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What Women Want: Gender Gaps in Political Preferences

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I. From Men's and Women's Preferences to Gender Gaps

Evidence from multiple countries in the developed world demonstrates that men and women hold systematically different political attitudes and policy preferences (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006), which may translate into substantive differences in partisan attachment and voting patterns (Corder and Wolbrecht, 2016; Inglehart and Norris, 2000).

There is relatively less work on the existence and origins of this gap in the context of the developing world and low-income countries (Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, Forthcoming). However, the studies that do exist suggest that gaps in men's and women's preferences indeed exist in the developing world, although they might be qualitatively different from those in the developed world. In a field experiment in Indonesia, where villages are randomly assigned to choose development projects, Olken (2010) finds that women are far more likely than men to prefer drinking water projects, and far less likely than men to prefer projects involving roads and bridges. Chattopadhyay and Duflo's (2004) seminal study on the effects of village-level quotas for women in India reveals a similar pattern: women in West Bengal and Rajasthan are more likely than men to complain to their village representatives about issues related to water provision, and in Rajasthan, like

in Indonesia, they are less likely than men to make requests related to roads. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson (Forthcoming) find that women are more likely than men to prioritize drinking water and poverty alleviation schemes. Brule and Gaikwad (2017) find that women belonging to patrilineal tribes in Meghalaya, India are on average more supportive of public welfare schemes than men, and that unlike men, their support does not decrease when they are reminded of the personal financial burden of such schemes.

In most of the above-mentioned studies, the observed differences in men's and women's political preferences are referred to as a "gender gap" (Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, Forthcoming; Brule and Gaikwad, 2017) or as "gender-based differences" (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). What about these differences makes them 'gender-based' rather than simply differences between men and women? In her essay on what it means to study gender and the state, Htun (2005) proposes approaching gender as a "social position and attribute of social structures", rather than an attribute of individuals; she identifies the "sexual division of labor" as one such social structure or institution. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) engage with the idea that women's higher preference for water is driven by the sexual division of labor: women in their study areas are primarily responsible for collecting drinking water for their households. Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson (Forthcoming) posit the same, and find that while women's individual-level employment does not significantly narrow the gap in prioritization of water, the gap narrows in places where the *share* of women in the labor force is higher. This suggests that it is perhaps the social norms of the sexual division of labor, rather than individual women's situations, that shape the gap in public goods priorities. The former is likely to change only when a certain threshold of women begin to participate in the economy and incur a higher opportunity cost of water collection. Brule and Gaikwad (2017) take advantage of the coexistence of matrilineal and patrilineal tribes in Meghalaya, India to show that the gender gap in political economy preferences ceases to exist, and is in fact reversed, in matrilineal tribes where women are the traditional inheritors of assets. Importantly, the gap persists even when controlling for individual-level wealth in patrilineal tribes, demonstrating that the systematic difference between men's and women's preferences is driven not just by differences in their individual

asset ownership, but also by the cultural norms that dictate the inheritance and ownership of such assets.

That the observed differences in preferences between men and women across these studies seem to be driven by attributes of social structures rather than the attributes of individual men and and women is what makes them 'gender-based differences.' In the remainder of this essay, I discuss the content and origin of such differences, drawing on evidence from Pakistan.

II. Understanding Women's Preference for Drinking Water

In a survey of 800 households in the Faisalabad district of Pakistan conducted in 2016, I find that drinking water is the most frequently named top priority for both men and women across a set of different public goods and services (Khan, 2017). However, as Figure 1 indicates, I also find that a significantly higher proportion of women name drinking water as their top priority.

On first glance, it may seem that these findings confirm those from Indonesia, India, and sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is an important distinction: women in this particular district of Pakistan are *not* primarily responsible for drinking water collection. In the survey sample, many of the households either have a piped water supply on the premises, or purchase potable water from door-to-door vendors. Among households that have to fetch water, only 22% report that a female household member is responsible for the task. In addition to asking respondents about who is responsible for water collection in their own households, I also ask them who they think performs the task of the water collection in the district as a whole: a majority of men (66%) and women (52%) agree that it is "mostly men." Thus, it seems that water-collection is neither a task disproportionately performed by women, nor is it perceived to be a 'woman's job' in this particular context.

How should we interpret the situation of the women in Faisalabad, who are more likely than men to prioritize access to drinking water, yet are not responsible for fetching this water, nor is it the norm that they should do so? Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson (Forthcoming) note that "women who are constrained by traditional gender roles are more likely to prioritize access to clean water relative to other policy domains because norms prescribe fetching water as a role for women." Should

Figure 1: Top Reported Priority for Public Good/Service Provision, By Gender
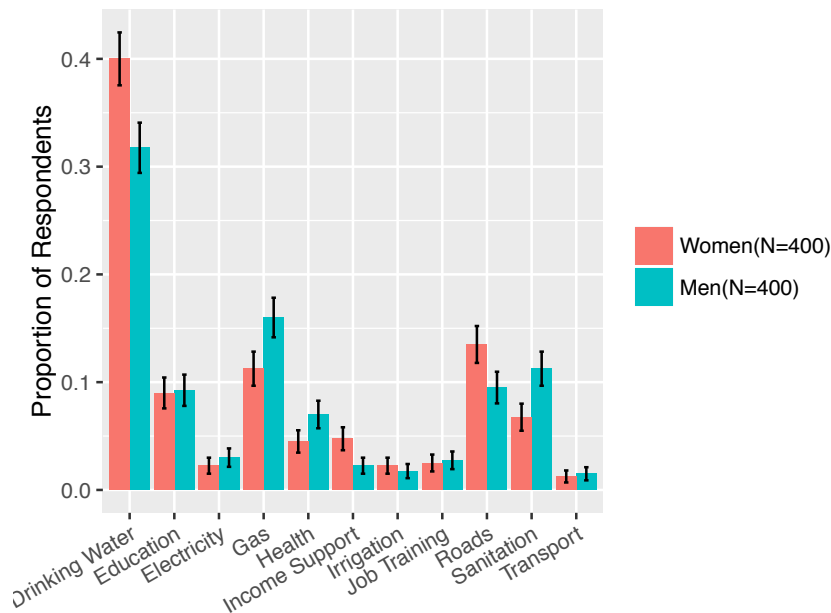
Note: Data are based on survey responses from 800 households in the Faisalabad district of Pakistan in 2016.

we interpret women's apparent freedom from the task of water collection in this context as a sign of evolving gender roles?

To understand this puzzle, I interviewed multiple community-based mobilizers who have been involved in organizing women for donor-funded village development projects, similar to the ones in the Olken (2010) study. The interviewees reveal that women's groups tend to prefer projects centered on water provision, healthcare, and education. Why water? Because women are the ones who take care of children, and unclean water makes children sick. Waterborne diseases are a serious public health concern, and the most common one, diarrhea, is a major cause of under-five child mortality in the developing world.[1]

Traditional gender roles are alive and well: women perform the bulk of childcare in this context. Moreover, it is widely accepted that they are responsible for doing so: 80% of surveyed men and 88% of surveyed women agree that household chores are *solely* a woman's responsibility. This, coupled with the threat to children's

health from unclean water, is an explanation for why women prioritize water provision at higher rates than men, even when they are not responsible for fetching the water.

It is also worth asking *why* women are not primarily responsible for collecting water in this setting, even though a majority of survey respondents see household chores as the exclusive domain of women. Among households that do not have access to drinking water on their premises in the Faisalabad district as a whole, women or girls are responsible for water collection only 24% of the time (*Punjab Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 Final Report*, 2016). However, this number looks very different for urban and rural areas within the district (17% and 51% respectively). The reason for this discrepancy lies in part with cultural norms regarding women's mobility and seclusion in Pakistan, which restrict women's ability to travel unaccompanied or without the permission of a male household member/relative (Jacoby and Mansuri, 2011; Mumtaz and Salway, 2005). The exact nature of these restrictions is "determined not so much by physical geography as by

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[1] According to the *Punjab Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 Final Report* (2016), 16% of children in this particular district under the age of five had experienced an episode of diarrhea within the two weeks preceding the survey.

social geography" (Mumtaz, 2012). In practice, restrictions on women's mobility may be relaxed for travel occurring within a hamlet or settlement (Jacoby and Mansuri, 2011) or within spaces populated by members of the same *biradari*[2] (Mumtaz, 2012). For the purposes of water collection, traveling to a water source in a rural area is less likely to involve contact with non-*biradari* members than in urban settlements, which are populated by migrants from different villages and *biradaris*. The surveyed households are mostly located in peri-urban communities, where women are ostensibly less mobile due to the aforementioned norms and only a small proportion of them are permitted to travel unaccompanied to the nearest water source. In this particular setting, not being responsible for collecting water does not imply that women are less constrained by traditional gender roles, but rather that they are *more* constrained by gendered norms of mobility.

The observed gap in men's and women's preferences in this case is indeed driven by social structures and norms rather than just the individual attributes of men and women. However, a closer examination reveals that it is a different facet of the sexual division of labor (childcare, rather than the task of fetching water) and context-specific norms (restrictions on women's mobility) that explain the gap.

III. Stated Preferences vs. Interests

Thus far, I have used the phrase 'women's preferences' simply to describe the stated preferences of women responding to survey questions. Can we use these stated preferences to make claims about women's interests. In other words, if a sizable proportion of women state that they prefer a particular good/service/policy, is it appropriate to say that the provision of said good/service or implementation of said policy is in the 'interest' of those women?

Drawing such a conclusion may be problematic for a number of reasons. As Weldon (2011) notes, feminist theorists and scholars today generally reject the notion of "women's shared identities or interests." The crux of the feminist critique is that emphasizing a notion of a shared group identity and interests among women runs the risk of essentialism (Celis et al., 2014) and ignoring other forms of shared identity (sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class) held by women that may make for vastly different experiences, concerns, and interests (Baldez, 2011).

Apart from the problems associated with aggregating individual preferences to define a collective interest, taking individual preferences to be indicative of *individual* interests also poses a number of issues. One such issue is that individuals may not have enough information to know what is in their objective interest. Mansbridge (1983, 2003) equates interests with 'enlightened preferences'; that is, the preferences an individual *would* have if they had access to 'all of the information.' Another possibility is that individuals may adapt their preferences to 'adjust to their possibilities.' In other words, individuals in a state of oppression or deprivation may come to see their situation as inevitable and adopt preferences that perpetuate those conditions (Elster, 1982). Elster's definition of adaptive preferences draws on the 'sour grapes' metaphor – a choice made by an individual because the alternative is seen as unattainable. Khader (2011) defines adaptive preferences slightly differently, as ones that are "inconsistent with basic flourishing that a person developed under conditions non-conducive to basic flourishing and that we expect [...] to change under conditions conducive to basic flourishing."

> An observationally equivalent division of labor may imply very different things about women's actual situation – being free from the task of fetching water implies a modicum of empowerment for women in sub-Saharan Africa, but is indicative of restrictions on mobility for women in Pakistan.

The discrepancy between individual preferences and collective interests is empirically observable when we compare women's responses to two different survey questions. The first asks respondents to rank a set of public good and services, in the order of personal preference (see Figure 1). The second asks respondents to rank the same public goods and services in the order that they would "most improve the lives of women" (see Figure 2).

Notably, the proportion of women citing water as a top priority decreases by nearly half when the question

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[2]Clan or kinship network.

Figure 2: Top Reported Public Good/Service That Would Improve The Lives of Women, By Gender
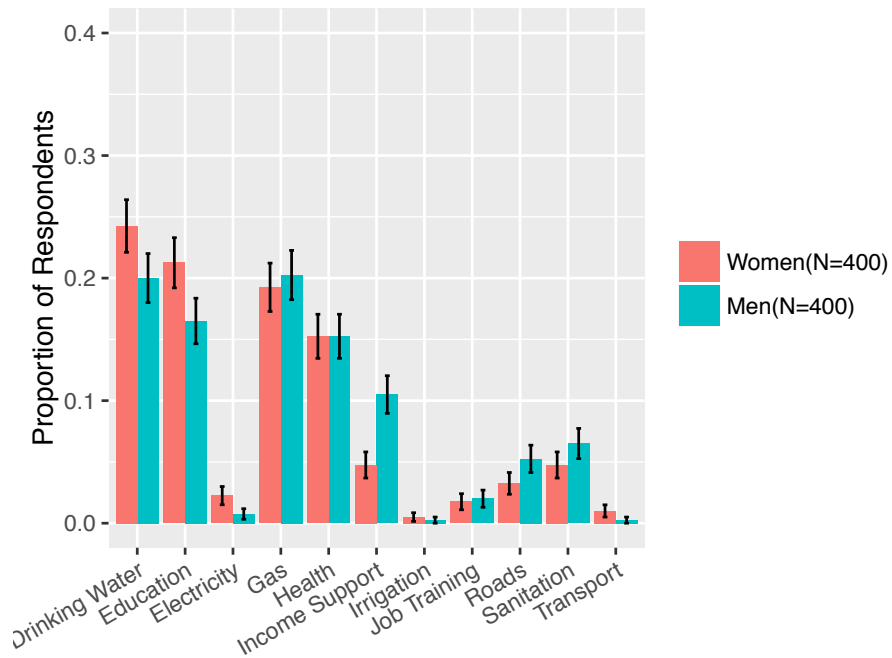
Note: Data are based on survey responses from 800 households in the Faisalabad district of Pakistan in 2016.

is about improving women's lives, rather than their personal preference (comparing women's responses in Figures 1 and 2). Although roads are the second most frequently cited good when women are asked about their personal preferences, only 3% of women cite roads when asked about what would improve women's lives. Drinking water, as previously discussed, is a good that directly affects children's health. Given constraints on women's mobility, roads are more frequently used by men. It appears then that when asked about their personal preferences, women seem to prioritize the goods and services that directly impact household members other than themselves. Sen (1990) notes a similar pattern in the context of India, and attributes it to the influence of a family-based identity:

> In some contexts the family identity may exert such a strong influence on our perceptions that we may not find it easy to formulate any clear notion of our own individual welfare [...] It has often been observed that if a typical Indian rural woman was asked about her personal 'welfare', she would find the question unintelligible, and

if she was able to reply, she might answer the question in terms of her reading of the welfare of her family.

However, when asked about goods and services that would improve *women's* lives, women cite gas, education, and health much more frequently than when asked about their personal preferences. Education and health are both services with wide gender disparities in access all over Pakistan. The aforementioned norms of mobility mean that it is simply more difficult for women to travel to physical schools (Jacoby and Mansuri, 2011), health centers, and clinics (Mumtaz and Salway, 2005) to access these services on their own. The sexual division of labor means that women do the bulk of cooking in households – 60% of surveyed households use gas for cooking, while others have to rely on wood, charcoal, and in a small number of cases, animal dung. However, even among households that use gas, the shortage of gas means that it is only available at certain times due to scheduled gas 'load-shedding.' Interviews reveal that women often organize their own schedule according to when the gas supply will be available, frequently sacrificing sleep time to do cooking work at odd hours of

the night. Moreover, a shortage of cooked meals due to the nonavailability of gas or cooking fuel is a reason for domestic disputes, and even physical domestic violence perpetrated against women.[3] Thus, even though the availability of gas affects the entire household at some level, due to the strong norms of the sexual division of labor it affects women disproportionately.

Female survey respondents cite the goods and services that affect women disproportionately when asked about what would most improve women's lives. Though they do not prioritize these goods and services to the same extent when asked about personal preferences, it seems that they do share a notion of what goods/services are most conducive to women's welfare and interests.

Sen's (1990) assessment of the family as a strong influence on women's preferences may explain why women's personal preferences appear to reflect the goods and services that most directly affect family members (children and male household members) other than themselves. However, it is important to note that this differential influence on women is again a product of larger social forces. The same factors that influence the content of women's preferences also influence the processes by which these preferences are formed.

As part of this survey, I ask respondents to name a person with whom they regularly discuss matters of public goods and service provision. A summary of the responses are shown in Figure 3. Firstly, a majority of women are unable to name even one person. Among those who do, the most frequently named person is their spouse; less than 10% of women report discussing these issues with a female friend or family member, and hardly any report discussing them with male relatives or co-workers. This is very different from men's reported patterns of interaction. The most frequently named discussion partner for men is other men: either friends or relatives. Significantly fewer men name their spouse as a discussion partner compared to women; however, men are equally likely to name a female friend or relative. Unlike women, men also name their co-workers as discussion partners, which is unsurprising given the large disparity in employment rates between men and women in the sample. Women's stated personal pref-

erences over public goods and services may be strongly influenced by family identity in part because their main interactions about these issues are with their spouse. The same norms of mobility that constrain women's access to healthcare and education also limit their social interactions to being mostly within the household. If women do not talk to other women about issues of community service provision any more than men do, it is unsurprising that they are no more likely to state a personal preference for the goods or services they perceive as being most conducive to women's collective interest.[4]

*IV. Towards a Gendered Analysis of Differences*

If we are to take the 'gender' in gender gaps seriously, it requires going beyond individual attributes to explain observed differences in men's and women's political preferences. The concept of gender as an "attribute of social structures" (Htun, 2005) demands that we pay attention to these social structures in our characterization of differences between men and women as gender gaps. For a full explanation, however, we must also bring in context. The sexual division of labor may exist across contexts as a social structure and set of norms that informs men's and women's lived experiences and preferences, but it also interacts with other context-specific norms. An observationally equivalent division of labor may imply very different things about women's actual situation – being free from the task of fetching water implies a modicum of empowerment for women in sub-Saharan Africa, but is indicative of restrictions on mobility for women in Pakistan.

The gender gap in preferences extends not just to the content, but also the process by which preferences are formed. Social structures such as the household division of labor also shape women's interactions and the composition of their social and political networks. Paying attention to the conditions under which an individual's preferences are formed may give us a clue as to whether they are more or less likely to be aligned with her interests (Khader, 2011). Although the notion of women's collective interests is a contested one, the low levels of interaction among women beg the question: would women's personal preferences look different if they talked to other women about public goods and ser-

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[3] A Pakistani legislator stated during a National Assembly session that gas load-shedding was leading to couples getting separated and an increased divorce rate ("Divorce in Pakistan on the rise due to gas loadshedding, MNA claims", *DAWN*, November 29, 2016)

[4] Note that this is a different explanation from one that emphasizes the role of women's other-regarding preferences in leading them to prioritize other household members' needs over their own.

Figure 3: Regular Discussion Partner on Community Services, by Gender
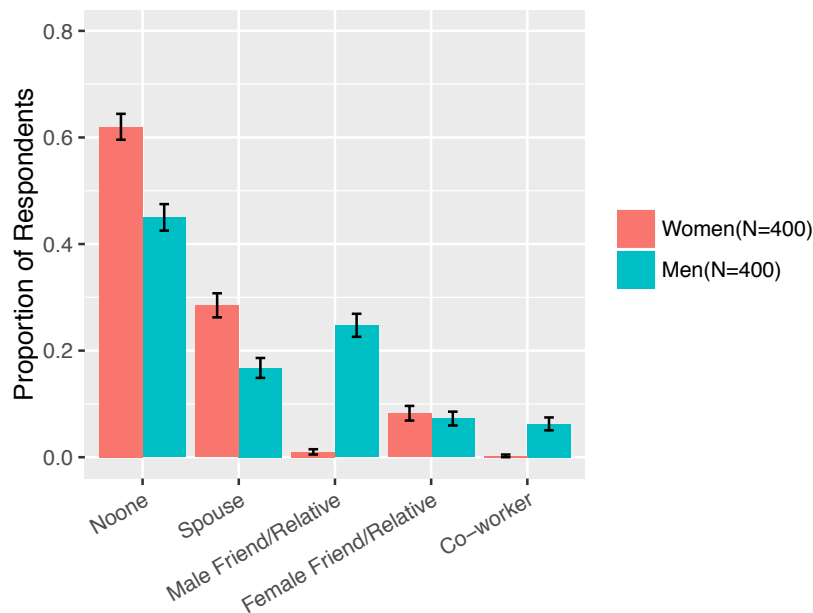
Note: Data are based on survey responses from 800 households in the Faisalabad district of Pakistan in 2016. Respondents were asked to name a person with whom they regularly discuss matters of public goods and service provision.

vices? Would they look more like what women think women's interests are, or something else altogether?

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The Electoral Impact of Women's Suffrage: The Case of the Nineteenth Amendment

by Mona Morgan-Collins

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I. The Puzzle: Calculated Democratization Going Wrong?

A perennial debate in political science explores the origins of democracy. Why does the elite ever decide to democratize and when do politicians agree to extend the right to vote to a previously excluded group? The most prominent explanations in political science emphasize strategic calculations on the part of elites, who consider the economic and political consequences of the reforms (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000; Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Boix, 2003). But redistributive consequences are not the only thing that office-seeking politicians think about when it comes to suffrage extension. Previous research tells us that politicians who face high costs of intimidation support a secret vote as a way to maximize their chances for electoral survival (Mares, 2015), and that parties who expect to electorally benefit from suffrage extension support it (Przeworski, 2009; Teele, 2015). In the United States, Western politicians who

were under greater electoral threat and believed to benefit from the reform enfranchised women earlier (Teele, 2015), while in Europe, Christian Democrats in the Catholic South sought to enfranchise women because they believed Christian Democrats were most likely to benefit from it (Przeworski, 2009).

Although strategic theories of democratization suggest that politicians consider the electoral impact of women's suffrage, a long tradition in political science disputes that suffrage reforms have a sizable electoral impact. Enfranchising poor men in the United Kingdom and in Italy, for example, did not result in large electoral swings for parties associated with the poor (Berlinski and Dewan, 2011; Larcinese, 2014). In the U.S., a typical text on the subject claims that women did not vote as a block and mostly disregards any possibility that women's suffrage had a significant electoral impact (Clark and Clark, 2008, p.2; Duverger, 1955, p.122; Freeman, 2002, p.2; Lemons, 1973, p.112; Manza and Brooks, 1998; Skocpol, 1992, p.506; Andersen, 1996, p.153; Bagby, 1962, p.160; Kleppner, 1986, p.178). The most comprehensive empirical evidence on women's early voting behavior to date also suggests that the gender-voting gap in presidential elections in the U.S. was fairly small after most women were enfranchised. Moreover, the gender gap did not have a uniform direction and varied across time and space (Corder and Wolbrecht, 2016).

II. Existing Explanations: Miscalculation or Successful Mitigation?

How can it be that politicians make calculated decisions based on the expected electoral impact of the reforms, yet there is not much evidence that suffrage reforms actually affected the electoral status quo?

In the case of women's suffrage, the most commonly cited explanation suggests that politicians simply miscalculated the effects of the reform. Politicians' expectations must have been unfounded, it is argued, their expectations never materialized and the reforms merely doubled the vote for each party (Kleppner, 1986, p.178; Andersen, 1996, p.153; McConnaughy, 2013; Duverger, 1955, p.122). This 'family-hypothesis', however, is generally inconsistent with the fact that American women organized separately from men and endorsed distinct issues and agendas. The capacity of American women to organize was immense: women contributed to more