent with RSS schools operating as embedded local institutions that connect cultural change to political organization. The electoral analyses document stronger BJP support, the household and naming analyses reveal changes in Hindu cultural practices, and the school survey shows sustained engagement with parents and other residents. This combination suggests that the political reach of movement-affiliated schools extends beyond the classroom into the communities in which they operate.

The paper makes three contributions. First, it expands research on education and political behavior beyond curriculum content and students' direct exposure. Prior work shows that curricula can affect political attitudes and identity (Cantoni et al., 2017) and that schools can increase electoral participation (Wantchekon et al., 2015). We show how schools established by a movement-affiliated non-state organization can also provide durable infrastructure for cultural activity, community engagement, and political coordination.

Second, the findings contribute to research on the organizational foundations of religious and right-wing politics. Research on India emphasizes ethnic polarization and communal conflict (Varshney, 2002; Iyer and Shrivastava, 2018), caste and status inequal-

ities (Suryanarayan, 2019; Jensenius, 2017), religious mobilization (Blakeslee, 2018), and mass-media exposure (Ahmed et al., 2025; Udupa, 2018). We show how local institutions can connect religious identity to partisan support while helping shape the cultural practices through which that identity is expressed. The findings also complement research on religion, education, and politics in developing countries (Lowes et al., 2025), including evidence on religious institutions and Islamist electoral support in Indonesia (Bazzi et al., 2020) and the response of religious schools to public-school expansion (Bazzi et al., 2025). Our setting highlights how institutions built by a political movement can engage adults and neighborhoods as well as students.

Third, we add to research on the transmission of norms and identity-based preferences. Existing work emphasizes conflict, families, peers, marriage networks, and media (Atkin et al., 2021; Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Giuliano and Nunn, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025). We provide evidence that local institutions can shape visible practices and shared religious symbols, including vegetarianism and devotional naming. By embedding these practices in recurring activities and community relationships, such institutions may help consolidate a shared identity and connect it to sustained political support.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the RSS and the development of its school network. Section 3 presents the data, and Section 4 explains the main electoral design. Section 5 reports the electoral results. Section 6 examines cultural practice and community engagement. Section 7 concludes.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The RSS and its Education Project

The RSS was founded in Nagpur, Maharashtra, in 1925, amid growing religious competition in late colonial India. It presented itself as a cultural organization with the goal of unifying Hindus around a shared religious-national identity. Its primary organizational unit was the *shakha*, a daily neighborhood gathering at which volunteers (*swayamsevaks*) participated in physical drills, games, prayers, and discussions (Andersen and Damle, 1987).

Shakhas served as training and recruitment centers. They communicated the organization's ideas, identified potential leaders, and built ties among participants. Because they met regularly in local public spaces, they also made the organization visible in everyday community life. Early recruitment drew heavily from upper-caste, urban, middle-class Hindus, which gave the RSS a cohesive and committed volunteer base.

The RSS's first public activity, in 1926, was to maintain order during *Ram Navami*, a festival honoring the Hindu god Ram (Andersen and Damle, 1987, 35). Its cadres later patrolled Hindu neighborhoods during communal unrest and managed religious fairs and processions, often in response to perceived Muslim mobilization (Beckerlegge, 2004). These activities deepened the RSS's conflict with the Indian National Congress and with Gandhi's commitment to religious pluralism. After Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a former RSS member, the government temporarily banned the organization. Although the RSS was not legally implicated and the ban was lifted in 1949, the episode left it politically isolated. The organization responded by investing in long-term social and cultural work outside electoral politics.

The RSS has never contested elections. In 1951, however, several of its members helped establish the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) to represent Hindu nationalist interests (Andersen and Damle, 1987). The BJS won 5 of 494 seats in the 1957 election to the Lok Sabha, India's national parliament, and 35 of 520 seats at its peak in 1967. In 1977, it merged with other opposition parties to form the Janata Party. A later split produced the BJP in 1980.

The BJP won only two Lok Sabha seats in 1984. Its support increased during the late 1980s and early 1990s as it mobilized around Hindu religious issues, especially the *Ram Janmabhoomi* campaign. The campaign concerned a mosque in Ayodhya located on a site that many Hindus regard as Ram's birthplace. The mosque was demolished in 1992, triggering widespread Hindu–Muslim violence and strengthening the BJP politically (Blakeslee, 2018). The BJP led coalition governments in 1998 and 1999. It returned to office with a parliamentary majority in 2014, increased that majority in 2019, and formed another coalition government after the 2024 election.

The RSS also works through a network of formally autonomous affiliates known as the *Sangh Parivar*. These include the student organization *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad*, the labor union *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh*, and the religious organization *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*. Each affiliate has its own leadership, but they draw on RSS-trained cadres and share a common ideological orientation. Their representatives meet at the RSS's annual *Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha* to coordinate priorities across social domains.

A growing recognition of the role of education in shaping ideological support led the RSS to invest in school construction. As Sarkar (1994) writes, founding schools allowed the organization to move into new areas of social activity. The RSS opened a flagship school in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, in 1952 and created the *Shishu Shiksha Prabandh Samiti* in 1958. Expansion accelerated after the creation of the *Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan* (Vidya Bharati) in 1977–78. Before Vidya Bharati, the network opened about

40 schools per year. Annual openings increased during the 1980s and 1990s and peaked at nearly 2,000 in the early 2000s (Figure 1).

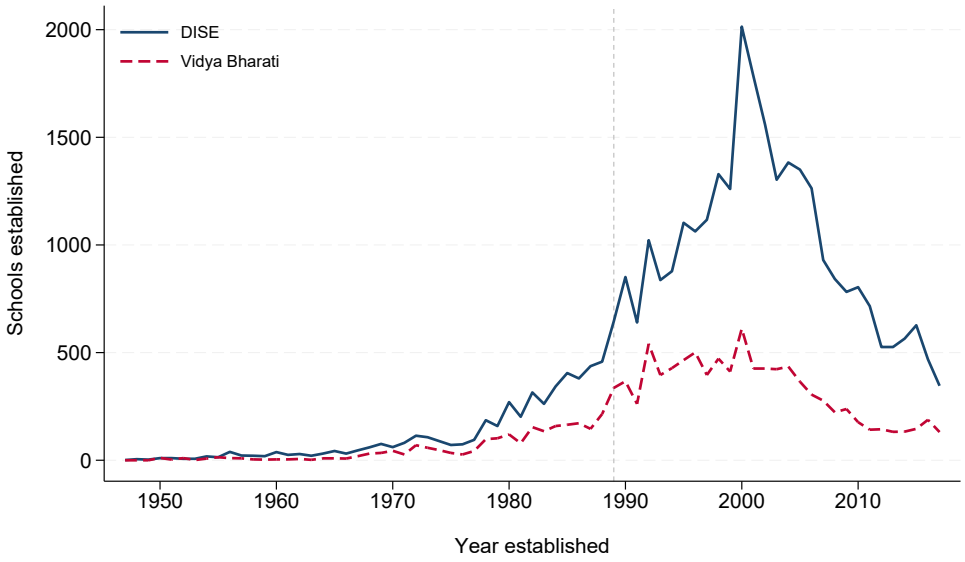


Figure 1: Establishment of RSS schools over time, 1947–2017.

Notes: Schools established per year, by year of establishment. The DISE series is schools identified in the DISE universe through state-specific naming patterns. The Vidya Bharati series is schools listed in the directory. The two sources overlap but are not nested, so their levels are only loosely comparable. The dashed line marks the 1989 cutoff used in the constituency analysis.

Vidya Bharati describes itself as India's largest non-governmental school network. It reports 11,781 formal schools, 3.3 million students, and about 150,000 teachers.[1] The average formal school therefore has about 280 students and 13 teachers. Vidya Bharati also manages informal schools, preschools, and cultural training centers. The Ekal movement operates single-teacher schools in rural and tribal areas; its 2021–22 annual report lists 77,983 such schools with about 2.1 million students.[2]

Other Sangh Parivar organizations also provide education. The Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram operates schools, hostels, and non-formal education centers in tribal areas: its national dashboard lists 181 formal primary centers, 230 hostels, and 3,816 non-formal centers, including 1,933 Ekal Vidyalayas.[3] Seva Bharati runs schools and hostels alongside its health and welfare programs. Affiliates also organize *sanskar-shalas*, preschools, student hostels, and vocational programs. Because these programs have different legal and or-

[1] These figures are from the Vidya Bharati website, accessed July 26, 2023.

[2] Ekal Abhiyan Annual Report 2021–22. The movement reported crossing 100,000 schools in 2019 (see NewsBharati, November 2019).

[3] kalyanashram.org.

ganizational forms, the full size of the RSS educational network is difficult to measure. Section 3 explains how we identify the schools used in the empirical analysis.

2.2 How RSS Schools Support Hindu Nationalism

Beyond curricular effects within the classroom, RSS schools can influence local politics through two broad channels: organizational activation and community socialization. First, schools provide physical space, staff, and networks that support organization-building and electoral canvassing. Second, community outreach through educational, religious, social, and service activities shapes cultural practice and strengthen identification with the Hindu nationalist movement.

Once established, school campuses can host *shakhas*, strategy meetings, training camps, and community events (Narayan, 2021). During elections, schools provide space for coordination and booth-level outreach. Teachers add to this electoral effort. In Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, for example, RSS school teachers were deployed across 21 villages during a BJP campaign (Jha, 2021). Other reports describe RSS schools hosting coordination meetings, leadership camps, and events addressed by senior BJP leaders (Khandelwal, 2025; The Pioneer, 2025; BJP, 2019). Appendix Section C.1 provides additional examples.

Through community socialization, RSS schools and related welfare programs can shape cultural practices and build local support among students and adults. Daily rituals, assemblies, songs, and extracurricular activities reinforce Hindu nationalist themes among students, while parent meetings, festivals, outreach programs, and initiatives such as Ekal Vidyalaya's weekly adult classes extend this engagement to families and other residents. Internal publications and curricular materials also discuss BJP policies and leaders (Iwanek, 2022). Together, these activities can transmit shared religious and political symbols across generations.

Regular contact with residents also gives RSS cadres opportunities to address local needs and build a reputation for solving problems. This resembles the "embedded mobilization" described by Thachil (2011), in which non-party organizations provide valued services and build support that can later benefit a political party. The school survey in Section 6.3 directly measures these forms of community engagement.

The same campus can therefore serve several functions: a school during the day, a venue for religious or civic events, a meeting place for RSS affiliates, and in some cases a hostel or office (Iwanek, 2015). These repeated uses make the institution a visible and durable part of local social life.

Together, these activities motivate the paper's empirical tests. If RSS schools provide

organizational infrastructure, school presence should be associated with stronger BJP performance. If they also shape cultural practice, nearby communities should adopt behaviors and symbols promoted by the organization. The electoral, vegetarianism, naming, and survey analyses examine these implications.

3 Data

3.1 School Data

Our primary source is India's District Information System for Education (DISE) (NIEPA, 2018), covering the 2005–2017 academic years. DISE lists schools registered with the Government of India and reports each school's name, establishment year, district, and block. We match these records to a geographic database that provides school coordinates. We then assign schools to assembly constituencies and pincodes. The constituency assignment supports the electoral analysis, while the pincode assignment supports the naming analysis.

Identifying schools run by the RSS Identifying RSS schools is difficult because the RSS does not publish a complete historical registry of its affiliated institutions. Its affiliates also operate under different names and legal forms (Andersen and Damle, 1987).

We construct two measures of RSS school presence. The first uses standardized, state-specific naming conventions documented in *Organiser*, an RSS publication, and in Iwanek (2022). We match DISE school names to these patterns, which are listed in Appendix Table C-1. We call the schools it identifies *DISE-RSS schools*. When applied to the 11,781 schools listed in the Vidya Bharati directory, the procedure identifies 94 percent of them. It identifies about 34,000 schools by 2017, close to an *Organiser* estimate of 30,000.[4]

DISE-RSS schools can include schools that are not affiliated with the RSS. Such false positives should attenuate the estimates if classification error is unrelated to the outcomes. Our second measure uses the Vidya Bharati directory, scraped from the organization's website in 2023, which provides a smaller set of schools with more certain affiliation. We call these *Vidya Bharati schools*. Tables and figures label the two measures DISE and Vidya Bharati.

The directory reports each school's state, district, town or locality, and pincode, but not its coordinates. We geocode all but one of the 11,781 listed schools. Two-thirds are

[4]See *Organiser*.

located at the village or school-building level, and most of the remainder are located at the town level.

Census data We use the 1981 and 1991 Population Censuses to describe school placement. For 1991, we aggregate village- and town-level records from the Socioeconomic High-resolution Rural-Urban Geographic platform (SHRUG; Asher et al., 2021) to the assembly-constituency boundaries in effect from 1977 to 2008. For 1981, which predates most of the school expansion we study, we use digitized Primary Census Abstract volumes. These volumes report population, caste, literacy, and workforce composition at the district and subdistrict levels. We match constituencies to 1981 districts using Agarwal et al. (2021).

3.2 Outcome Variables

Electoral Outcomes Election outcomes come from Agarwal et al. (2021), which compiles official Election Commission reports for national and state elections since 1962. The main analysis begins in 1980, when the BJP was formed, and uses state assembly elections through 2007. These elections were held on assembly-constituency boundaries established under the 1976 Delimitation Order and used from 1977 until they were replaced under the 2008 delimitation. We can therefore compare the same geographic units over time.

Our two outcomes are the BJP's vote share and an indicator for a BJP victory. Vote share is the votes received by the BJP candidate divided by valid votes, and a victory means that the candidate finished first. The BJP did not stand in every seat. In some state elections it entered a pre-election alliance and left seats to an ally, and in other seats neither the BJP nor an ally stood. We code the BJP's allies in each state election from its seat-sharing arrangements. Whether an ally's result counts for the BJP depends on the BJP's weight in the alliance. For each state, we compute the BJP's average share of the seats the alliance contested, across the sample elections in which it had an ally. Where this share is at least one quarter, a seat left to an ally takes the ally's vote share and the ally's victory as the BJP outcome. This rule credits allies in Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu, the BJP contested less than a fifth of the alliance's seats, and an ally's result is not credited. The other ten sample states had no alliance during the sample period. We call every state except Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu an ally-crediting state. The rule is fixed within a state, so the outcome definition does not change between

elections of the same state.

Polling-station returns We use polling-booth data for 2009 and 2014 from Jensenius et al. (2025). The resulting panel allows us to measure the distance from each village to the nearest RSS school and to compare villages that did and did not gain a nearby school between the 2009 and 2014 elections.

Vegetarianism We study vegetarianism with the 1982 and 1999 waves of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS). The 1982 wave records consumption during the preceding year, so we refer to the two periods as 1981 and 1999. The sample contains 3,269 Hindu households in 229 villages. In each wave, REDS reports the annual quantity and value of meat, fish, and eggs consumed by the household. Our outcome equals one when the household reports no consumption of any of these foods.

Household identifiers allow us to follow the same household units in both waves. If a baseline household split into several units by 1999, we aggregate consumption across the resulting units. We use REDS village coordinates to calculate distance to the nearest RSS school. We exclude villages that already had a school within two kilometres in 1981. For the remaining villages, exposure is the log distance to the nearest school established by 1999, or by 1995 in a robustness check. The result is a balanced two-wave household panel.

Names We use electoral rolls compiled by Sood and Dhingra (2023). Each entry lists the elector's name, the name of the elector's father or husband, age, sex, and the polling station, whose address gives the pincode. We assign each elector a birth year by subtracting age from the year of the roll and aggregate the entries to pincode-by-birth-year cells.

We classify an elector by first name. We take the first word of the recorded name, transliterate it from Devanagari to Latin script, and match it against a list of Hindu deities and their epithets compiled from Goldman et al. (2005), Chandra (1998), and expanded with AI assistance (OpenAI GPT 4). The list starts from 26 main deities, extends to about 1,200 of their names and epithets, and is then expanded to allow for regional and transliteration variants. We then separate Vaishnavite (deities associated with, and including Vishnu and his incarnations) names from others. The father's name is classified in the same way. Our outcomes are the share of men in a pincode-birth-year cell whose first name is a theophoric name, the share with a Vishnu-related name, and the share with any other deity name.

We restrict the analysis to male names because marriage-related migration makes the

current location of women a weaker proxy for their place of birth. The sample covers 6,556 pincodes, built from the recorded names of about 181 million men.

3.3 Survey of Schools

To measure community engagement, we conducted a primary survey of RSS and non-RSS private schools in Bihar. The sampling design selected equal numbers of districts from North and South Bihar: Samastipur, Gaya, Bhojpur, and Patna. Within each district, we sampled blocks that contained at least one operating RSS school, 36 blocks in all.

Within each block, we randomly selected one RSS school and then surveyed non-RSS private schools identified by scoping the villages around it, favoring schools closest to the selected RSS school. The final sample contains 67 RSS schools and 106 comparison schools. The primary respondent was the principal; when the principal was unavailable, a teacher or another staff member responded.

The questionnaire covers school facilities, religious and national events, curricular material, outreach, use of school premises, and teachers' community activities. To reduce experimenter-demand effects, the outcomes of interest were embedded in a broader questionnaire about school operations. Section 6.3 reports the results.

4 Empirical Strategy

This section presents the main constituency-level design. It tests whether constituencies with a high RSS school stock in 1988 experienced larger subsequent changes in BJP performance than other constituencies in the same state.

We measure exposure using the stock of RSS schools in 1988 and classify constituencies above the state-specific 75th percentile as treated. We restrict the analysis to 1980–2007 because the BJP was formed in 1980 and constituency boundaries remained broadly comparable from the 1977 delimitation until new boundaries were implemented in 2008. We choose 1989 as the cutoff year as it provides two pre-period elections which allows us to test pre-trends. The design therefore tests whether BJP electoral performance changed differentially after 1989 in constituencies with a larger pre-existing stock of RSS schools.

Table 1 compares treated and control constituencies using the 1991 Census. For DISE-RSS schools, treated constituencies have about 62,000 more residents and an urban population share 11.4 percentage points higher than controls, conditional on state fixed effects. Their literacy rate is 2.9 percentage points higher. They also have smaller shares of cultivators and agricultural laborers. Differences in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe

shares are small and statistically insignificant. Vidya Bharati schools show a similar pattern, although their treated constituencies have a Scheduled Tribe share 1.8 percentage points lower at the 5 percent significance level. These comparisons show that RSS schools were concentrated in more urban and literate parts of a state. Because the 1991 characteristics postdate school openings, Appendix Table B-1 repeats the comparison with 1981 district data. In this exercise we attach each district's 1981 characteristics to the constituencies that fall inside it and compare treated with control constituencies within state, clustering by district. This analysis shows a difference in urbanization but no difference in literacy rates. Appendix Figure B-2 plots the 1991 characteristics against the full 1988 school count.

Table 1: Characteristics of treated and control constituencies in 1991

	DISE			Vidya Bharati		
	Treated	Control	Difference	Treated	Control	Difference
Population (thousands)	275.1	201.9	62.0***	256.7	206.5	52.5***
Population per sq. km	1114.8	1083.3	217.2	1008.6	1102.1	316.0***
Urban population share	0.311	0.208	0.114***	0.306	0.211	0.129***
Scheduled Caste share	0.166	0.158	-0.002	0.169	0.158	-0.000
Scheduled Tribe share	0.085	0.122	-0.007	0.079	0.122	-0.018**
Literacy rate	0.440	0.426	0.029***	0.433	0.428	0.034***
Female literacy rate	0.334	0.321	0.030***	0.329	0.323	0.036***
Main-worker share of population	0.335	0.350	-0.011***	0.340	0.349	-0.013***
Cultivator share of workers	0.370	0.415	-0.053***	0.347	0.418	-0.069***
Agricultural-labourer share of workers	0.214	0.258	-0.046***	0.244	0.252	-0.040***
Constituencies	599	3079		538	3140	
Districts (clusters)		374			374	

Notes: One observation per assembly constituency. A constituency is treated if its RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution. Demographics are from the 1991 Population Census, aggregated from SHRUG village- and town-level data to the 1977–2008 constituency boundaries. Each census unit's polygon is intersected with the constituency polygons it covers and its counts are split in proportion to intersected area, so a town spanning several constituencies contributes to each of them. Units for which SHRUG holds no polygon are placed by their centroid where one exists, and named towns with neither are assigned to the constituencies carrying their name, split equally when a town names more than one. The aggregation covers 809 million of India's 846 million 1991 population and reaches all but eight of the panel's constituencies; no population-band restriction is applied. The urban share is the share of constituency population living in census towns, and population density is that population divided by the area of the constituency polygon. Treated and Control columns report unadjusted means. The Difference column is the coefficient from a regression of the characteristic on the treated indicator with state fixed effects, standard errors clustered by 1981 district. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Figure 2 maps the 1988 school count and treatment status. RSS schools are most common in northern India, the BJP's historical electoral base. Because the cutoff is state-specific, however, 19 of the 20 sample states contain treated constituencies, and the empirical comparisons are made within states. Figure 3 shows the underlying count distribution. About 2,200 of 3,686 constituencies had no RSS school in 1988, and most constituencies with a school had only a few.

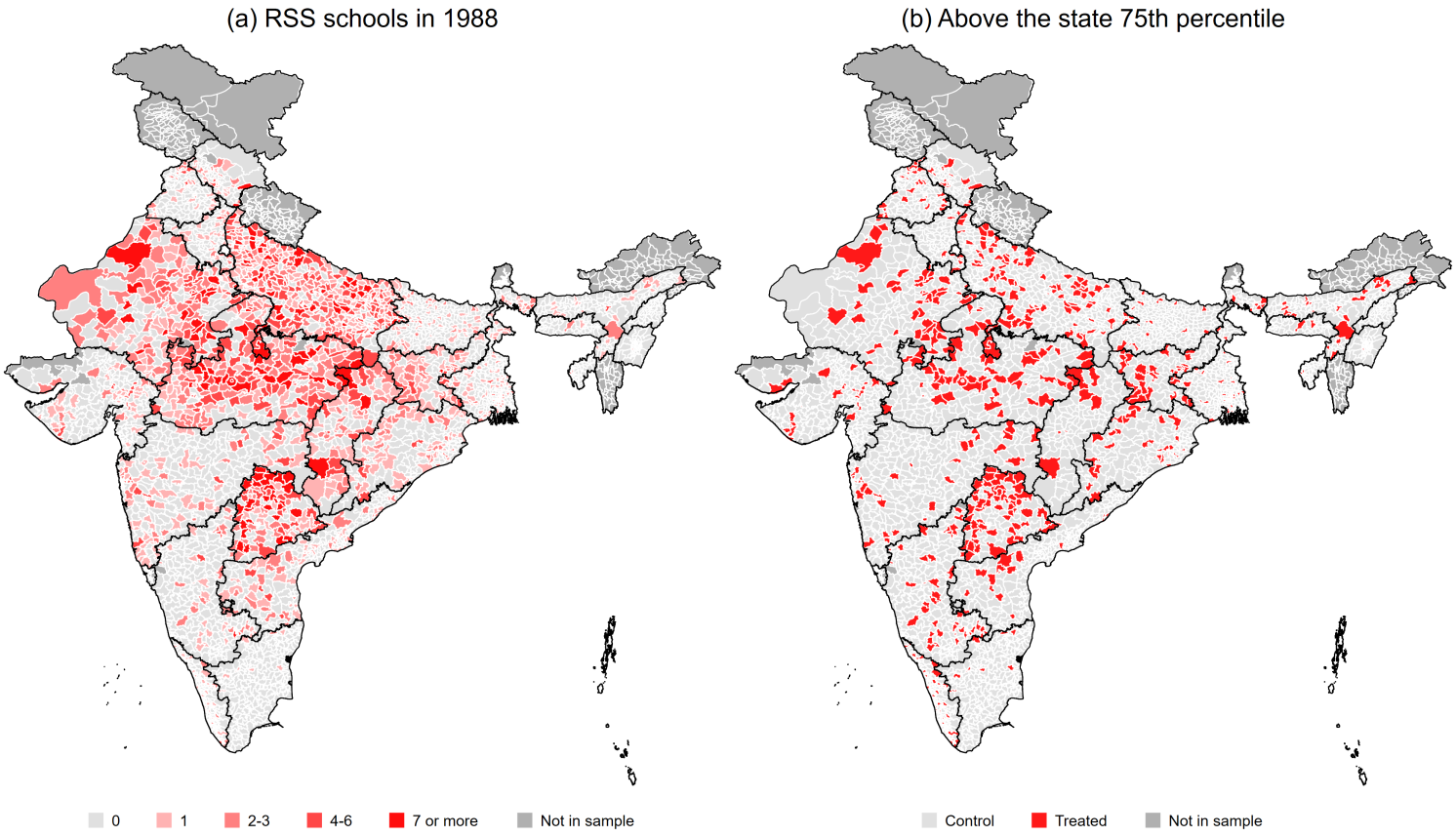


Figure 2: RSS school presence and treatment status

Notes: Panel (a) shades each assembly constituency by the number of RSS schools in 1988. Panel (b) marks in red the constituencies whose 1988 stock lies above the 75th percentile of their own state's distribution. Treated constituencies appear in 19 of the 20 states in the sample. Constituencies in grey are outside the estimation sample. State boundaries are overlaid in black.

Figure 4 documents the cross-sectional relationship between RSS school presence and BJP performance after accounting for time effects, electoral controls, and the local stock of other schools. BJP vote share and winning probability both rise with RSS school presence. The designs below examine whether this relationship persists when comparisons are made over time and within geographic units.

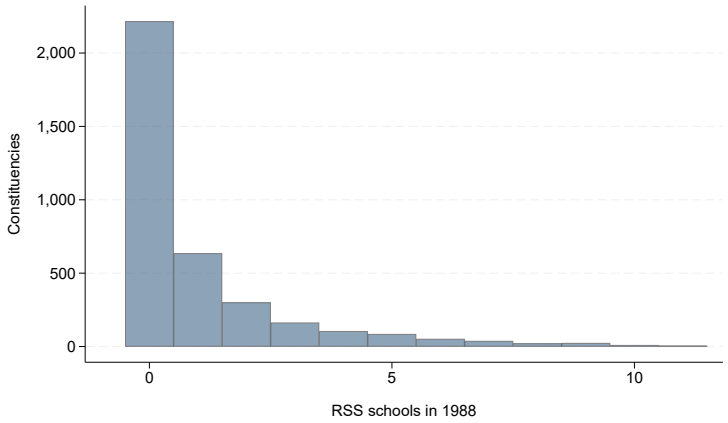
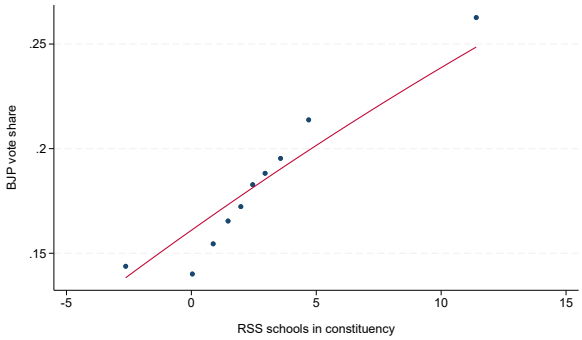


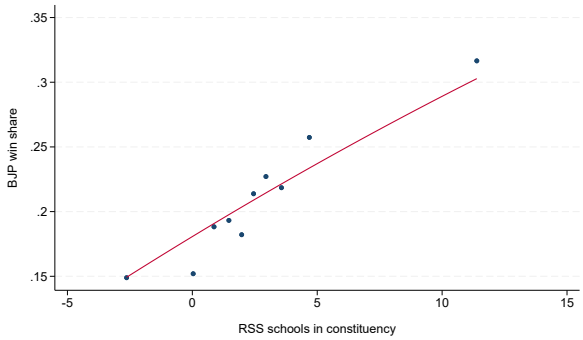
Figure 3: Distribution of assembly constituencies by RSS school count

Notes: Number of assembly constituencies holding each number of RSS schools in 1988. One observation per constituency. The right tail is trimmed at the 99th percentile. Roughly 2,200 of 3,686 constituencies have no RSS school in 1988.

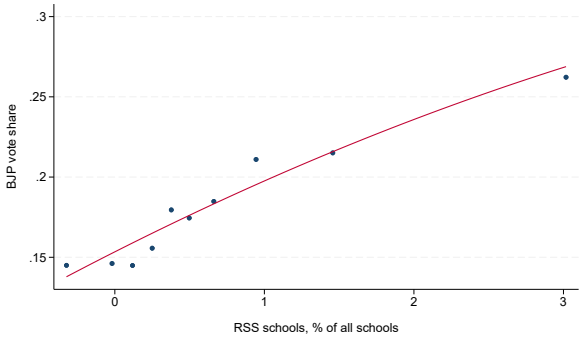
Figure 5 plots BJP vote share and winning rates for treated and control constituencies after removing state-by-year means. The difference between the two groups changes little across the two pre-period elections. After 1989, treated constituencies perform better on both outcomes. These descriptive trends motivate the regression specification.



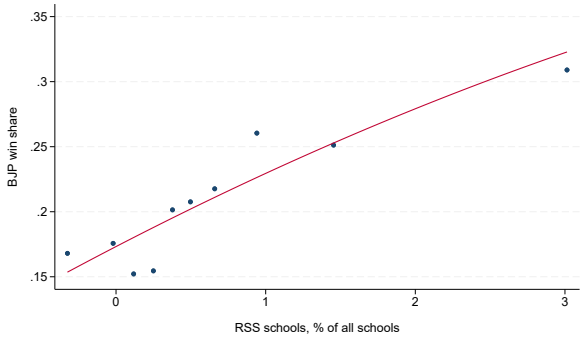
(a) Vote share vs. No. RSS schools



(b) Win prob. vs. No. RSS schools



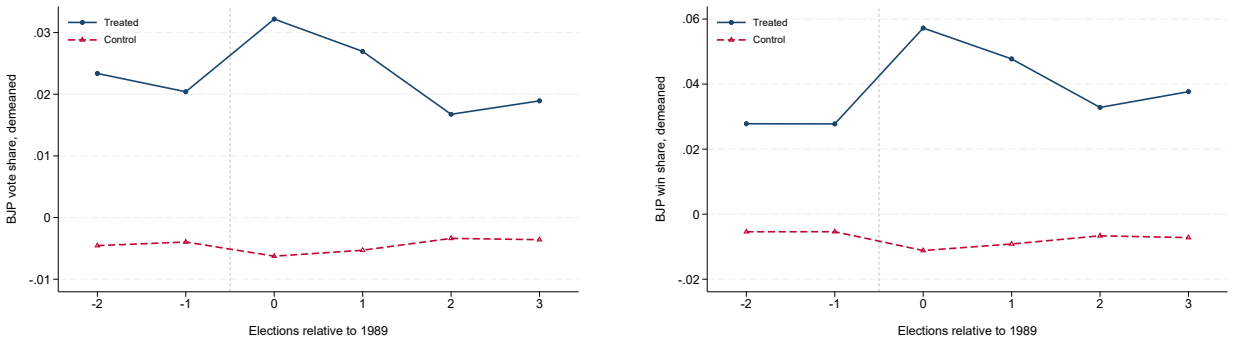
(c) Vote share vs. % RSS schools



(d) Win prob. vs. % RSS schools

Figure 4: BJP Electoral Performance and RSS School Presence

Notes: Binned scatter of BJP electoral performance against RSS school presence across constituencies, over all constituency-elections between 1980 and 2007. RSS school counts are measured as of the year before each election. Each panel shows ten quantile bins with a quadratic fit, controlling for turnout at the previous election, the number of electors in the constituency, and counts of government, and non-RSS private schools in the year before the election, with half-decade fixed effects. The school-count controls exclude RSS schools. Both axes are residualized on the controls and fixed effects before binning, so the horizontal axis extends below zero.



(a) BJP vote share

(b) BJP win rate

Figure 5: Residualized trends in BJP electoral performance

Notes: Mean outcome by election relative to 1989, for treated and control constituencies. A constituency is treated if its RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of the within-state distribution. Election 0 is the first election held in or after 1989 and election -1 is the last one before it. Outcomes are residualized on state $\times$ year fixed effects before averaging, so the two series are not tracking the different election calendars of the states. No other controls are applied and no model is estimated.

The design compares changes in BJP electoral performance after 1989 between constituencies with high and lower RSS school stocks in 1988. Identification requires that, without their greater exposure to RSS schools, high-stock constituencies would have experienced the same changes in BJP performance as lower-stock constituencies. Constituency fixed effects account for time-invariant differences across constituencies, while state-by-election fixed effects absorb electoral shocks common to constituencies in the same state. To address the possibility that RSS schools were concentrated in areas with stronger pre-existing Hindu nationalist support, we interact the 1960 Jana Sangh vote share with event-time indicators. This allows electoral trends to vary with historical Jana Sangh support. Because treatment is defined using the school stock in 1988, it predates all post-period elections.

We estimate

$$Y_{jk} = \sum_{m \neq -1} \beta_m \left(\mathit{Treated}_j \times \mathbf{1}[k = m] \right) + X'_{jk}\delta + \alpha_j + \lambda_{s(j)k} + \mu_{c(j,k)a(j)} + \epsilon_{jk} \tag{4.1}$$

where Y_{jk} is the BJP vote share or an indicator for a BJP victory in constituency j at event time k. Elections are indexed by event time rather than calendar year: $k = 0$ is the first election constituency j holds in or after 1989, $k = -1$ is the last it holds before, and the remaining elections are numbered outward. Because states vote on their own calendars, a given k falls in different years in different states. The sample contains two pre-period elections and four post-period elections. We omit $m = -1$, so β_m measures the change

in treated constituencies relative to controls and relative to the last pre-1989 election. The equation contains three sets of fixed effects. Constituency fixed effects α_j, one for each assembly constituency, absorb time-invariant differences across constituencies. State-by-election fixed effects $\lambda_{s(j)k}$, one for each event time k in state $s(j)$, absorb state-specific electoral shocks. Contest-status fixed effects $\mu_{c(j,k)a(j)}$ account for who stood in the seat. The contest status $c(j,k)$ takes four values according to whether the BJP alone, an ally alone, both, or neither stood in constituency j at election k. The indicator $a(j)$ equals one if constituency j lies in an ally-crediting state, as defined in Section 3, and zero in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu. There is one fixed effect for each combination of $c(j,k)$ and $a(j)$. The BJP alone stood in 60 percent of constituency-elections, an ally alone in 13 percent, neither in 27 percent, and both in the remainder. Standard errors are clustered by constituency. The coefficient β_{-2} provides a test for differential pre-trends.

X_{jk} contains four sets of controls. The log 1979 stock of all schools, interacted with event time, allows constituencies with different initial education systems to follow different paths. The effective number of candidates captures changes in electoral competition. Constituency reservation status and the 1960 Jana Sangh vote share, each interacted with event time, allow reserved seats and places with earlier Hindu nationalist support to have different trends.

The BJP does not contest every seat, and it began contesting treated constituencies earlier than control constituencies. Conditioning on contest status prevents this change in candidate entry from driving the event-time estimates. The coefficients therefore compare treated and control constituencies within the same contest-status category. Because both outcomes are zero wherever neither the BJP nor a credited ally stood, the estimates describe BJP performance in seats that the party or a credited ally contested, holding contest status fixed. They do not capture any effect of treatment on whether the BJP stood.

We also estimate a pooled specification that replaces the event-time indicators with a single post-1989 indicator. The robustness analysis uses continuous measures of RSS school presence, district-by-election fixed effects, the imputation estimator of Borusyak et al. (2024), and the synthetic difference-in-differences estimator of Arkhangelsky et al. (2021).

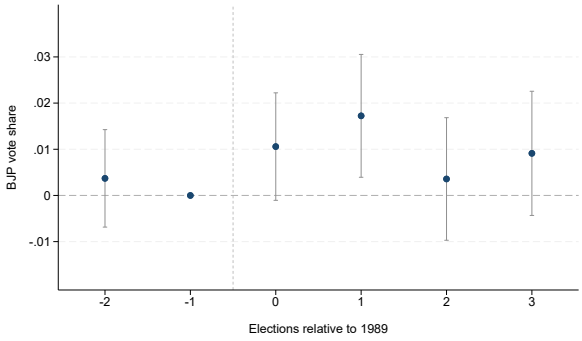
5 Political Impacts

5.1 Assembly Constituency Analysis

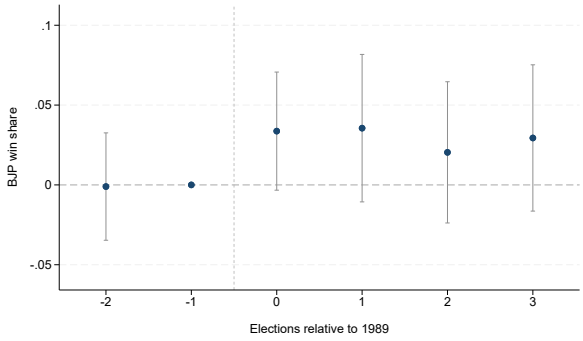
Table 2 reports the pooled version of Equation 4.1, replacing the event-time indicators with a single post-1989 indicator. For DISE-RSS schools, treated constituencies gain 0.8 percentage points of BJP vote share and 2.9 percentage points of winning probability relative to control constituencies in the same state. The estimates are significant at the 10 and 5 percent levels, respectively. Vidya Bharati schools produce larger estimates: 1.3 percentage points for vote share and 4.2 percentage points for winning probability, both significant at the 1 percent level. Relative to the treated groups' pre-1989 means, the vote-share estimates represent increases of 6 and 10 percent, and the winning-probability estimates represent increases of 27 and 44 percent. Thus, modest changes in vote share are accompanied by meaningful changes in electoral outcomes.

Figure 6 reports the event-study estimates. For both school measures and both outcomes, the coefficient for the second-to-last pre-1989 election is small and statistically indistinguishable from zero. The coefficients become positive from the first post-1989 election onward. For Vidya Bharati schools, the estimate for winning probability reaches about 8 percentage points in the second post-period election and remains near that level in the fourth. The vote-share estimates range from 1 to 3 percentage points. DISE-RSS schools show the same general pattern, with smaller estimates and wider confidence intervals, as expected if false-positive name matches attenuate the relationship.

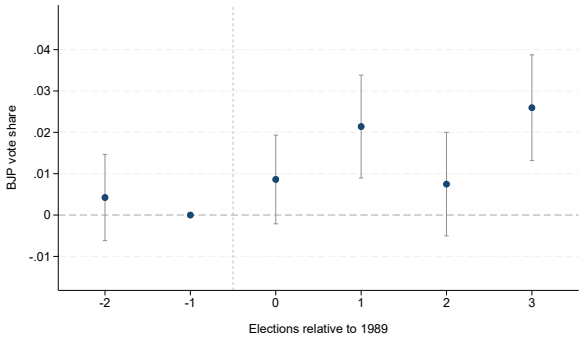
Treated constituencies are more urban and literate than control constituencies (Table 1), raising the possibility that their post-1989 electoral trajectories reflect these initial differences rather than RSS school exposure. Appendix Table A-1 addresses this concern by interacting event-time indicators with the 1981 district urban share, log population, and literacy rate. These interactions allow constituencies in districts with different initial characteristics to follow different electoral paths. The Vidya Bharati estimates remain essentially unchanged. For the DISE measure, the vote-share estimate declines by approximately 20 percent and is no longer statistically significant at the 10 percent level, while the winning-probability estimate remains stable. The results therefore provide stronger reassurance for the Vidya Bharati estimates and the effect on winning probability than for the DISE vote-share estimate, which is sensitive to allowing electoral trends to vary with initial district characteristics.



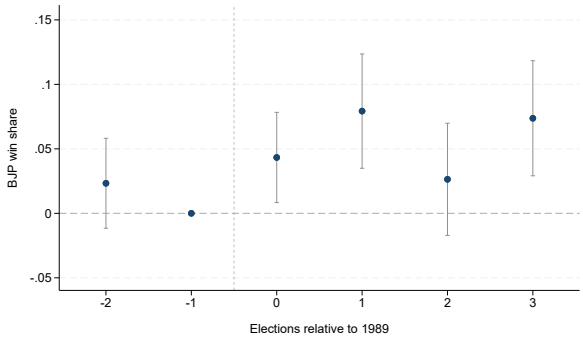
(a) DISE: BJP vote share



(b) DISE: BJP win



(c) Vidya Bharati: BJP vote share



(d) Vidya Bharati: BJP win

Figure 6: Dynamic effects of RSS schools on BJP electoral outcomes

Notes: Event-study coefficients from Equation 4.1. The horizontal axis is elections relative to 1989: election 0 is the first election held in or after 1989 and election -1, the last one before it, is the omitted reference. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution. Controls, fixed effects and clustering follow Table 2. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.

Table 2: Effect of RSS School Presence on BJP Vote Share and Victory

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0080*	0.0289**	0.0129***	0.0417***
	(0.0043)	(0.0129)	(0.0040)	(0.0127)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,662	21,662	21,662	21,662
Mean dep. Variable	0.139	0.107	0.126	0.094

Notes: One observation per constituency-election, 1980–2007, spanning two elections before 1989 and four from 1989 onward. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution, interacted with an indicator for elections held in or after 1989. Vote share is the BJP candidate's share of valid votes and Win indicates that the candidate finished first. In ally-crediting states, every sample state except Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu (Section 3), a seat left to an ally takes the ally's vote share and result. Elsewhere, and wherever neither the BJP nor an ally stood, both outcomes are zero. Contest status records whether the BJP alone, an ally alone, both, or neither stood in the seat. Controls are the 1979 school stock, the 1960 Jana Sangh vote share and reserved status, each interacted with event time, and the effective number of candidates. All specifications include constituency, state × election, and contest-status × ally-crediting fixed effects. The dependent-variable mean is the pre-1989 mean among treated constituencies. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by constituency. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

5.2 Village-Level Analysis: School Openings, 2009–2014

The constituency design compares places with different levels of RSS school presence. We complement it with a village-level design that uses the timing of school entry. This design compares changes within villages and within parliamentary constituencies, thereby accounting for fixed local differences and constituency-specific election shocks.

We use the village-level electoral data from Jensenius et al. (2025) for the 2009 and 2014 national-level elections. The outcome is the BJP's village-level vote share, which averaged 28 percent in 2009. For a radius R, a village is treated if an RSS school opened within R kilometres between the two elections. We restrict the sample to villages without an RSS school within the same radius in 2008. We estimate:

$$y_{vt} = \alpha_v + \gamma_{p(v)t} + \beta \left(\text{treated}_v \times \text{post}_t\right) + \left(Z_v \times \text{post}_t\right)' \delta + \varepsilon_{vt}, \tag{5.1}$$

where y_{vt} is the BJP vote share in village v at election t, α_v is a village fixed effect, and $\gamma_{p(v)t}$ is a fixed effect for the parliamentary constituency containing the village interacted with the election year. Standard errors are clustered on the village.

Village fixed effects absorb all time-invariant local characteristics, including caste composition, religious composition, development, and prior political support. Parliamentary-constituency-by-year fixed effects absorb the candidates, party alliances, constituency-level campaigns, and the national swing toward the BJP. The coefficient β therefore compares villages in the same parliamentary constituency and election according to whether they gained a nearby school.

The controls Z_v are the log number of non-RSS schools within R kilometres in 2008, log distance to the nearest town, and log village population. Each is interacted with the post indicator, allowing villages with different initial school density, remoteness, and size to follow different trends. The school-density control is particularly important: villages that gained an RSS school had an average of 14.4 non-RSS schools within two kilometres, compared with 10.5 in other eligible villages.

Table 3 reports the estimates. For DISE-RSS schools, a school opening within two kilometres is associated with a 0.77 percentage point increase in BJP vote share, or 2.8 percent of the 2009 mean. The estimate is significant at the 1 percent level (Panel A, column 1). Adding the village controls reduces it to 0.51 percentage points, significant at the 10 percent level (column 2). For Vidya Bharati schools, the corresponding estimates are 2.27 percentage points without controls and 1.92 percentage points with controls. Both are significant at the 1 percent level, and the controlled estimate is about 7 percent of the 2009 mean.

The Vidya Bharati estimate is more stable when controls are added: it falls by about one-seventh, compared with about one-third for DISE-RSS schools. This pattern is consistent with more classification error among DISE-RSS schools.

Figure 7 replaces the treatment indicator with distance bands relative to the nearest school in 2013; villages more than ten kilometres away form the omitted group. The estimates decline with distance under both measures. For DISE-RSS schools, the estimate falls from 2.03 percentage points within two kilometres to 1.20 points at five to ten kilometres. For Vidya Bharati schools, it falls from 2.23 to 0.39 percentage points.

Table A-9 describes selection into school entry. Relative to villages in the two-to-five kilometre band, villages that gained a DISE-RSS school within two kilometres were 12 percent larger, 0.5 percentage points more literate, and 2 percentage points lower in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. They also had more schools nearby. Their 2009 BJP vote share was 0.4 percentage points higher than in the nearest compari-

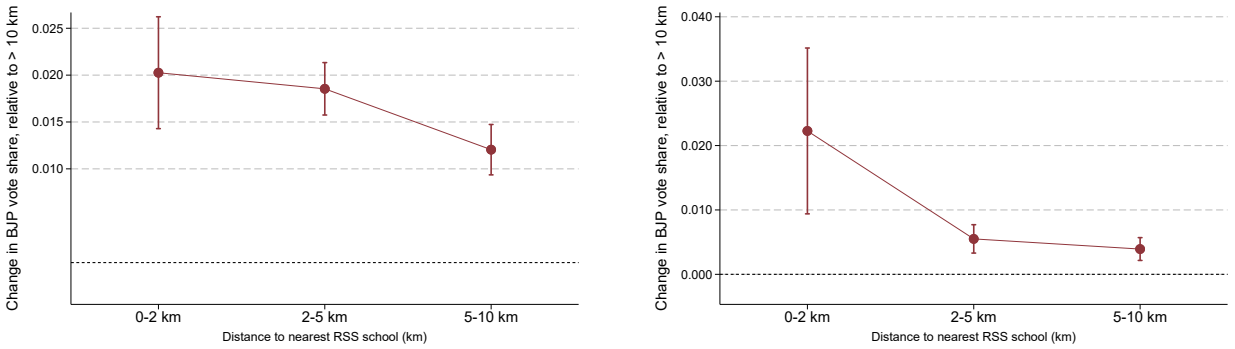
Table 3: School openings and the BJP vote share, 2009–2014

Panel A: Within 2 km	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	No controls	Controls	No controls	Controls
RSS school within 2 km × Post	0.0077***	0.0051*	0.0227***	0.0192***
	(0.0028)	(0.0028)	(0.0066)	(0.0066)
Village FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
PC × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Treated Villages	3,558	3,558	497	497
Observations	389,102	386,794	437,736	435,146
Mean dep. Variable	0.280	0.280	0.279	0.279
Panel B: Within 5 km	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	No controls	Controls	No controls	Controls
RSS school within 5 km × Post	0.0096***	0.0059***	0.0302***	0.0261***
	(0.0020)	(0.0020)	(0.0032)	(0.0033)
Village FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
PC × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Treated Villages	8,546	8,546	2,318	2,318
Observations	215,862	214,652	362,506	360,534
Mean dep. Variable	0.286	0.286	0.276	0.275

Notes: The outcome is the BJP vote share in a census 2011 village, observed in 2009 and 2014. Treatment is a school opening within the stated radius by 2013, interacted with a post indicator; the sample is villages with no such school within that radius in 2008. Controls are the log count of non-RSS schools within the same radius in 2008, the log distance to the nearest town and log village population, each interacted with the post indicator. Standard errors, in parentheses, are clustered on the village. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

son band and 1.1 points higher than in villages more than ten kilometres away. Village fixed effects absorb these level differences. The design additionally allows trends to differ with initial school density, remoteness, and population.

The village design provides evidence from a different period and source of variation than the constituency design. Its principal remaining concern is that schools may open in villages where BJP support is already growing, a possibility we cannot test given data constraints. Together, the two designs indicate greater BJP support in areas with RSS



(a) DISE

(b) Vidya Bharati

Figure 7: Change in BJP vote share by distance to the nearest RSS school

Notes: Coefficients on distance-band indicators interacted with the post indicator, from Equation 5.1 with the treatment indicator replaced by the bands. Bands are 0–2, 2–5 and 5–10 kilometres to the nearest school in 2013; villages more than ten kilometres away are the omitted category. The sample is the two-kilometre sample of Panel A of Table 3: villages with no RSS school of the given measure within two kilometres in 2008. All specifications include village and parliamentary-constituency-by-year fixed effects and the controls of Table 3, with the non-RSS school count measured within two kilometres. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals, clustered on the village.

schools in both state and national elections.

5.3 Robustness

Congress outcomes Appendix Table A-6 replaces the BJP outcomes with Congress vote share and winning probability. As for the BJP outcomes, vote share is set to zero when Congress does not contest so that both outcomes use the same sample. Because vote shares sum to one, a BJP gain must come from other parties, so a negative Congress coefficient would be the expected sign rather than a failed placebo. The estimates are negative, small, and statistically indistinguishable from zero. The BJP gains therefore do not appear to come primarily from Congress losses.

Religious programming on television Exposure to the televised *Ramayana* in the late 1980s increased support for the BJP (Ahmed et al., 2025). Appendix Table A-5 adds an indicator for a working television transmitter and its power at the constituency-year level. Because coverage expanded after 1989, these controls are measured after treatment and would absorb part of the effect if television were driving it. The RSS school estimates are nearly unchanged.

The Ram Rath Yatra Constituencies near L. K. Advani's 1990 Rath Yatra route may have received more direct mobilization. Appendix Table A-8 controls for log distance to the route interacted with an indicator for elections after the march. Because the march was halted in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh lies off the route. The post indicator starts with the 1991 elections, since the eight states that voted in 1990 did so in February and March, six months before the march. The RSS school estimates are unchanged to the third decimal, and the route interaction is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Alternative treatment definitions The 75th-percentile rule does not use variation in treatment intensity. Appendix Figure A-1 replaces it with two continuous measures: the share of schools that were RSS-affiliated in 1988 and the number of RSS schools per thousand electors in 1988, winsorized at the 95th percentile. Both measures show pre-period coefficients near zero and positive post-1989 estimates for BJP vote share and winning probability.

Alternative estimators Appendix Table A-4 replaces state-by-election fixed effects with district-by-election fixed effects and applies the imputation estimator of Borusyak et al. (2024). Appendix Figures A-3 and A-4 report the corresponding event studies. Appendix Table A-2 applies the synthetic difference-in-differences estimator of Arkhangelsky et al. (2021), which reweights control constituencies to match the treated group's pre-period path. The estimates remain positive and similar in magnitude.

Reverse causality The RSS may build schools after the BJP gains political power. We examine this possibility with a regression discontinuity around close elections in which the BJP finished first or second. The running variable is the BJP's vote margin over the runner-up, and the outcome is the number of RSS schools established in the constituency in the election year and the following six years. Appendix Table A-7 reports estimates for bandwidths of 0.03, 0.05, and 0.10 with triangular kernel weights. The discontinuities are statistically indistinguishable from zero for both school measures at every bandwidth. We therefore find no evidence that a narrow BJP victory increases subsequent RSS school construction.

6 Cultural Impacts

Beyond their electoral effects, RSS schools may reshape local cultural norms and practices through regular interaction with surrounding communities. Religious festivals, assem-

blies, and lectures can make Hindu nationalist ideas and symbols more salient among students, parents, and other residents (Sundar, 2010; Froerer, 2006). Such community socialization may operate alongside organizational activation, as school facilities and personnel support meetings, campaigns, and other collective activities. We examine two markers of cultural practice: vegetarianism and the use of theophoric (Hindu deity) names. We then use the Bihar school survey to compare the religious programs and community activities of RSS and non-RSS private schools.

6.1 Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is a visible and demanding cultural practice in India. It is associated with *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and has historically served as a marker of ritual status, particularly among upper-caste Hindus (Appadurai, 1981). Yet many Hindu households consume meat, fish, or eggs (Natrajan and Jacob, 2018). RSS leaders promote vegetarianism as part of a unified Hindu identity.[5] During our study period, cow protection—which links abstention from meat to Hindu observance—was a central component of Sangh Parivar mobilization, from the Vishva Hindu Parishad's relaunch in the early 1980s to its adoption of a cow-protection resolution at Bhopal in 1986 (Jaffrelot, 1996).

REDS observes the same households in 1981 and 1999, and most nearby RSS schools opened between the two waves. We measure exposure with the distance from a household's village to the nearest RSS school in 1999. We estimate

$$\text{Vegetarian}_{it} = \beta \left[\log(\text{Distance}_{i,1999}) \times \mathit{Post}_t\right] + \gamma_{s\times t} + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it}, \tag{6.1}$$

where Vegetarian_{it} equals one if household i reports no consumption of meat, fish, or eggs in year t. Distance is measured from the household's village to the nearest RSS school operating in 1999; the robustness analysis instead uses schools operating in 1995. Household fixed effects α_i absorb fixed household characteristics, and state-by-year fixed effects $\gamma_{s\times t}$ absorb changes common to a state. Because exposure is log distance, a negative β means that households closer to an RSS school became more likely to be vegetarian.

The controls include counts of government, private, and total schools within two kilometres. We also interact the post indicator with baseline household size, landholdings, and the household head's education, as well as baseline village population, distance to the nearest town, distance to the nearest *pucca* (paved) road, and year of electrification.

[5] At a public event in Bengaluru on November 9, 2025, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat urged the government to "project vegetarianism in its policies" and to reduce non-vegetarianism where possible. See *Times of India*.

Table 4: Distance to RSS schools and household vegetarianism

Panel A: All households

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
Log distance × Post (1999)	-0.0274**	-0.0320**	-0.0259**	-0.0304***
	(0.0139)	(0.0141)	(0.0102)	(0.0103)
Log distance × Post (1995)	-0.0224*	-0.0262*	-0.0182*	-0.0228**
	(0.0133)	(0.0136)	(0.0102)	(0.0103)
Household controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Clustering	HH	HH	HH	HH
Observations	6,536	6,428	6,536	6,428
Pre-treatment mean	0.4475	0.4475	0.4475	0.4475

Panel B: By caste, DISE

	Upper caste		SC / ST		OBC	
Log distance × Post	-0.0646***	-0.0658***	0.0498	0.0358	-0.0449**	-0.0441*
	(0.0238)	(0.0248)	(0.0318)	(0.0327)	(0.0224)	(0.0226)
Household controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Clustering	HH	HH	HH	HH	HH	HH
Observations	2,478	2,434	1,382	1,368	2,422	2,390
Pre-treatment mean	0.5202	0.5202	0.3676	0.3676	0.4244	0.4244

Notes: The sample is 3,269 REDS households across 229 villages, observed in 1981 and 1999. The dependent variable is an indicator for the household reporting vegetarianism. The regressor is the log distance from the village to the nearest RSS school existing in the stated year (1995 or 1999), interacted with an indicator for 1999. All specifications include household and state × year fixed effects and the household controls: counts of private, government and total schools, and household size, head's education and land value each interacted with year. The village controls add distance to the nearest town, distance to a pucca road, number of households in 1981, and year of electrification, each interacted with year. Standard errors are clustered by household. In Panel B the caste groups are Brahmin and upper caste, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Caste. $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Standard errors are clustered by household. The coefficient compares within-household changes in vegetarianism according to distance from an RSS school, net of common state-level changes.

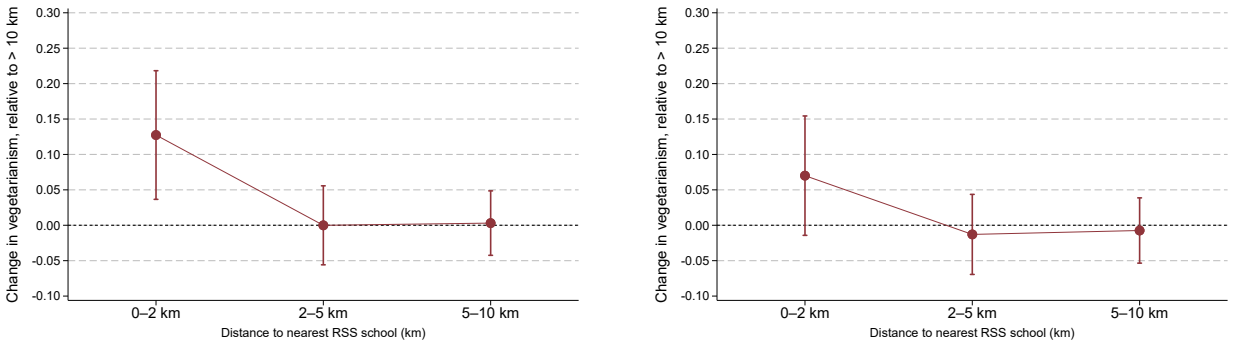
Panel A of Table 4 reports negative coefficients on log distance for both school measures. All four 1999 estimates are significant at the 5 percent level or better. Halving the distance to the nearest school is associated with an increase of about 2 percentage points in vegetarianism, relative to a pre-treatment mean of 45 percent. The estimates are similar for DISE-RSS schools and Vidya Bharati schools and change little when village controls are added. Using the 1995 school stock produces somewhat smaller estimates that remain significant at the 10 percent level or better.

Figure 8 replaces log distance with distance bands. Relative to villages more than ten kilometres away, vegetarianism increases by about 13 percentage points within two kilometres of a DISE-RSS school and by about 8 percentage points within two kilometres of a Vidya Bharati school. The estimates beyond two kilometres are close to zero.

Panel B of Table 4 splits the sample by caste. Halving the distance to a school is associated with an increase of about 4.5 percentage points among upper-caste households and about 3 percentage points among Other Backward Class households. The estimates for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households are small and statistically imprecise. The stronger upper-caste response is consistent with the historical association between vegetarianism, caste status, and support for the BJP.

The two-wave panel does not permit a pre-trend test, so we report two complementary checks. First, Panel B of Appendix Table A-11 applies the same specification to non-Hindu households. Because the norms RSS schools promote are directed at Hindu households, no increase is expected among non-Hindus. The coefficients have the opposite sign from the Hindu estimates and provide no evidence that proximity increased vegetarianism among non-Hindus. Second, Appendix Figure A-7 shows no statistically detectable relationship between baseline village vegetarianism in 1981 and subsequent school opening through 1999.

Robustness Panel A of Appendix Table A-11 clusters standard errors by village rather than household. With 229 village clusters, the standard errors roughly double. The point estimates are unchanged. The 1999 Vidya Bharati estimate with village controls remains significant at the 10 percent level, while the other estimates are no longer statistically significant.



(a) DISE

(b) Vidya Bharati

Figure 8: Changes in vegetarianism by distance to an RSS school

Notes: Points plot bin-specific difference-in-differences estimates of the change in vegetarianism between 1981 and 1999 for villages located within 0–2, 2–5 km, and 5–10 km of the nearest RSS school in 1999, relative to villages located more than 10 km away. Panel (a) uses the DISE-RSS schools; panel (b) uses the Vidya Bharati schools. Coefficients are estimated with household fixed effects and state-by-year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the household level.

6.2 Naming Patterns

We next examine whether the expansion of RSS schools is followed by changes in religious naming practices. Names can carry religious meaning and remain with individuals throughout their lives, making them a durable measure of the religious symbols valued by parents. We test whether Hindu deity names become more common among male birth cohorts after RSS schools establish a substantial local presence.

Using electoral-roll data, we construct a pincode-by-birth-year panel for men born between 1970 and 1998. Pincodes are the smallest geographic units that can be identified consistently in these data. We use a balanced event window covering five years before and ten years after treatment. We exclude pincodes that already had two or more RSS schools in 1970.

In the baseline specification, a pincode becomes treated in the first year in which RSS schools account for at least 1 percent of all local schools. Pincodes with exactly one RSS school during the sample period are excluded from the control group. For each treatment cohort, the control group consists of pincodes that do not cross the treatment threshold within the following ten years. These restrictions yield 1,043 treated pincodes and 4,289 control pincodes, of which 3,387 never cross the threshold during the sample period.

We estimate the following specification:

$$Y_{gjt} = \beta \, treat_{jg} \, \mathbf{1}[t \geq g] + Z'_{jt}\delta + \gamma_{gj} + \mu_{gs(j)t} + \epsilon_{gjt} \tag{6.2}$$

Here, Y_{gjt} is the share of male electors assigned to birth year t in pincode j whose first name falls within the relevant category, observed in stack g. Each stack is defined by a treatment year g and includes the pincodes first treated in that year and control pincodes that remain untreated through year $g+10$. Both groups are observed from birth year $g-5$ through $g+10$. The indicator $\textit{treat}_{jg}$ identifies treated pincodes in stack g, while $\mathbf{1}[t \geq g]$ identifies birth years from the treatment year onward.

The specification includes pincode-by-stack fixed effects γ_{gj}, which absorb time-invariant differences across pincodes within each stack. Stack-by-state-by-birth-year fixed effects $\mu_{gs(j)t}$ absorb naming patterns common to pincodes in the same state, birth year, and stack. The coefficient β therefore compares changes in naming patterns between treated and control pincodes within the same state and treatment cohort. The controls Z_{jt} include the numbers of government, aided, and private schools and the share of fathers with deity names. Observations are weighted by the number of men in each pincode-by-birth-year cell, and standard errors are clustered by pincode-by-stack. The event-study specifications replace the pooled post-treatment indicator with indicators for years relative to treatment, with the year before treatment omitted.

Table 5 reports the pooled estimates. In the controlled specification, treatment is associated with a 0.13 percentage point increase in the share of men with any deity name and a 0.17 percentage point increase in the share with a name associated with Vishnu or one of his incarnations. The estimates are statistically significant at the 5 and 1 percent levels, respectively. The estimate for other deity names is small and statistically insignificant. The increase in deity names is therefore concentrated in Vishnu-related names, with no corresponding increase in names associated with other Hindu deities.

Figure 9 shows the event study for all deity names. The pre-treatment coefficients display no systematic trend. The coefficients become positive after treatment and remain positive over the following decade. Figure 10 separates Vishnu-related names from other deity names. The sustained post-treatment increase is concentrated in Vishnu-related names, while the estimates for other deity names are small. Together, the figures show an increase in Vishnu-related names and no corresponding change in other deity names.

The concentration of the result in Vishnu-related names is substantively important. Scholarship on the Sangh Parivar emphasizes its promotion of Ram as a symbol of a shared Hindu identity (Rajagopal, 2001; Jaffrelot, 1996). Public processions and the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign made Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, a widely recognized political and religious symbol (van der Veer, 1994; Jaffrelot, 1996; Lutgendorf, 1991). The increase in Vishnu-related names, alongside the absence of a comparable increase in other deity names, is consistent with the promotion of a common set of Hindu symbols (Thapar,

1997; Hansen, 1999).

The pincode-level estimates average exposure across large geographic areas. The median treated pincode covers approximately 323 km^2 and contains two RSS schools. If each school serves a circular catchment with a radius of 2.5 kilometres, the two catchments together cover approximately 12 percent of the median pincode's area. Under the strong assumptions of uniform population density and no overlap between catchments, scaling the unadjusted Vishnu-name estimate of 0.22 percentage points by this share implies an increase of approximately 1.8 percentage points within the catchment areas.[6]

Finally, the balanced event window limits the treated sample to pincodes that crossed the treatment threshold between 1975 and 1988. Schools established during the network's expansion in the 1990s therefore do not contribute treated cohorts. The estimates consequently describe the effects of early RSS school expansion and may not generalize to the contemporary school network.

Table 5: Effects of RSS School Presence on Deity Names

	Any deity name		Vishnu-related name		Other deity name	
% of RSS Schools >= 1* Post	0.0016***	0.0013**	0.0022***	0.0017***	-0.0006	-0.0004
	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Observations	863,488	863,488	863,488	863,488	863,488	863,488
Mean dep. variable	0.154	0.154	0.102	0.102	0.052	0.052
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Each column reports a stacked pincode-by-birth-year regression of the indicated outcome on the treatment-by-post indicator. A pincode becomes treated when RSS schools reach 1 percent of all schools. All specifications include pincode-by-stack and stack-by-state-by-year fixed effects. Controls are counts of government, aided, and private schools and the share of fathers with deity names. Observations are weighted by the number of births in the pincode-year. Standard errors are clustered by pincode-by-stack. The dependent-variable mean is calculated among treated pincodes before treatment. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

[6]This calculation is illustrative and should not be interpreted as an estimated local treatment effect. Uneven population density, overlapping catchments, migration, spillovers, and differences in schools' geographic reach could change the implied magnitude in either direction.

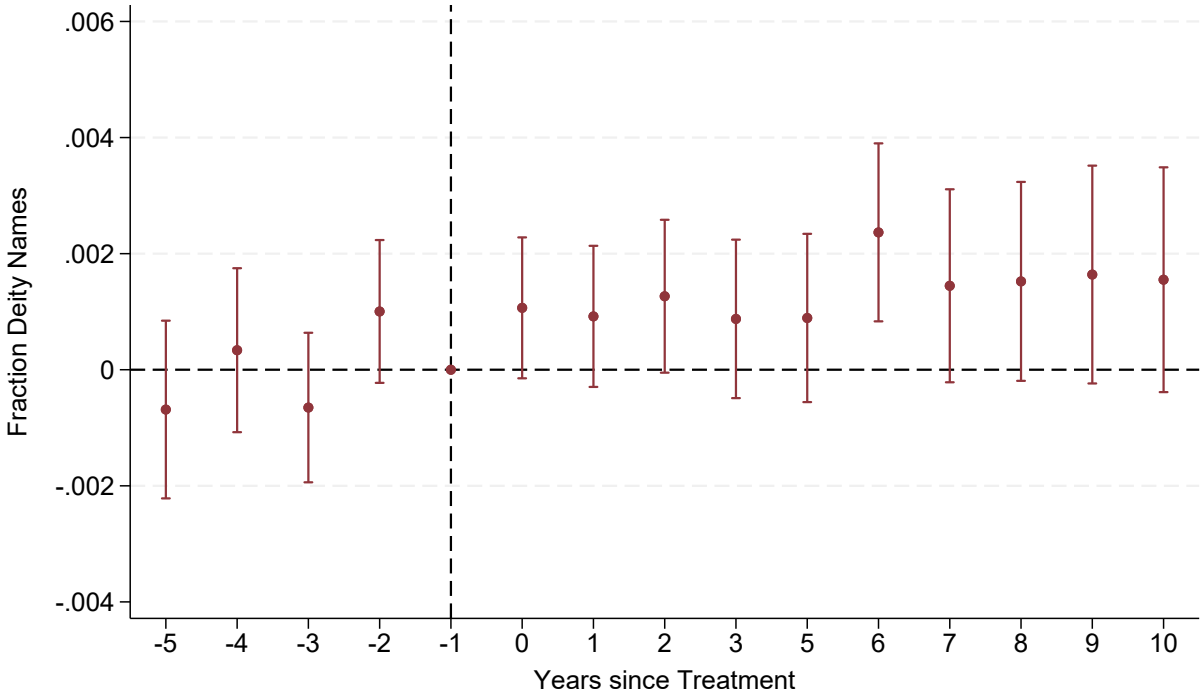
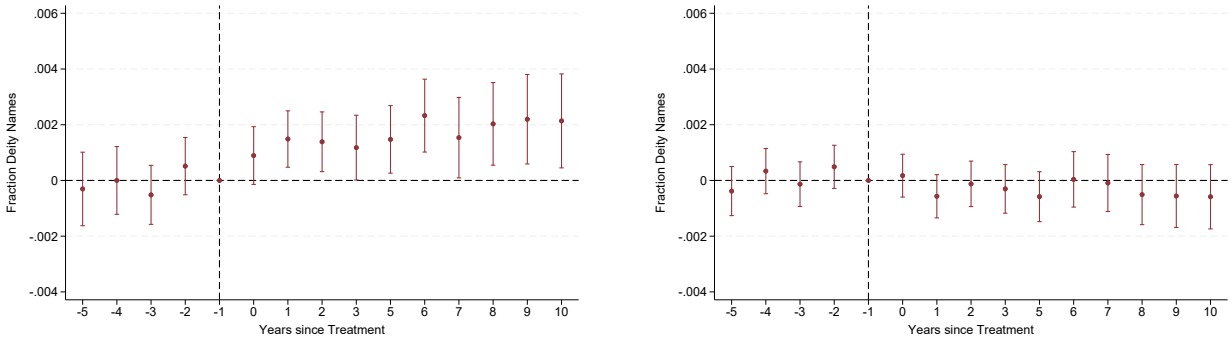


Figure 9: Dynamic effects of RSS schools on deity naming

Notes: Event-study coefficients from the stacked design of Equation 6.2. The outcome is the share of male children born in a pincode-year who receive a Hindu deity name. A pincode is treated once RSS schools reach 1 percent of its schools; year 0 is the treatment year and the year before is the omitted reference. Fixed effects, controls, weights and clustering follow Table 5. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.



(a) Share with Vishnu-related names

(b) Share with other deity names

Figure 10: Dynamic effects of RSS schools on Vishnu-related and other deity names

Notes: Event-study coefficients from the stacked design of Equation 6.2. The outcome in panel (a) is the share of male children born in a pincode-year who receive a name of Vishnu or one of his incarnations; in panel (b), the share receiving any other deity name. A pincode is treated once RSS schools reach 1 percent of its schools; year 0 is the treatment year and the year before is the omitted reference. Fixed effects, controls, weights and clustering follow Table 5. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.

Alternative treatment definition Appendix Figures A-8 and A-9 define treatment as the presence of at least two RSS schools in a pincode. The figures show no systematic pre-treatment trend and a persistent post-treatment increase in all deity names and Vishnu-related names.

6.3 Community Engagement

Table 6: School survey: facilities and teaching content

Variable Name	RSS School	Private School	Coefficient
Facilities			
School boundary	0.582	0.642	-0.04
	(0.497)	(0.482)	
School Playground	0.642	0.623	0.03
	(0.483)	(0.487)	
No of students per room	20.472	20.750	-0.25
	(12.448)	(10.533)	
Only English Medium	0.299	0.453	-0.17**
	(0.461)	(0.500)	
Pct Low Income students	0.436	0.494	-0.06
	(0.285)	(0.285)	
Teachers per student	0.061	0.054	0.01
	(0.030)	(0.031)	
External Support for construction	0.212	0.087	0.14***
	(0.412)	(0.284)	
Teaching content			
Mythological Books in Coursework	0.448	0.217	0.25***
	(0.501)	(0.414)	
Religious Trips	0.522	0.538	0.00
	(0.503)	(0.501)	
School has a magazine	0.209	0.028	0.18***
	(0.410)	(0.167)	

Notes: The first two columns report means by school type, with standard deviations in parentheses; the sample is 67 RSS schools and 106 non-RSS private schools. The coefficient is from a regression of the outcome on an RSS school indicator with block fixed effects. Confidence intervals for these comparisons appear in Figure 11.

To examine how RSS schools engage with their surrounding communities, we conducted a primary survey of 67 RSS schools and 106 nearby non-RSS private schools in Samastipur, Gaya, Bhojpur, and Patna districts of Bihar between August and October

Table 7: School survey: events

Variable Name	RSS School	Private School	Coefficient
Events held			
Independence Day	0.985	1.000	-0.01
	(0.122)	(0.000)	
Independence Day: Parents	0.955	0.953	0.01
	(0.208)	(0.213)	
Independence Day: Community	0.806	0.821	-0.01
	(0.398)	(0.385)	
Christmas	0.119	0.236	-0.11**
	(0.327)	(0.427)	
Christmas: Parents	0.000	0.057	-0.05*
	(0.000)	(0.232)	
Christmas: Community	0.000	0.019	-0.02
	(0.000)	(0.137)	
Ram Navami	0.209	0.104	0.10*
	(0.410)	(0.306)	
Ram Navami: Parents	0.179	0.028	0.14***
	(0.386)	(0.167)	
Ram Navami: Community	0.179	0.019	0.15***
	(0.386)	(0.137)	
Saraswati	0.970	0.925	0.05
	(0.171)	(0.265)	
Saraswati: Parents	0.925	0.755	0.17***
	(0.265)	(0.432)	
Saraswati: Community	0.761	0.547	0.20***
	(0.430)	(0.500)	
Yoga Day	0.731	0.613	0.10
	(0.447)	(0.489)	
Yoga Day: Parents	0.418	0.217	0.16**
	(0.497)	(0.414)	
Yoga Day: Community	0.313	0.151	0.14**
	(0.467)	(0.360)	
Religious ceremony, Prayers	0.433	0.170	0.25***
	(0.499)	(0.377)	
Religious ceremony, Prayers: Parents	0.313	0.085	0.23***
	(0.467)	(0.280)	
Religious ceremony, Prayers: Community	0.224	0.028	0.21***
	(0.420)	(0.167)	

Notes: The first two columns report means by school type, with standard deviations in parentheses; the sample is 67 RSS schools and 106 non-RSS private schools. The coefficient is from a regression of the outcome on an RSS school indicator with block fixed effects. $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table 8: School survey: community engagement

Variable Name	RSS School	Private School	Coefficient
Distribute material on social issues in community	0.299	0.198	0.08
	(0.461)	(0.400)	
Organizes education activities in community	0.299	0.104	0.19***
	(0.461)	(0.306)	
Teacher contribute to local community	0.538	0.460	0.10
	(0.502)	(0.501)	
Engage with community through social org	0.269	0.094	0.18***
	(0.447)	(0.294)	

Notes: The first two columns report means by school type, with standard deviations in parentheses; the sample is 67 RSS schools and 106 non-RSS private schools. The coefficient is from a regression of the outcome on an RSS school indicator with block fixed effects. $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

2025. The survey asked school principals and other staff about school facilities, instructional content, religious and national events, and activities involving parents and other community members. We use these data to compare RSS and non-RSS schools located within the same block. The sampling design and questionnaire are described in Section 3.

Table 6 compares school facilities and instructional practices. RSS and non-RSS schools are similar in the prevalence of boundary walls and playgrounds, the number of students per room, the number of teachers per student, and the share of students from low-income households. The main differences concern language, curricular content, and external support. RSS schools are 17 percentage points less likely to use English as their only medium of instruction, 25 percentage points more likely to include mythological books in their coursework, and 18 percentage points more likely to publish a school magazine. They are also 14 percentage points more likely to report receiving external support for construction.

Table 7 shows substantial differences in religious events involving parents and other community members. RSS schools are 14 percentage points more likely to involve parents in Ram Navami celebrations and 15 percentage points more likely to involve other residents. The corresponding differences are 17 and 20 percentage points for Saraswati Puja, 16 and 14 percentage points for Yoga Day, and 23 and 21 percentage points for religious ceremonies or prayers. Independence Day is celebrated at similar rates in both groups, whereas Christmas events are less common in RSS schools.

Table 8 examines activities outside the school. RSS schools are 19 percentage points

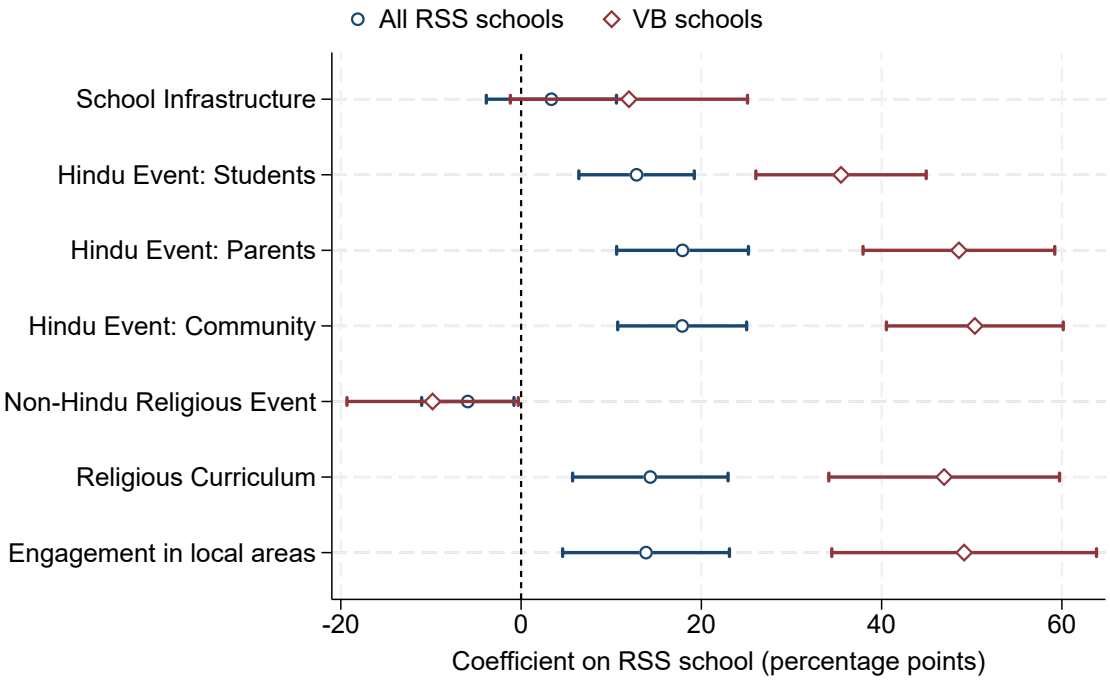


Figure 11: Differences between RSS and non-RSS schools

Notes: Each point is a coefficient from a separate regression of an outcome index on a school-affiliation indicator, estimated with block fixed effects. Bars show 95% confidence intervals. All indices are scaled to 0–100, so coefficients read as percentage points. *School Infrastructure* is the mean of: boundary wall and playground (coded 0/100), and rooms-per-student and teachers-per-student rescaled so the 95th percentile equals 100. *Hindu events (Students/Parents/Community)* are the shares of Ram Navami, Janmashtmi, Saraswati, Yoga Day, and religious-ceremony indicators recorded for the relevant group. *Non-Hindu religious events* is the mean across Christmas indicators for students, parents, and community. *Religious curriculum* averages binary indicators for: mythological books in coursework, religious trips, and presence of school magazine. *Engagement in local areas* averages binary indicators of: materials distributed for villager awareness, community educational activities, teacher contribution to the community, and engagement of teacher via social organisations. *All RSS schools* uses all RSS schools in our sample, whereas the *VB schools* coefficient compares Vidya Bharati–run schools with non-RSS schools.

more likely to organize educational activities in the surrounding community and 18 percentage points more likely to work through local social organizations. These activities, together with religious events and curricular programs, create regular opportunities for schools to engage with students' families and other local residents.

Figure 11 summarizes the survey outcomes using indices scaled from 0 to 100. Relative to non-RSS schools in the same block, RSS schools score higher on Hindu events involving students, parents, and community members, as well as on religious curriculum and local engagement. They score lower on non-Hindu religious events, while the difference in basic infrastructure is small. Restricting the RSS group to Vidya Bharati schools produces

the same general pattern, with larger estimated differences.

Taken together, the survey results suggest that RSS schools operate as community institutions rather than solely as providers of classroom education. Their distinctive features are not better physical facilities, but the religious and social activities through which they engage students, parents, and other residents. Hindu festivals, religious teaching materials, community programs, and partnerships with local organizations extend the school's presence beyond its enrolled students. These activities repeatedly expose families and residents to common religious symbols while creating regular contact among school staff, households, and community organizations. RSS schools can therefore provide local infrastructure for both the transmission of cultural practices and the formation of social networks that facilitate collective action.

The survey comparisons are descriptive and do not establish that these activities cause the electoral and cultural effects documented elsewhere in the paper. They nevertheless help clarify the paper's proposed mechanism. Relative to nearby non-RSS private schools, RSS schools differ most clearly in religious programming and outward-facing community engagement, not in basic infrastructure. This pattern is consistent with the paper's central argument that community-embedded institutions can connect cultural transmission to political organization through sustained involvement in local social life.

7 Conclusion

This paper examines how community-embedded institutions shape cultural practices and partisan politics. We study the nationwide network of schools affiliated with the RSS in India. In addition to providing education, these schools organize religious events, conduct civic activities, and engage with families and local organizations. They can therefore influence communities through both instruction and sustained participation in local social life.

The analysis yields three sets of results. First, RSS school presence is associated with greater electoral support for the BJP. From 1989 onward, constituencies with a high RSS school stock experienced increases of 0.8 to 1.3 percentage points in BJP vote share and 2.9 to 4.2 percentage points in the probability of a BJP victory. These gains persist across the post-period elections. The village-level analysis provides complementary evidence: BJP vote share increased more in villages where an RSS school opened nearby between the 2009 and 2014 general elections, and the estimates decline with distance from the school.

Second, proximity to RSS schools is associated with changes in two markers of Hindu cultural practice. In the household panel, increases in vegetarianism are concentrated

within two kilometres of an RSS school and among upper-caste and Other Backward Class households. Estimates for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households are small and imprecise, and there is no comparable increase among non-Hindu households. The naming analysis shows that, after RSS schools account for at least 1 percent of schools in a pincode, the share of men with Hindu deity names increases by 0.13 percentage points. The increase is concentrated in names associated with Vishnu and his incarnations, including Ram; the estimate for other deity names is small and statistically insignificant.

Third, a primary survey of RSS and nearby non-RSS private schools in four Bihar districts provides descriptive evidence on community engagement. The two groups have similar basic facilities, but RSS schools organize more Hindu religious events involving students, parents, and other residents. They are also more likely to include mythological texts in their coursework, publish school magazines, conduct educational activities in surrounding communities, and work through local social organizations. The main differences therefore concern religious programming and outward-facing engagement rather than physical infrastructure.

Taken together, the findings are consistent with the paper's central argument that RSS schools operate as community institutions rather than solely as providers of classroom education. Their religious events, teaching materials, and outreach activities make shared symbols visible beyond the classroom and create repeated contact among school staff, families, and local organizations. These activities provide plausible channels through which RSS schools can influence cultural practices, strengthen local networks, and build support for the BJP.

The broader contribution is to show that the political role of schools can extend beyond curriculum and enrolled students. Schools established by partisan non-state actors can provide durable local infrastructure for cultural transmission, network formation, and political organization. More generally, community-embedded institutions such as schools, parishes, and civic associations can connect political movements to everyday social life and help sustain their influence between elections.

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Part I

Appendix

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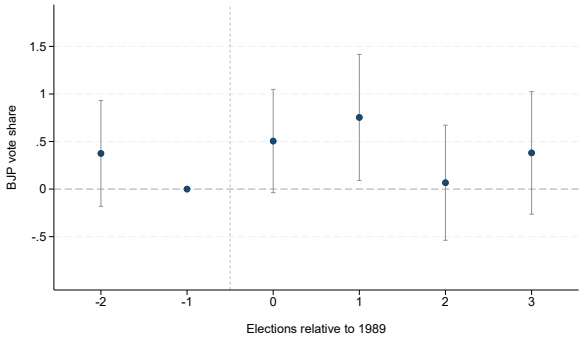
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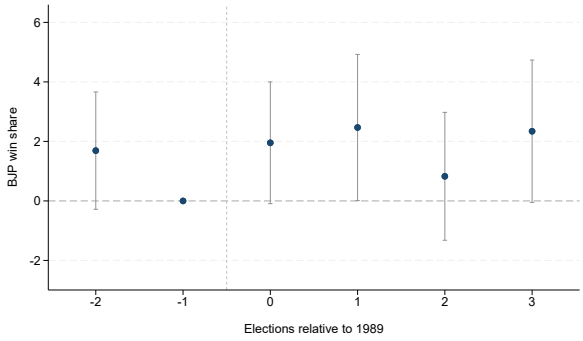
A Robustness

A.1 Electoral Outcomes

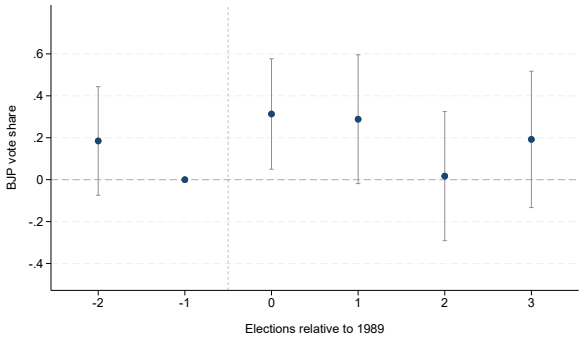
Table A-3 adds the 1981 district characteristics interacted with event time, the controls of Table A-1, to the synthetic difference-in-differences specification. The Vidya Bharati estimates are unaffected. The DISE estimate for vote share falls to 0.006 and is no longer distinguishable from zero, and the estimate for winning retains significance only at the 10 percent level. The same asymmetry appears when these controls are added to the two-way fixed-effects specification in Table A-1, so it does not arise from the choice of estimator.



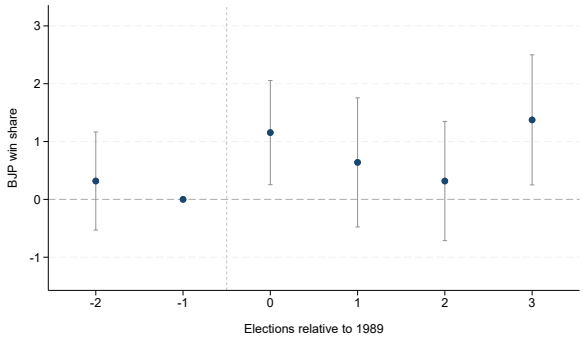
(a) Share of schools: BJP vote share



(b) Share of schools: BJP win



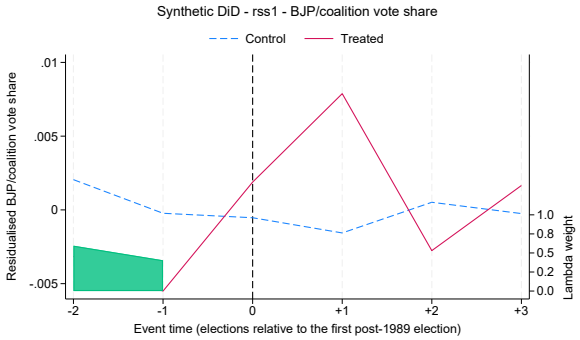
(c) Schools per 1,000 electors: BJP vote share



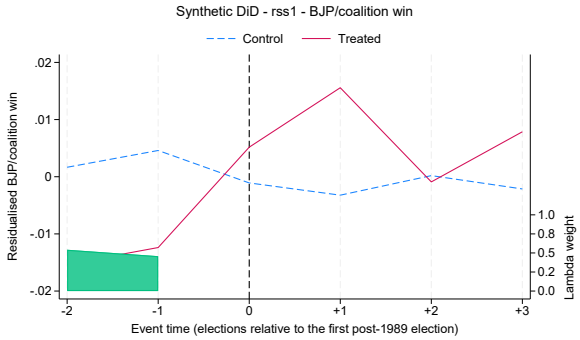
(d) Schools per 1,000 electors: BJP win

Figure A-1: Continuous treatment definitions, DISE

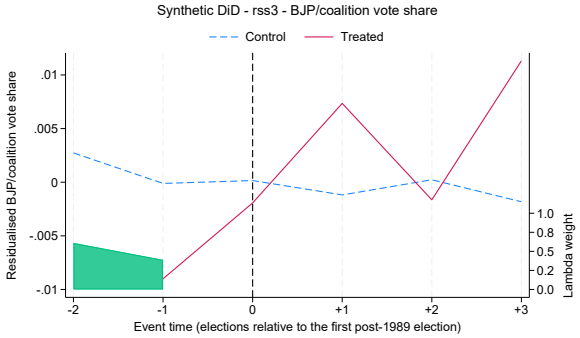
Notes: Event-study coefficients from Equation 4.1 with the binary treatment replaced by a continuous one: the share of the constituency's schools that were RSS-affiliated in 1988 (top row), and RSS schools per thousand electors in 1988, winsorized at the 95th percentile of the constituency distribution (bottom row). Election -1, the last election before 1989, is the omitted reference. Controls, fixed effects and clustering follow Table 2. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.



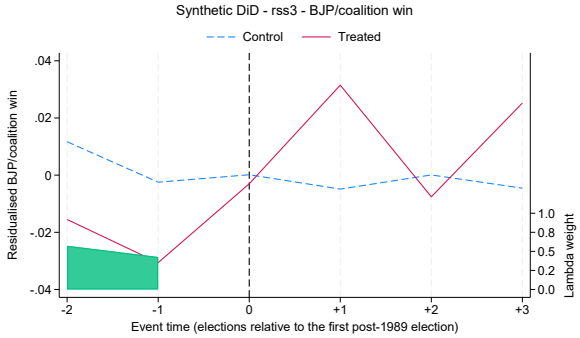
(a) DISE: BJP vote share



(b) DISE: BJP win



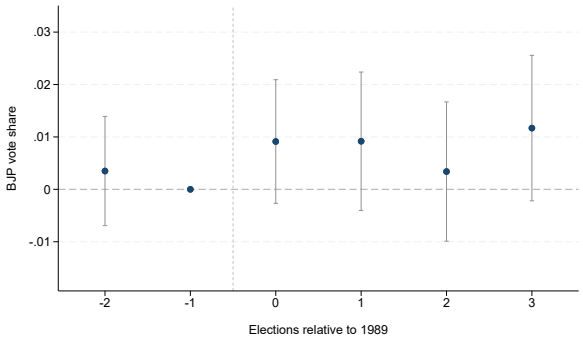
(c) Vidya Bharati: BJP vote share



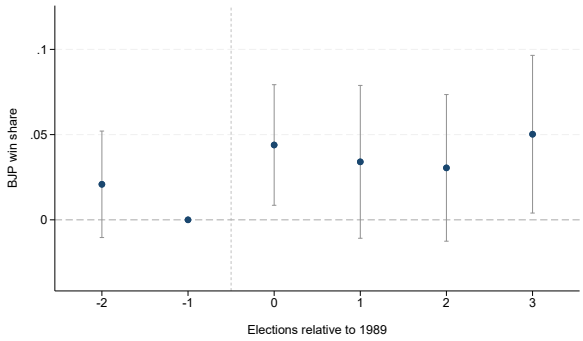
(d) Vidya Bharati: BJP win

Figure A-2: Synthetic difference-in-differences: treated and reweighted control paths

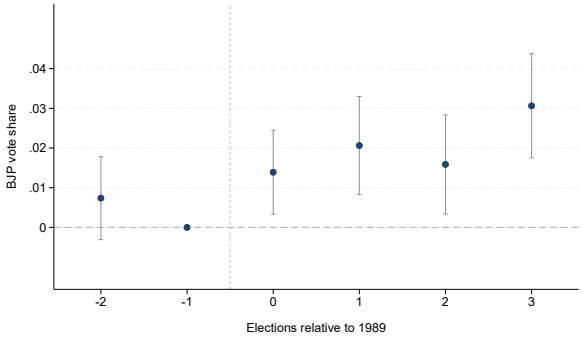
Notes: Each panel plots the residualized outcome for treated constituencies and for the control group reweighted by the estimator's unit weights, in event time, with the time weights shown at the bottom. The specification is that of Table A-2. The vertical line marks the first election in or after 1989.



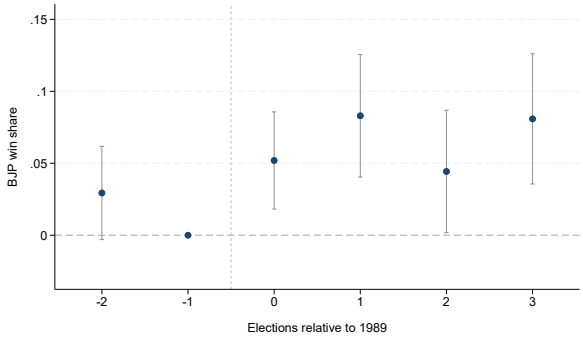
(a) DISE: BJP vote share



(b) DISE: BJP win



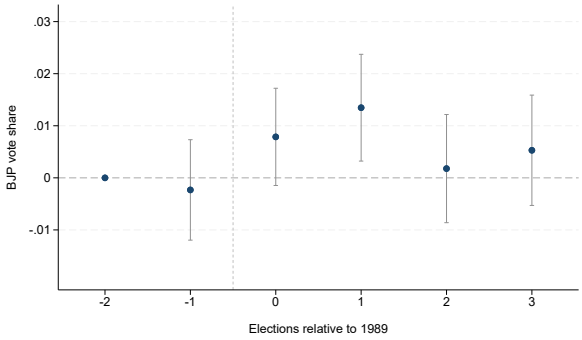
(c) Vidya Bharati: BJP vote share



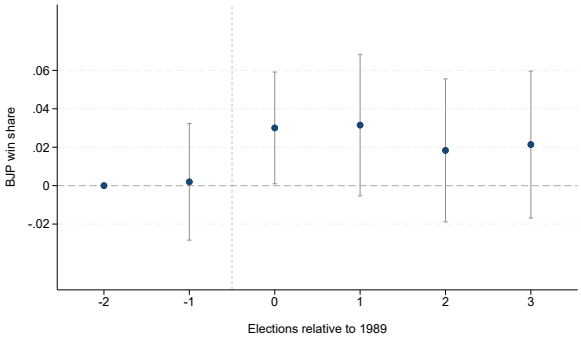
(d) Vidya Bharati: BJP win

Figure A-3: Event study with district × year fixed effects

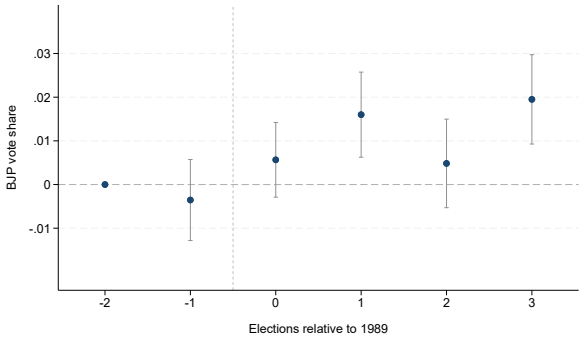
Notes: Event-study coefficients from Equation 4.1 with the state × election fixed effects replaced by 1981-district × election fixed effects; the specification otherwise follows Panel A of Table A-4. Election -1, the last election before 1989, is the omitted reference. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals, clustered by constituency.



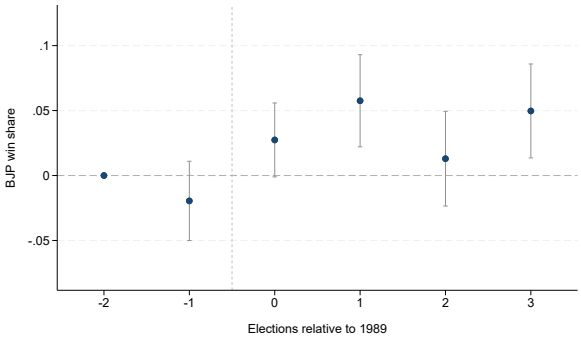
(a) DISE: BJP vote share



(b) DISE: BJP win



(c) Vidya Bharati: BJP vote share



(d) Vidya Bharati: BJP win

Figure A-4: Event study using the imputation estimator

Notes: Event-time estimates from the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel and Spiess (2024), following Panel B of Table A-4. Pre-period coefficients test for differential trends before 1989. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals, clustered by constituency.

Table A-1: Robustness: 1981 district characteristics interacted with event time

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0065	0.0273**	0.0135***	0.0453***
	(0.0044)	(0.0131)	(0.0041)	(0.0130)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
1981 District Characteristics × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	20,897	20,897	20,897	20,897
Mean dep. Variable	0.142	0.108	0.125	0.092

Notes: The specification is that of Table 2 with three controls added, each interacted with event time: the urban population share, log population, and the literacy rate of the constituency's 1981 census district, attached to every constituency in the district. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution, interacted with the post-1989 period. The sample omits Assam, where the 1981 census was not conducted. All other controls, fixed effects and clustering follow the main specification. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-2: Synthetic difference-in-differences estimates

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0079**	0.0255*	0.0133***	0.0414***
	(0.0037)	(0.0131)	(0.0036)	(0.0123)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Synthetic DiD Weights	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	19,068	19,068	19,068	19,068
Mean dep. Variable	0.144	0.114	0.128	0.100

Notes: Synthetic difference-in-differences estimates (Arkhangelsky et al., 2021). The controls and fixed effects of Table 2 are partialled out and the estimator is run on the residuals. The panel spans two elections before 1989 and four from 1989 onward; treatment is the interaction between an indicator for a constituency whose 1988 RSS school stock lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution and an indicator for the post-1989 period. Standard errors are from a clustered bootstrap with 100 replications, each re-solving the unit and time weights. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-3: Synthetic difference-in-differences with 1981 district characteristics

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0061	0.0222*	0.0137***	0.0441***
	(0.0041)	(0.0128)	(0.0044)	(0.0128)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
1981 District Characteristics × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Synthetic DiD Weights	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	18,348	18,348	18,348	18,348
Mean dep. Variable	0.147	0.115	0.128	0.098

Notes: As Table A-2, with the urban share, log population and literacy rate of the constituency's 1981 district each interacted with event time and partialled out along with the other controls before the estimator is run. These are the controls of Table A-1, and they are measured before the school expansion the design studies. Standard errors are from a clustered bootstrap with 100 replications, each re-solving the unit and time weights. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-4: Robustness: district fixed effects and the imputation estimator

Panel A: District × Year Fixed Effects	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0065	0.0290**	0.0164***	0.0500***
	(0.0045)	(0.0134)	(0.0043)	(0.0132)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
District × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,624	21,624	21,624	21,624
Mean dep. Variable	0.139	0.107	0.126	0.094
Panel B: Imputation Estimator	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0071*	0.0254**	0.0114***	0.0367***
	(0.0040)	(0.0124)	(0.0038)	(0.0119)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Imputation Estimator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,662	21,662	21,662	21,662
Mean dep. Variable	0.138	0.107	0.125	0.094

Notes: Panel A replaces the state × election fixed effects of Table 2 with 1981-district × election fixed effects, so treated constituencies are compared with control constituencies in the same district at the same event time; districts without both a treated and a control constituency in a year contribute nothing, so power falls. Panel B estimates the design of Table 2 with the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel and Spiess (2024), which is robust to treatment-effect heterogeneity. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose 1988 RSS school stock lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution, interacted with the post-1989 period. All other controls and clustering follow the main specification. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-5: Robustness: controlling for television coverage

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0081*	0.0276**	0.0129***	0.0397***
	(0.0043)	(0.0129)	(0.0041)	(0.0127)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
TV Transmitter Present	✓	✓	✓	✓
TV Transmitter Power (W)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,662	21,662	21,662	21,662
Mean dep. Variable	0.139	0.107	0.126	0.094

Notes: The specification is that of Table 2, with two television controls added: an indicator for whether the constituency had a working transmitter in the year of the election, and that transmitter's power in watts. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose RSS school stock in 1988 lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution, interacted with the post-1989 period. Television coverage expanded over the estimation window, from 0.6 percent of constituencies two elections before 1989 to 22.9 percent three elections after. All other controls, fixed effects and clustering follow the main specification. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-6: Effect of RSS schools on Congress outcomes

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	-0.0032	-0.0153	-0.0038	-0.0253
	(0.0047)	(0.0157)	(0.0052)	(0.0164)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,662	21,662	21,662	21,662
Mean dep. Variable	0.270	0.294	0.268	0.297

Notes: The specification is that of Table 2 with Congress vote share and a Congress win substituted for the BJP outcomes. As for the BJP outcomes, vote share is set to zero in the constituency-elections the Congress did not contest, so that both outcomes are estimated on the same sample. All controls, fixed effects and clustering follow the main specification. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-7: Reverse causality: does winning a seat produce RSS schools?

	DISE			Vidya Bharati		
BJP won the seat	0.4281	0.1859	-0.0155	0.0442	0.0519	0.0287
	(0.3134)	(0.2426)	(0.1829)	(0.1619)	(0.1238)	(0.0862)
Bandwidth	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.03	0.05	0.10
Observations	1,213	1,958	3,488	1,213	1,958	3,488
Mean dep. Variable	2.013	2.036	2.073	0.641	0.704	0.721

Notes: Regression discontinuity in close elections, estimated on every constituency-election in the panel in which the BJP finished first or second. Each constituency contributes one observation per such election. The running variable is the BJP's margin over the runner-up as a share of valid votes, positive when the BJP won. The outcome is the number of RSS schools established in the constituency in the election year and the following six years. Each column fits a linear function of the margin with separate slopes on each side of the threshold, with triangular kernel weights within the stated bandwidth; the bandwidths are fixed at 0.03, 0.05, and 0.10 rather than chosen from the data. The coefficient reported is on an indicator for a BJP victory. Controls are the number of electors and the counts of non-RSS schools, government schools, and RSS schools in the year before the election. State fixed effects are included. Standard errors are clustered by constituency, which allows for dependence across a constituency's repeated close elections, whose outcome windows can overlap. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-8: Robustness: controlling for the 1990 Rath Yatra route

	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
	Vote share	Win	Vote share	Win
RSS schools above state p75 (1988) × Post	0.0077*	0.0286**	0.0126***	0.0414***
	(0.0043)	(0.0130)	(0.0040)	(0.0127)
1979 School Stock × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
BJS 1960 Vote Share × Event Time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Log Distance to Rath Yatra × Post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	21,662	21,662	21,662	21,662
Mean dep. Variable	0.139	0.107	0.126	0.094

Notes: The specification is that of Table 2 with one term added: the log distance from the constituency centroid to the nearest point on L. K. Advani's 1990 Rath Yatra route, interacted with an indicator for elections held from 1991 onward. The route is traced from the Global Map India roads layer. Both main effects are absorbed, log distance by the constituency fixed effects and the post indicator by the state × election fixed effects, so only the interaction is estimated. All other controls, fixed effects and clustering follow the main specification. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

A.2 Village-Level Design

Tables A-9 and A-10 compare villages by their distance to the nearest school in 2013, using two reference groups. The villages within two kilometres are compared with those between two and five kilometres away; the villages within five kilometres are then compared with those between five and ten kilometres away and with those beyond ten kilometres. Differences are conditional on parliamentary constituency fixed effects, with standard errors clustered by village.

The comparisons describe selection into school entry. Village fixed effects absorb these level differences in the difference-in-differences specification; the village-level controls also allow trends to differ with initial school density, remoteness, and population.

Figure 7 compares villages within a parliamentary constituency, which contains about seven hundred villages. Figure A-5 repeats it within the 2011 census block, which contains about one hundred. The profiles retain their shape and fall by roughly half. Two considerations bear on how much weight this carries. A block spans a few tens of kilometres, so villages in the reference group are often near the same schools as the villages being compared, and part of the decline reflects a comparison group that is itself exposed. In addition, the coefficient on a band is not a simple contrast with the reference group once a geographic fixed effect is included: the fixed effect is estimated from every village in the block whatever its band, so each coefficient is a weighted average of within-block comparisons. This applies equally to Figure 7.

The vote-share results describe how villages divided their votes, not how many votes were cast. Figure A-6 replaces the outcome with turnout and leaves the design unchanged. Turnout rises in villages closer to a school, and the profile decays with distance in the same way the vote-share profile does. The effect at 0–2 kilometres is about one percentage point for DISE-RSS schools and one and a half for Vidya Bharati schools, against a mean turnout of 47 percent. The entry specification gives the same answer: for Vidya Bharati schools within five kilometres, turnout rises by 1.3 percentage points, and the estimate is unchanged by dropping the restriction to constituencies the BJP contested in both years, by replacing the constituency-by-year fixed effects with block-by-year fixed effects, and by removing the controls.

These estimates suggest that the village-level vote gains are not solely a matter of existing voters changing their choice. Two limits apply. Every band lies above the beyond-ten-kilometre reference group, so if the effect extends past ten kilometres the reference group is itself affected and all three coefficients understate. And turnout in aggregate cannot distinguish a general increase in participation from an increase concentrated in one community offset by a decline in another.

Table A-9: Balance across distance to the nearest RSS school, DISE

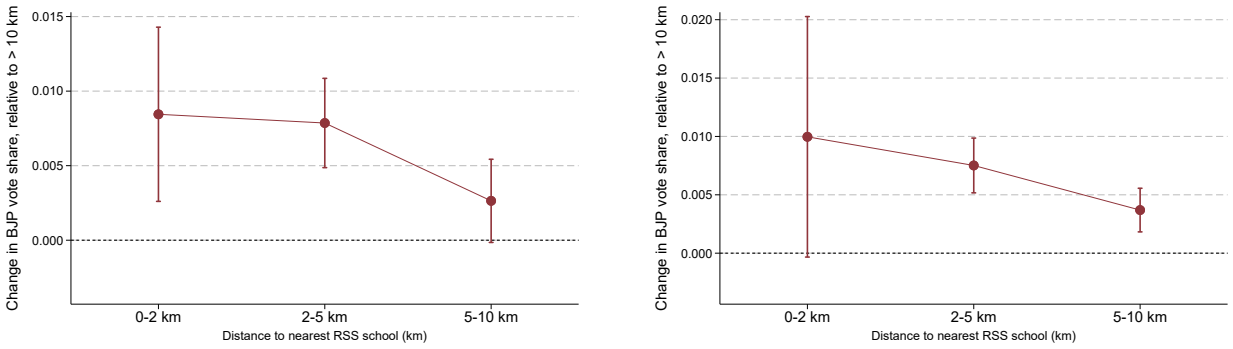
	Villages within 2 km		Villages within 5 km		
	Mean	2–5 km	Mean	5–10 km	10+ km
Ln village population	6.856	-0.114***	6.789	-0.032***	-0.103***
Literate share	0.558	-0.005***	0.562	-0.018***	-0.044***
SC + ST share	0.339	0.020***	0.337	0.019***	0.068***
Ln non-RSS schools within 2 km, 2008	2.528	-0.266***	2.308	-0.143***	-0.296***
Ln distance to nearest town	2.366	-0.039***	2.279	0.144***	0.374***
Turnout, 2009	0.417	-0.010***	0.418	-0.010***	-0.025***
BJP vote share, 2009	0.276	-0.004*	0.273	-0.003***	-0.003**
INC vote share, 2009	0.314	0.001	0.303	-0.001	-0.002
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituencys	181	181	226	224	197
Villages	3,558	91,879	95,437	70,252	29,865

Notes: The table reports two sets of comparisons. The first Mean column is the mean among villages within two kilometres of an RSS school in 2013, and the column beside it is the difference between the 2–5 km group and that group. The second Mean column is the mean among villages within five kilometres, that is the 0–2 and 2–5 km groups pooled, and the two columns beside it are the differences between the 5–10 km and 10+ km groups and that group. Every difference is the comparison group minus the reference group and comes from a regression limited to the two relevant groups, with parliamentary constituency fixed effects and standard errors clustered by village. The sample contains villages with no RSS school within two kilometres in 2008, matching the $R = 2$ km sample in Table 3, and is restricted to parliamentary constituencies where the BJP contested both the 2009 and 2014 elections. Groups are defined by distance to the nearest RSS school in 2013; because eligibility is set at two kilometres, the within-five-kilometre group includes villages that already had a school between two and five kilometres away in 2008. A village outside the 0–2 km group may still have gained a school at a greater distance, so the comparison groups are untreated at two kilometres rather than untreated. Census characteristics are measured in 2011, and electoral outcomes are measured in 2009. The constituency count reports the number of parliamentary constituencies containing both groups in a given comparison. Means are unadjusted while each difference is estimated within constituency, so the two need not agree in sign; for the 2009 BJP vote share they do not. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

Table A-10: Balance across distance to the nearest RSS school, Vidya Bharati

	Villages within 2 km		Villages within 5 km		
	Mean	2–5 km	Mean	5–10 km	10+ km
Ln village population	6.842	-0.062	6.690	-0.025***	-0.061***
Literate share	0.584	-0.001	0.577	-0.011***	-0.030***
SC + ST share	0.343	0.010	0.323	0.011***	0.037***
Ln non-RSS schools within 2 km, 2008	2.592	-0.178***	2.424	-0.104***	-0.209***
Ln distance to nearest town	2.310	-0.124***	2.148	0.179***	0.385***
Turnout, 2009	0.441	0.002	0.405	-0.008***	-0.021***
BJP vote share, 2009	0.248	0.005	0.294	-0.004***	-0.011***
INC vote share, 2009	0.263	0.004	0.304	-0.002*	-0.004***
Constituency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constituencys	69	69	210	210	209
Villages	497	39,544	40,041	71,293	108,608

Notes: As Table A-9, with the sample and the distance groups defined by distance to the nearest Vidya Bharati school rather than to the nearest DISE-RSS school.

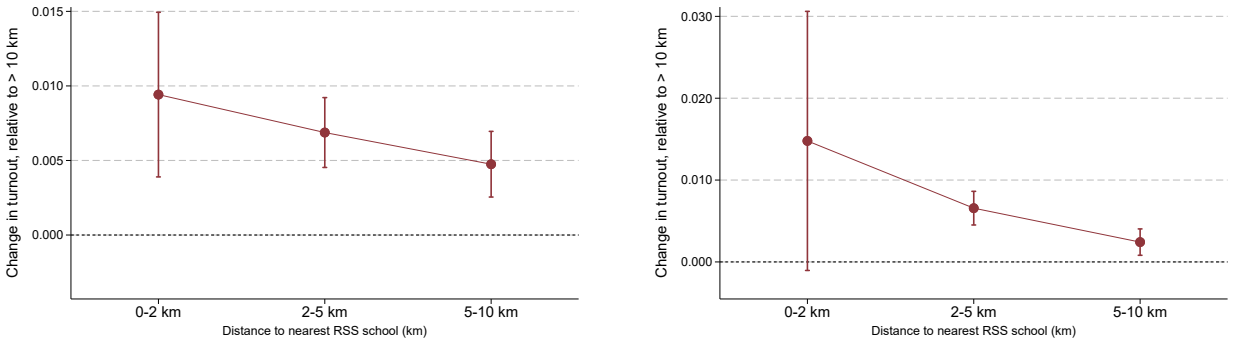


(a) DISE

(b) Vidya Bharati

Figure A-5: Change in BJP vote share by distance to the nearest RSS school, block fixed effects

Notes: This figure repeats Figure 7 with block-by-year fixed effects in place of parliamentary-constituency-by-year fixed effects. Blocks are 2011 census sub-districts, identified from the village census code. The sample, the distance bands, the omitted category, the controls and the clustering are those of Figure 7: villages with no RSS school of the given measure within two kilometres in 2008, bands of 0–2, 2–5 and 5–10 kilometres to the nearest school in 2013 with villages beyond ten kilometres omitted, village fixed effects, and the controls of Table 3 with the non-RSS school count measured within two kilometres. The estimates rest on 1,912 blocks for DISE and 1,915 for Vidya Bharati. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals, clustered on the village. Point estimates at 0–2, 2–5 and 5–10 kilometres are 0.008, 0.008 and 0.003 for DISE and 0.010, 0.008 and 0.004 for Vidya Bharati.



(a) DISE

(b) Vidya Bharati

Figure A-6: Change in turnout by distance to the nearest RSS school

Notes: This figure repeats Figure 7 with turnout in place of the BJP vote share. Turnout is votes cast divided by registered electors, set missing outside the interval $(0, 1.2]$ because village totals are sums of booth records whose elector and vote counts do not always come from the same roll; 1,924 of 542,335 village-years are excluded on this ground. The outcome is a share, so a coefficient of 0.01 is one percentage point, and mean turnout is 0.472. The sample, the distance bands, the omitted category, the controls, the fixed effects and the clustering are those of Figure 7. Point estimates at 0–2, 2–5 and 5–10 kilometres are 0.009, 0.007 and 0.005 for DISE and 0.015, 0.007 and 0.002 for Vidya Bharati. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals, clustered on the village.

A.3 Vegetarianism

Table A-11: Vegetarianism: village clustering and non-Hindu households

Panel A: Clustered by village	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
Log distance × Post (1999)	-0.0274	-0.0320	-0.0259	-0.0304*
	(0.0259)	(0.0266)	(0.0180)	(0.0182)
Log distance × Post (1995)	-0.0224	-0.0262	-0.0182	-0.0228
	(0.0244)	(0.0251)	(0.0179)	(0.0181)
Household controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Clustering	Village	Village	Village	Village
Observations	6,536	6,428	6,536	6,428
Pre-treatment mean	0.4475	0.4475	0.4475	0.4475
Panel B: Non-Hindu households	DISE		Vidya Bharati	
Log distance × Post (1999)	0.0710*	0.0803*	0.0299	0.0253
	(0.0422)	(0.0451)	(0.0287)	(0.0330)
Log distance × Post (1995)	0.0134	0.0227	0.0274	0.0256
	(0.0370)	(0.0380)	(0.0267)	(0.0322)
Household controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Clustering	HH	HH	HH	HH
Observations	884	880	884	880
Pre-treatment mean	0.2715	0.2715	0.2715	0.2715

Notes: Both panels repeat Panel A of Table 4. Panel A changes only the standard errors, clustering on the village rather than the household; with 229 village clusters the standard errors roughly double. Panel B re-estimates the same specification on the 442 non-Hindu households, 884 household-years across 80 villages. As in Table 4, the 1999 and 1995 rows are separate regressions on the same observations.

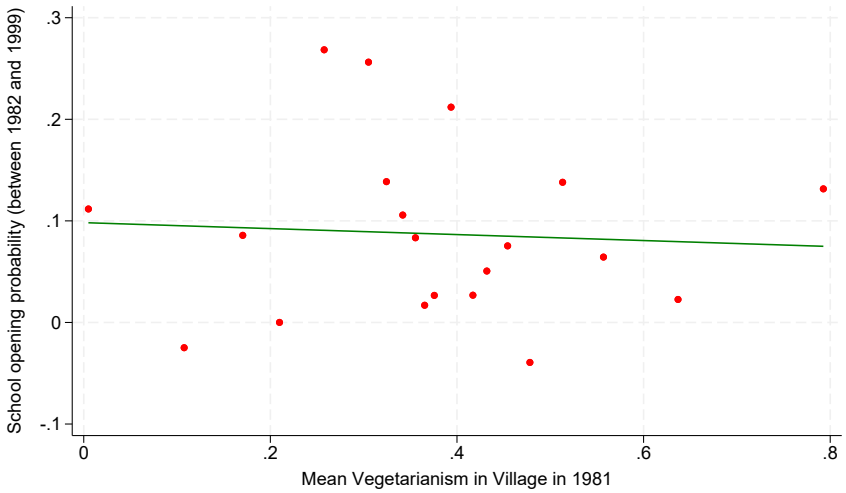


Figure A-7: Baseline vegetarianism and subsequent RSS school opening

Notes: Binned scatter at the village level. The vertical axis is an indicator for an RSS school opening within two kilometres of the village by 1999, and the horizontal axis is the village's mean vegetarianism in 1981. Both variables are residualized on state fixed effects before binning, and the line is a linear fit on the underlying village data. The sample is the REDS villages of Table 4.

A.4 Naming Patterns

Figure A-10 estimates the pooled specification separately within each of the nine states the electoral rolls cover. The increase in Vishnu-related names is concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana. Rajasthan moves in the opposite direction, and it is not a small sample: it has as many treated pincodes as Madhya Pradesh, and its estimate is larger in absolute value than the estimate for Uttar Pradesh. The two panels are close to mirror images. States that shift toward Vishnu-related names tend to shift away from names of other deities, and Rajasthan shows the reverse. The split therefore describes which deity a name honours rather than whether a child receives a deity name at all, which is also what the pooled estimates show: the effect on all deity names is smaller than the effect on Vishnu-related names alone.

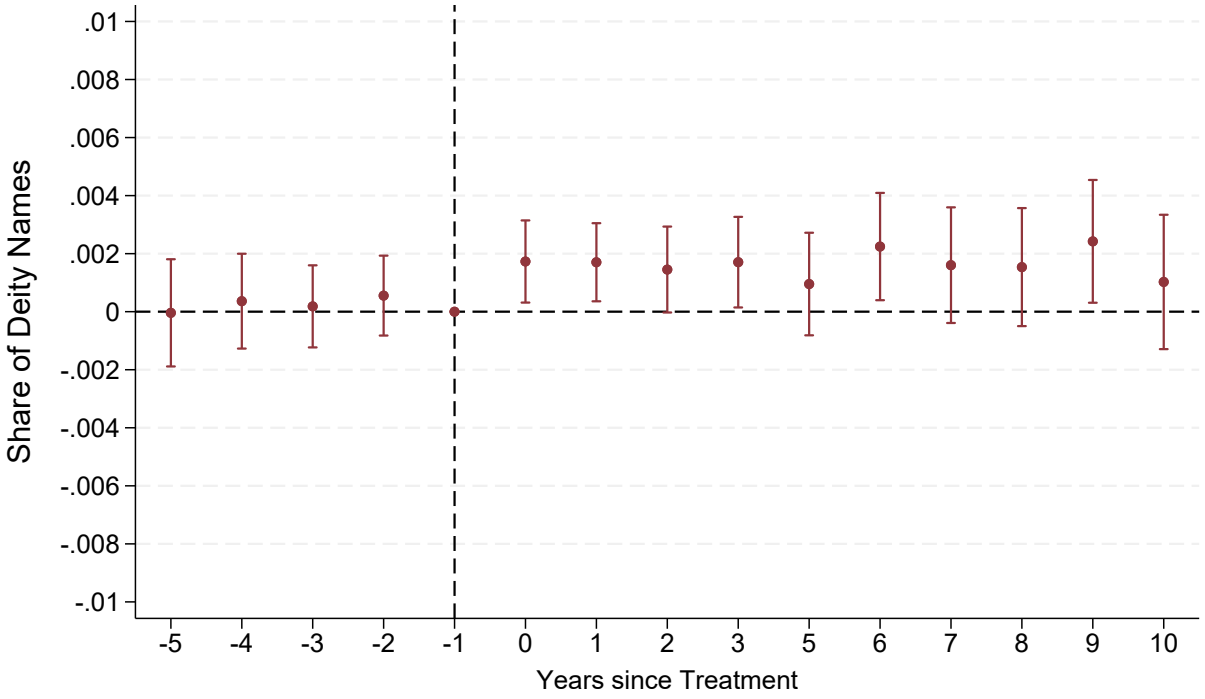
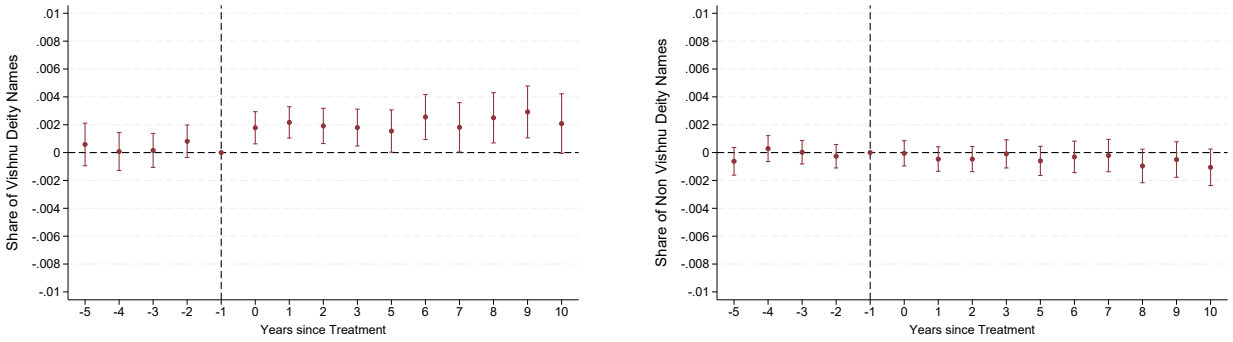


Figure A-8: Dynamic effects of RSS schools on deity naming (# RSS schools ≥ 2)

Notes: Event-study coefficients from the stacked pincode design. The outcome is the share of male children born in a pincode-year who receive a Hindu deity name. A pincode is treated once it holds at least two RSS schools; year 0 is the treatment year and the year before is the omitted reference. Fixed effects, controls, weights and clustering follow Table 5. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.

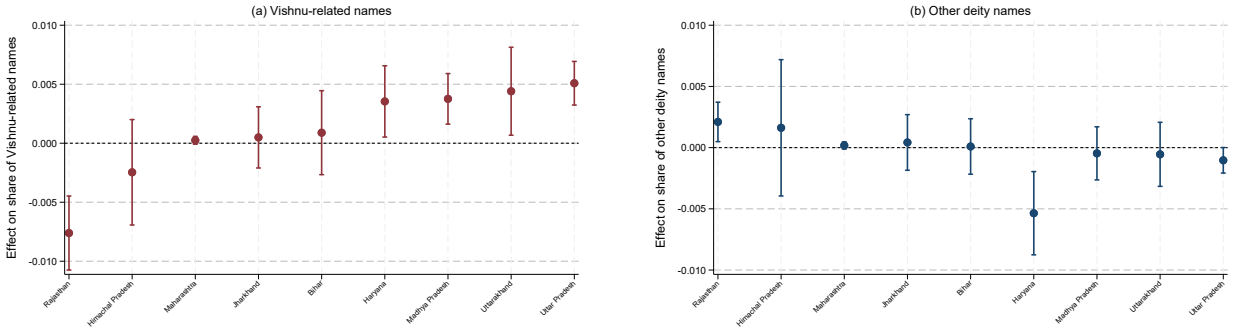


(a) Vishnu-related names

(b) Other deity names

Figure A-9: Dynamic effects for Vishnu-related and other deity names (# RSS schools ≥ 2)

Notes: Event-study coefficients from the stacked pincode design. The outcome in panel (a) is the share of male children born in a pincode-year who receive a name of Vishnu or one of his incarnations; in panel (b), the share receiving any other deity name. A pincode is treated once it holds at least two RSS schools; year 0 is the treatment year and the year before is the omitted reference. Fixed effects, controls, weights and clustering follow Table 5. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals.



(a) Vishnu-related names

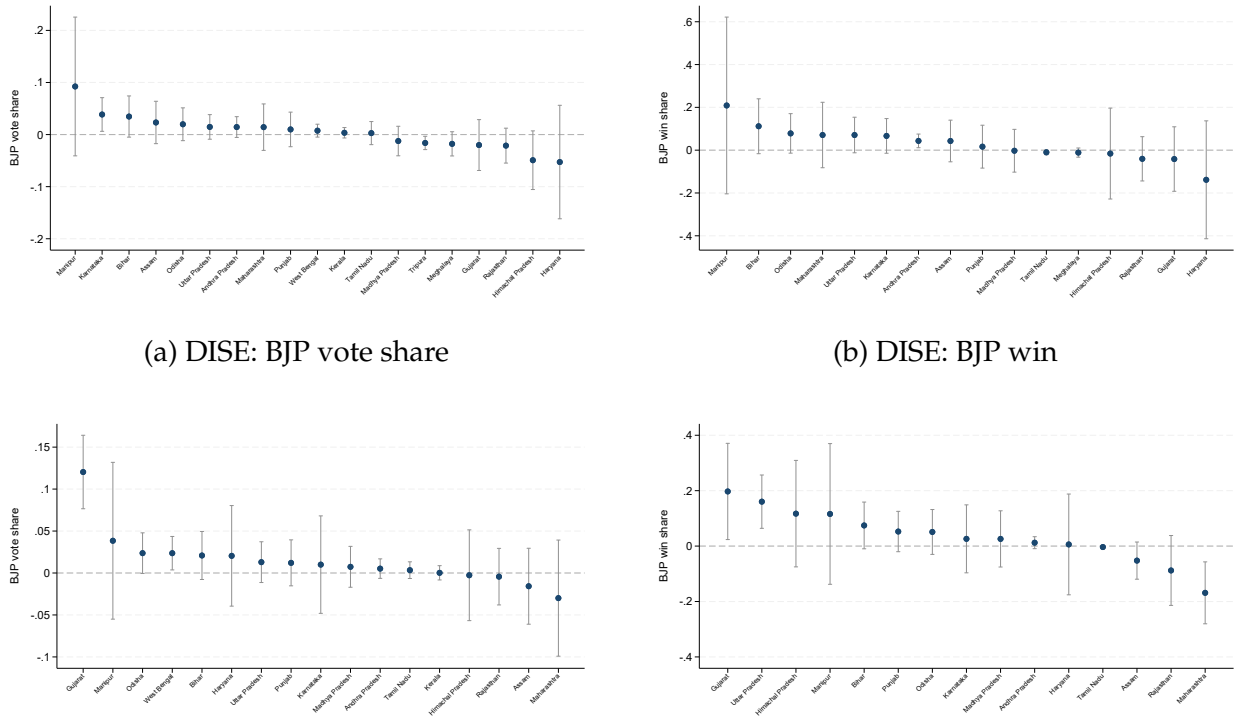
(b) Other deity names

Figure A-10: Deity naming estimated separately by state

Notes: Each point is the pooled post-treatment coefficient from the specification of Table 5, estimated on one state's pincodes alone. The outcome in panel (a) is the share of male children in a pincode-year who receive a name of Vishnu or one of his incarnations; in panel (b), the share receiving any other deity name. Controls, weights, fixed effects and clustering follow the pooled specification; within a state the stack-by-state-by-year effects reduce to stack-by-year. States are ordered by their Vishnu-related estimate and held in the same order in both panels, so a state occupies the same position in each. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals. The nine states are those covered by the electoral rolls. Treated pincode counts range from 22 in Haryana to 357 in Uttar Pradesh, and the estimates for states with few treated pincodes are correspondingly imprecise.

B Additional Results

B.1 Heterogeneity by State: Assembly-Constituency Design



(a) DISE: BJP vote share

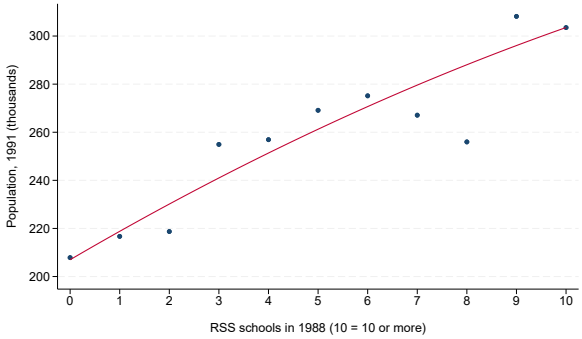
(b) DISE: BJP win

(c) Vidya Bharati: BJP vote share

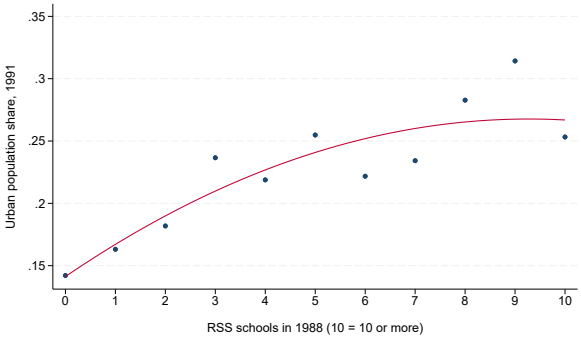
(d) Vidya Bharati: BJP win

Figure B-1: State-by-state estimates of the main specification

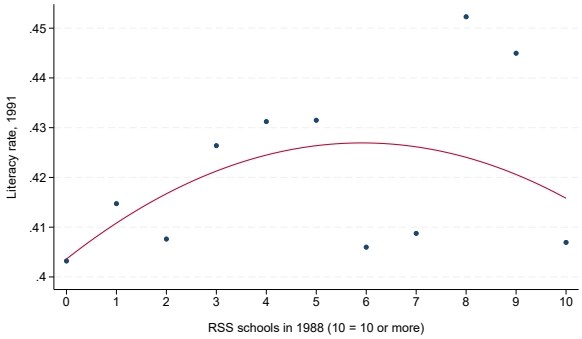
Notes: Each point is the pooled post-1989 treatment coefficient from the specification of Table 2, estimated on one state's constituencies alone. Treatment is an indicator for a constituency whose 1988 RSS school stock lies above the 75th percentile of its own state's distribution, interacted with the post-1989 period. Within a state, the state × election fixed effects reduce to election effects and the contest-status × crediting fixed effects to contest status; all other controls and constituency clustering follow the main specification. Bars are 95 percent confidence intervals and states are ordered by point estimate. States where the treatment does not vary or the specification cannot be estimated in the within-state sample (Nagaland throughout; Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, and Meghalaya for some panels) are omitted. Estimates for small states rest on few treated constituencies and are imprecise.



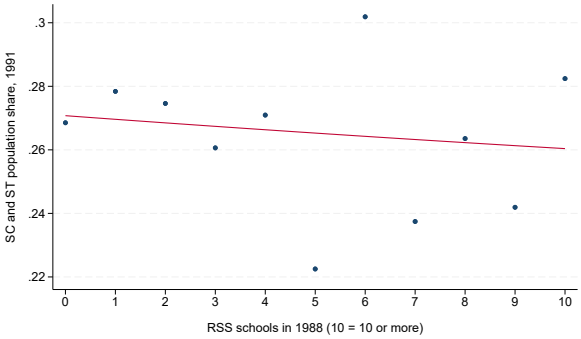
(a) Population



(b) Urban population share



(c) Literacy rate



(d) SC and ST population share

Figure B-2: Constituency characteristics by RSS school count in 1988

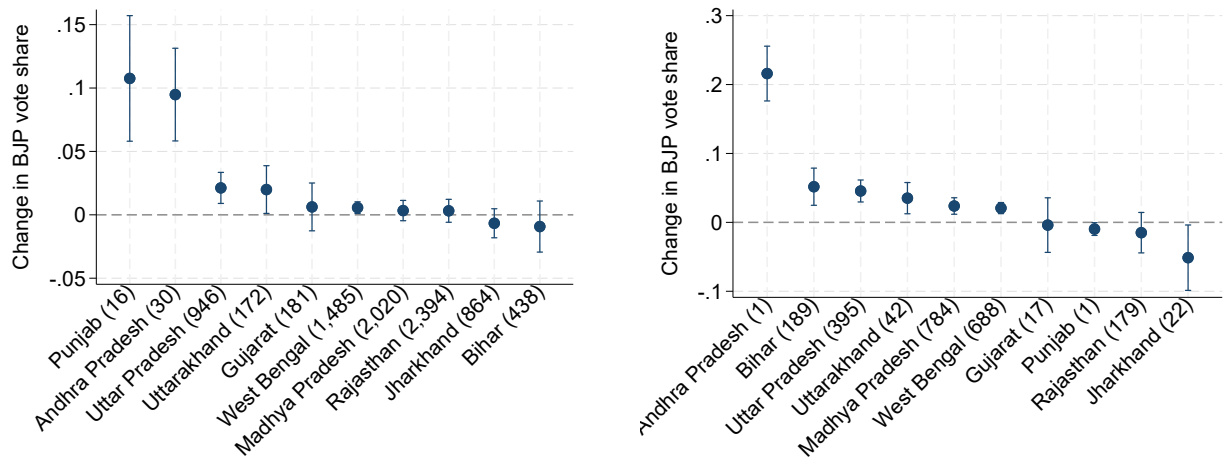
Notes: Each point is the mean of the 1991 constituency characteristic among constituencies holding the given number of RSS schools in 1988, with ten or more pooled into the rightmost point. Characteristics are demeaned by state (the sample mean is added back), so the points compare constituencies within states; the line is a quadratic fit on the underlying constituency data. Demographics are the SHRUG-based constituency aggregates of Table 1, on the same sample: constituencies with implausible aggregated populations are excluded as overlay artifacts, leaving 3,328. The leftmost point is the 59 percent of constituencies with no RSS school in 1988.

Table B-1: 1981 characteristics of treated and control constituencies

	DISE			Vidya Bharati		
	Treated	Control	Difference	Treated	Control	Difference
District population (thousands)	2343.707	2378.322	11.057	2081.022	2423.056	-192.906**
Population per sq. km	481.241	766.735	-146.585	460.413	766.685	-36.748
Urban population share	0.232	0.217	0.023**	0.200	0.223	0.007
Scheduled Caste share	0.154	0.141	0.004	0.164	0.139	0.007**
Scheduled Tribe share	0.084	0.115	0.002	0.084	0.114	-0.006
Literacy rate	0.351	0.366	0.001	0.335	0.368	-0.006
Female literacy rate	0.239	0.254	-0.000	0.223	0.256	-0.008*
Main-worker share of population	0.335	0.343	-0.002	0.344	0.341	-0.001
Cultivator share of workers	0.428	0.431	-0.010	0.426	0.432	-0.000
Agricultural-labourer share of workers	0.223	0.242	-0.019***	0.251	0.237	-0.013***
Constituencies	577	2983		524	3036	
Districts (clusters)		351			351	

Notes: One observation per constituency, the unit the electoral design estimates on. Each constituency carries the 1981 characteristics of the district it falls in, assigned by spatial intersection of the constituency boundaries with the 1981 district map. A constituency is treated if its RSS school stock in 1988 is above the 75th percentile of its state's distribution. Demographics are digitized from the 1981 Primary Census Abstract volumes; population per square kilometre divides district population by the census land area. Treated and Control columns report unadjusted means; the Difference column is the coefficient from a regression of the characteristic on the treated indicator with state fixed effects and standard errors clustered by district. Unlike Table 1, these characteristics predate the entire school-placement window. Because they vary only across districts, they cannot capture how a treated constituency differs from its neighbors inside the same district. The 1981 census was not conducted in Assam, whose constituencies are therefore absent. Statistical significance: $p < 0.10$ (*), $p < 0.05$ (**), $p < 0.01$ (***).

B.2 Heterogeneity by State: Village-Level Design



(a) DISE

(b) Vidya Bharati

Figure B-3: Entry difference-in-differences estimated separately by state

Notes: Each point is the coefficient on treatment interacted with the post indicator, from the specification in Table 3 estimated within a single state at a five kilometre radius. Village and parliamentary constituency by year fixed effects and the same village controls are included throughout; standard errors are clustered on the village. Bars are 95% confidence intervals and the dashed line marks zero. States are ordered by the size of the estimate, and the number of villages that gained a school within five kilometres appears in parentheses beside each state name. Himachal Pradesh is not in the village-level sample, and states in which no village gained a school are omitted.

C Additional Historical Details

C.1 How the BJP Uses RSS Schools

The following examples document several ways in which RSS and BJP organizations use school personnel, facilities, and community networks. They provide historical and qualitative support for the organizational mechanisms discussed in Section 2.

1. Iwanek (2022) (Page 282): "Many of the Vidya Bharati schools have another, very practical advantage for the BJP and the RSS suborganizations: their space. Places such as courtyards or assembly halls can be easily arranged for various RSS/BJP functions, and presumably such an endeavour also comes cheap and without extensive work. During my visit to school X, I found, for instance, that a VHP workshop was taking place within its spacious precincts. The examples of using the Vidya Bharati schools for these purposes are otherwise easy to be found in the press. These instances are so numerous that I am putting some of them in a mammoth endnote at the end of this paragraph."

2. Iwanek (2022) (Page 282): "The school space may also be used to host an RSS shakha. I found out that the shakha were being held in schools A and C3 (Dhaundiyal, personal communication), school E (Rajat, personal communication)—all three located in Uttarakhand, as well as school B2 in Himachal Pradesh (Bajpai, personal communication) and school Y in UP (Narayan, personal communication). In school A, it turned out that the shakha held there was actually managed by the principal of another Vidya Bharati school in the same city, school C3. Two more shakha were being held in the latter school (Bhardwaj, personal communication). School D houses an entire RSS office."

3. Jha (2021): "Away from the BJP, the Sangh also made a separate list of voters at the booth level. Then, the teachers who work across the schools under Vidya Bharati in Rampur were utilized to go among the voters in every booth and mobilize support for the party. In each of 21 villages, the Sangh employed three teachers from the SVM. In places such as the village Param, which is the biggest panchayat in the Milak sub-division, Sangh functionaries worked in parallel with the party organization. Each local administrative division was led by a sarkaryawah (General Secretary), who was then assisted by acharyas (teachers) from the SSM and SVM."

4. Ambikar (2008): "Although none of the teachers admitted to being part of a political party, several did attend the local shakha and helped organize community events

like Hindu festivals and national celebrations. These events often served as informal meeting points for members of the wider Sangh Parivar... Their engagement in 'seva' or service activities was framed as apolitical, but in practice, it functioned to strengthen the ideological hold of Hindutva in the neighborhood."

5. Bhattacharya (2020): "I travelled to Habibpur, in the Malda district and Rampurhat, in the Birbhum district, to examine the functioning of the Ekal schools set up in these areas after 2011. Like the coaching centre at Jharbasti in Uttar Dinajpur, the Abhiyan's activities followed a similar pattern, with minor variations. The FTS would start a one-teacher free coaching centre or school. In a few weeks, a matri mandali, or mothers' group, would be formed. This group would meet every two to three months to discuss the progress of their children. Once the centre became popular enough that students of a nearby government-run school started attending the classes regularly, the SHSS would enter the scene. They would start a weekly moral-values centre, or Sanskar Kendra, for the adults, and in some cases, for the children, too. The SHSS would also set up a Bhajan Mandali, or Bhajan group, for weekly bhajan evenings to engage a larger population. The next step would be to form a village committee, called gram samiti, comprised completely of local residents. The committee would be entrusted with the wellbeing of the Ekal Vidyalaya and the all-round development of the village. A village where the programme has taken root would usually have three key persons—the acharya, or teacher, the gram pramukh, or village head, and the satsang pramukh, spiritual or religious head. The AFI would then enter the scene and organise health-awareness and check-up camps at regular intervals. These camps provide medicine for free, and critical cases would get help to get treated at urban hospitals."

6. Bhattacharya (2020): On cultural homogenization: "A short documentary, Introduction of Shreehari Satsang Samiti [an RSS-affiliated trust that set up a school in West Bengal], reveals that the Hari Katha Yojna is aimed at Sanskritik Jagran, or cultural awakening, to transform people into Ram Sadhaks, or worshippers of Ram, and develop villages into Sanskari Gaon—villages rooted in traditions. The documentary was made by the Vanvasi Raksha Parivar Foundation—a branch of the SHSS which aims to safeguard tribal people and their families. The SHSS would train village youth in the art of religious narration and develop them into dedicated, full-time kathakars for this project."

7. Basava (2024): "Most of the shakhas (one-hour RSS activity) are conducted in schools, colleges, temple grounds, or Vidya Bharathi schools. With some faculty members

reportedly from an RSS background and the management being affiliated with the RSS, there was a free hand for the shakhas to be held on the Vidya Bharathi school grounds."

C.2 RSS School Naming Patterns

Table C-1: Common Vidya Bharati school names by state and territory (from Iwanek, 2022)

State / UT	Common School Names
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	*Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandir* and *Saraswati Shishu Mandir*.
Andhra Pradesh	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for elementary schools; *Bharatiya Vidya Niketan* (bharatiya vidya niketan) above the elementary level.
Arunachal Pradesh	*Vidya Niketan* (with various names before it) and *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay*.
Assam	*Shishu Niketan* (sisu niketan) for elementary schools; *Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Bihar	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for elementary schools; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Chandigarh	*Sarvhitkari Vidya Mandir*.
Chhattisgarh	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir*.
Delhi	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for elementary schools; *Saraswati Bal Mandir* above the elementary level; rarely: *Saraswati Vidya Mandir*.
Gujarat	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for the elementary level; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Haryana	*Gita Vidya Mandir*.
Himachal Pradesh	*Saraswati Vidya Mandir* (regardless of school level).
Jammu and Kashmir	*Bharatiya Vidya Mandir*; rarely: *Saraswati Vidya Mandir*, *Bharatiya Vidya Niketan*.
Jharkhand	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for elementary schools; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Karnataka	*Vidya Bharati High School* above the elementary level.
Kerala	*Saraswati Shishu Vidyalay* (saraswati sisu vidyalaya) for elementary schools; *Bharatiya Vidya Niketan* (bharatiya vidya niketan) above the elementary level.

Continued on next page

State / UT	Common School Names
Ladakh	*Bharatiya Vidya Niketan*.
Madhya Pradesh	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for the elementary level; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Maharashtra	*Bal Mandir* for primary level schools; *Vidya Niketan* above the primary level.
Manipur	*Bal Vidya Mandir*.
Meghalaya	Unclear, but the name *Garudachal Vidyapeeth* appears to be used in the Garo Hills regions.
Nagaland	*Vidya Bharati School*.
Odisha	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for primary level; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the primary level; *Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandir* is also a very common name.
Punjab	Most commonly: *Sarvhitkari Vidya Mandir* (regardless of school level).
Rajasthan	*Vidya Mandir* and *Vidya Niketan*.
Sikkim	*Saraswati Shishu Niketan* and *Saraswati Vidya Niketan*.
Telangana	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for primary level; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the primary level and below intermediate college level; *Saraswati Gyana Mandir* for intermediate college level.
Tripura	*Shishu Mandir* or *Shishu Niketan* for primary level schools; *Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Uttar Pradesh	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for elementary level schools; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
Uttarakhand	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir* for the elementary level; *Saraswati Vidya Mandir* above the elementary level.
West Bengal	*Saraswati Shishu Mandir*, *Vivekananda Shishu Mandir*, and *Sarada Shishu Tirtha*.