Personal is Political:
Prospects for Women’s Substantive Representation in Pakistan*

Sarah Khan†

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Abstract

I develop and test a theory of how gender inequality within the household is reproduced in the political sphere, and undermines prospects for women’s substantive representation. Drawing on an original face-to-face survey conducted in 800 households in the Faisalabad district of Pakistan, I show that men and women within the same household prioritize systematically different public goods and services based on the context-specific division of household labor. Using a novel behavioral measure of political communication, I demonstrate that women attach a lower value to their distinctive preferences than men, and are less willing to communicate these preferences to political representatives. The gendered asymmetry in preference assertion has implications for democratic theories of representation: it suggests that the link between political participation and substantive representation may be undermined by gender inequality within the household.

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†Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, Columbia University. sk2947@columbia.edu
1 Introduction

Does increased political participation by women result in the improved representation of their preferences? Government responsiveness to citizen preferences is a foundational goal for democracy. Attention and responsiveness to citizen preferences, concerns, and interests is also what constitutes “substantive representation” ([Pitkin, 1967](#)). However, women, as a group, have historically been denied the opportunity to express their preferences. Prior to universal suffrage, women were explicitly excluded from the right to vote – an institutional guarantee necessary for signifying preferences in a democracy – thus precluding any electoral incentive for representatives to appeal to them, or account for their preferences. Today, despite widespread *de jure* guarantees for political equality, women continue to face significant barriers to equal political participation and representation. What explains the disjuncture between *de jure* guarantees to equality and the *de facto* conditions of political inequality that exist between men and women? This question is of interest for scholars of democracy, policymakers, and advocates for women’s rights. Moreover, it is one with substantial consequences for women’s welfare.

To answer this question, I draw attention to the role of the household as a mediator between citizens and the state. I develop a theory of how household inequality impacts both the content of men and women’s preferences, and their willingness to express and assert these preferences. I test this using an original survey of 800 households, conducted in the Faisalabad district of the Punjab province, Pakistan, which includes a novel behavioral measure of political communication with local level representatives. The setting for the study allows us to better understand the prospects for women’s representation in a context where the stakes are especially high: Pakistan ranked 143rd out of 144th on the Global Gender Gap Index in 2016.

The household is the most basic unit in many models of decision-making, but treating it as a unit with common preferences obscures a set of complex within-household dynamics. In recent years, development economists have pushed against this unitary conceptualization of the household, instead drawing attention to the existence of difference preferences among household members, the dynamics of bargaining within the household, and gender asymmetries in bargaining power ([Agarwal, 1997](#); [Sen, 1990](#)). However, these intra-household dynamics are often ignored in the study of political behavior. While there is ample work documenting and seeking to explain persistent gender gaps in political participation and representation in a variety of contexts ([Kittilson, 2016](#)), empirical evidence on the link between intra-household disparities and patterns of political

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1 Pitkin defines substantive representation as “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive them”. However, the question of whether and how “women’s interests” can be defined is a contested one, since it runs the risk of minimizing important differences and other salient forms of group identity amongst women. See [Celis et al., 2014](#) for an extensive review of the various theoretical and empirical approaches employed by scholars of gender and politics in recent work on women’s representation.


3 See [Kittilson, 2016](#) for a recent review.
inequality is somewhat scarce. This paper takes forward the research agenda of empirically investigating the “relationship between inequality at home and citizen politics” identified by Burns, Schlozman and Verba (1997). I explore how hierarchies within the household shape the content of men and women’s political preferences, and their relative willingness to express those preferences. In order to represent citizen’s preferences, representatives need information on the content of those preferences. The willingness to express and communicate preferences on part of citizens is therefore a prerequisite for representation.

I argue that the gendered division of labor within the household implies that men and women within the same household benefit differentially from certain public goods and services, and that this shapes their preferences over public good provision. I identify significant differences in men and women’s stated preferences over a set of local public goods and services in my survey sample. Women prioritize goods such as drinking water, healthcare, and income supplementing schemes, which are likely to benefit them disproportionately. On the other hand men tend to prioritize roads and transport, which they are more likely to use given their patterns of frequent travel outside the home for work.

I also document stark gender differences in all self-reported forms of electoral and inter-electoral political participation: voting, communication, rally/meeting attendance, as well as in reported access to representatives at all levels of government. Under-participation by women, coupled with a gender gap in preferences, means that women’s distinctive demands and voices are systematically excluded from political decision-making. Would women’s preferences be better represented if women participated in higher numbers? I argue that higher levels of participation by women may be necessary, but not sufficient, to guarantee the representation of their preferences.

To demonstrate this, I employ a novel behavioral measure of preference expression which allows me to study how men and women respond differentially to an equal opportunity to communicate their preferences to local representatives. When faced with a choice of whether to anonymously communicate their own preferences to a local representative at no cost, a striking 76% of women forego the opportunity to make their own preferences known, and instead choose to pass on their spouse’s preferences. Men behave in exactly the opposite way: under the same conditions of anonymity and no cost, 88% choose to communicate their own preferences over their spouse’s. Moreover, women’s willingness to communicate their own preferences decreases in how different they perceive their preferences being from their spouse’s, as well as in how different their preferences actually are. Gender inequality in the preference expression thus persists even when the level of political participation is held equal across men and women. However, in households where women have greater bargaining power (as proxied by their opportunities outside the household, and their status relative to their spouse), the patterns of political expression are less distorted.

These findings have important implications for how we understand the linkage be-

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4Notable exceptions include Burns, Schlozman and Verba (1997); Chhibber (2002); Iversen and Rosenbluth (2010)
tween citizens’ preferences, participation and representation. It appears that at least under conditions of deep household inequality, the gains from improvements in nominal levels of women’s political participation may be limited. Under such conditions, women are demonstrably reticent to use opportunities to participate to assert their own preferences. The prospects for women’s substantive representation may be especially low when the stakes are highest, i.e. when women’s preferences are substantively distinct from those of men, since that is when women are least likely to make their preferences known.

The 1960s feminist rallying cry “personal is political” informs the design of this study, and helps in making sense of the findings. In its original use, the phrase has a consciousness raising function. I use it as an invitation to consider seriously the role of the private, personal sphere in understanding patterns in public and political life. Past work has looked at how gender differences in individual level resources (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995), levels of political knowledge and interest (Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997), community norms (Isaksson, Kotsadam and Nerman, 2014), and access to social networks (Prillaman, 2016) shape patterns of women’s political participation and representation in various contexts. This paper turns the focus onto the household and the family as a site with unique explanatory power for these outcomes of interest.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on women’s political preferences and participation, and outlines my theory of how these factors interact to produce substantive representation. Section 3 describes the study context. Section 4 introduces the survey data, and describes the behavioral measure of preference expression. Section 5 reports findings on preference heterogeneity within the household, and the results from the behavioral measure. Section 6 examines the effects of differences in preferences, and within household empowerment on individuals’ choice to express their preferences. Section 7 concludes with a discussion of the implications for the link between political participation and representation in gender unequal settings.

## 2 Theory and Related Literature

### Preferences

Concerns about gender inequality in politics are in part motivated by the notion of a gender gap in political preferences. In the case of women, this implies that women, as a group, have distinctive preferences that go unheard when women are excluded from the political sphere. In other words, the exclusion of women’s voices from politics has material and distributive consequences. The notion of a gender gap in preferences has empirical support across a number of contexts. For instance, work from advanced industrialized democracies demonstrates that women have a greater preference for redistributive and leftist policies than their male counterparts (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006; Inglehart and Norris, 2000).

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5 Crenshaw (1991) speaks of the “process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual” as key to the practice of identity politics by various marginalized groups.
It is likely that such gaps, if they exist, will be qualitatively different in the developing world. For instance, it seems unlikely that women will have strong preferences for redistribution in countries where state capacity is too low to provide comprehensive welfare programs. Accordingly, existing empirical work on gender gaps in preferences in the developing world has focused on differential preferences over locally provided public goods, services, and schemes, rather than programmatic policies. Olken (2010) finds that women in Indonesia are far more likely than men to prefer drinking water projects in their villages, and far less likely to prefer projects involving roads and bridges. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004)’s 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 (2016) analyze Afrobarometer survey data to show 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 and that unlike men, their support does not decrease when they are reminded of the personal financial burden of such schemes.

How do we reconcile these empirical patterns with the challenge to thinking of women as a homogeneous group with a common set of preferences? Many contemporary feminist and gender studies scholars deemphasize the notion of shared identity and shared interests of women, highlighting instead the heterogeneity of women’s experiences (Weldon, 2011). However, Beckwith (2014), while acknowledging the differences of experiences among women, points to the existence of “similar shaping forces” in women’s lives that differ substantially from men’s lives:

Women’s lives are constructed in specific instances by political, economic, and social arrangements that (1) shape their life histories and life options, and (2) differ substantially from the shaping forces and trajectories of men’s lives. This does not mean that all women experience exactly the same lives or are subject to the same constraints or benefit from the same advantages, but it does recognize that, within specific contexts, similar shaping forces exist and have similar consequences for women in a wide range of countries.

I argue that the household division of labor is one such “shaping force” or institution. In particular, the sexual division of labor implies that differential benefits accrue to men and women from universally provided public goods and services and this influences their preferences over these goods. The household division of labor helps us understand the relative preference for water revealed in studies conducted in the Indonesian, Indian and sub-Saharan context where women are largely responsible for the collection of drinking water. Thus, the provision of water, while unarguably beneficial for the

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6 Htun (2005) suggests that a conceptualization of gender as a “social position” is useful for political science questions. She suggests that this social position manifests itself in three institutions: the sexual division of labor, normative heterosexuality, and war and militarism and that “these three institutions, [...] position human subjects in unequal and hierarchical relations of power.”
entire household and community at large, disproportionately benefits women.

The existing studies discussed above document aggregate gender gaps in preferences for public good and service provision in the developing world. This paper however, provides evidence that such such gaps exist among male and female members within the same households. It is thus a more direct test of the notion that conditions within the household, at least in part, drive these preference differences.

I further argue that as a consequence of the gendered division of labor, the roles and tasks performed by men and women within the household are not just different in content, but also different in how they are valued. Specifically, the unpaid work within the home, performed disproportionately by women, is valued lower than the paid work outside the home, performed disproportionately by men. Sen (1990) explains this in terms of men and women’s “perceived contribution” to the household, which “tends to relate to the size of the direct money earning rather than to the amount of time and effort expended (or to the role of non-market activities by other members of the family, who indirectly support such earnings).” Thus, even if women spend more or equal time and effort on tasks within the household, their work is perceived as a smaller contribution to the household than the paid tasks performed outside the household by men. If the preference gap between men and women within the home arises out of roles that have different values, it is plausible that these preferences too, are valued differently. In particular, women’s preferences, borne out of their specific role within the household, may be valued less than the preferences of men.

Participation and Representation

The bulk of literature on how to achieve the substantive representation of women’s distinctive preferences focuses on top-down mechanisms. Specifically it examines how women’s participation as leaders may lead to better representation of women’s preferences. However scholars have paid less attention to the prospects of bottom-up mechanisms i.e. whether, and under what conditions, women’s participation as citizens can improve the substantive representation of their preferences.

Existing evidence on the effects of greater political participation by women, following the extension of suffrage rights in the US and Western Europe, supports the notion that increased participation leads to policy shifts in the direction of women’s collective preferences. Lott and Kenny (1999) find that the extension of suffrage through the Nineteenth Amendment in the United States led to increases in welfare spending by state governments, and increased the probability of enactment of prohibition laws, and amendments to divorce laws that benefitted women. Miller (2008) documents an increase in health spending and consequent improvements in children’s health following the extension of suffrage. AIDT and DALLAL (2008) find similar effects in Western Europe where the extension of suffrage leads to increases in social spending. CARRUTHERS and WANAMAKER (2015) find that the Nineteenth Amendment led to greater public resources

\footnote{This includes a large body of work on the impacts of women’s quotas and the behavior of female legislators (TRIPP and KANG 2008; HUM 2016; WANGNERUD 2009; BARNES 2016; CHATTOPADHYAY and DUFLO 2004; CLOTS-FIGUERAS 2011; IYER et al. 2012).}
for education, but that these gains were concentrated in white schools.

Most women living in new democracies in the developing world have never faced a legal barrier to political participation, since universal franchise was enshrined in their country’s constitution at the time of independence. Figure 1 depicts how universal suffrage had become an “irresistible norm” by the second half of the twentieth century (Przeworski 2009), which is when most countries in modern day South Asia, including Pakistan, gained independence.

Equal participation rights may provide women the opportunity to participate and signify their preferences, but we will not observe corresponding shifts in policy if women do not actually exercise these rights in a meaningful way. I argue that the relationship between women’s de jure right to participate and the de facto representation of their preferences depends in part on two factors on the side of women citizens: 1) their actual levels of participation, and 2) whether such participation is reflective of their preferences.

Levels of Participation

Following the extension of suffrage, gender gaps in voter turnout still persisted in the developed world, although they have now reversed such that women systematically turn out to vote at higher rates than men in many countries. Lott and Kenny (1999) find that the representational gains from women’s suffrage grew overtime as more and more women took advantage of the franchise. The secular trend of narrowing gender gaps in voter participation also holds in developing democracies. In an analysis of gender gaps in political participation in 20 African countries, Isaksson, Kotsadam and
Nerman (2014) find that in 6 countries the gender gap is reversed for voting: women turn out in higher numbers than men. In India, Kapoor and Ravi (2015) document a steady increase in women’s turnout in state level elections between 1962 and 2012, and also document a closing of the gender gap in turnout.

However it is worth noting that voting is not the only tool– and is arguably an especially blunt one– for signifying preferences to representatives. Citizens can also engage in various forms of inter-electoral participation, including but not limited to communicating directly with representatives, attending political meetings and rallies, and making campaign contributions. These forms of engagement may have greater influence on representative behavior than voting (Cleary, 2007). Gender gaps in such forms of participation still remain substantial and significant across various contexts. I document similar patterns in Pakistan: the existence of stark gender gaps in levels of political participation of all forms, and particularly wide gaps in inter-electoral participation.

Various scholars have tried to understand why these gaps exist and how to close them. A set of studies shows that the gender gap in individual level factors that are predictive of political participation (e.g. money, time, civic skills, political knowledge and efficacy) has explanatory power for the gender gap in participation (?). However, emerging research demonstrates that even when accounting for many of these factors, women remain less engaged with politics than similarly situated men. For instance Isaksson, Kotsadam and Nerman (2014) show that norms at the community level hold more explanatory power than individual level factors for women’s under-participation in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In an extreme example, Gottlieb (2016) finds that a civic education course delivered in Mali raises both men and women’s individual levels of political knowledge, but exacerbates the gender gap in actual political participation since female participants are seen as deviating from social norms, and either compensate for this by voluntarily reducing participation, or are prevented by men from participating due to a backlash effect.

Expression of Preferences

If women participate at higher rates, can we reasonably expect this to improve the representation of their preferences? We observe a positive relationship between women’s participation and their substantive representation in the context of Western developed democracies when women exercise their rights under suffrage. However, I argue that this does not generalize to contexts where women’s participation is not reflective of their preferences.

Bleck and Michelitch (2017) examine the case of women’s political participation in rural Mali, and suggest that such participation is often mobilized (by chiefs or religious leaders) rather than autonomously initiated by women themselves. High rates of female voter turnout are hardly a promising pathway for representation if women are

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8They find that a higher share of men with primary and secondary education is not predictive of male participation levels but is correlated with women’s levels of participation. They interpret as this as “Having more people with secondary education is arguably correlated with less traditional gender norms, even if men are the ones being educated.”
being coerced to turn out. Blaydes and El Tarouty (2009) find that women were more likely to be targeted for vote-buying in the Egyptian parliamentary election of 2005. Using records of village-level meetings in India, Parthasarathy et al. (2017) find that a female-centered poverty alleviation program, which explicitly aims to bring women into greater contact with village government, increases women’s attendance and likelihood of speaking up at these meetings. Yet they also find that this does not lead to a change in agenda-setting or greater responses to women by the state representatives present at these meetings.

This group of recent studies points to important constraints on part of external actors – village chiefs, religious leaders, political party workers and representatives – which may undermine the relationship between women’s political participation and the representation of their preferences. In this paper, I identify an internal constraint: women themselves may be reluctant to express their own distinctive preferences when provided the opportunity to do so.

3 Context: Gender Inequality in Pakistan

The last nine years represent the longest uninterrupted period of civilian democratic rule in Pakistan’s political history since the country gained independence in 1947. The 2013 general elections marked the first civilian transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another, and were deemed by local and international observers to be the freest and fairest elections in the country since 1970. The local body elections held in all four provinces in 2015 marked the first instance of devolution of power under a democratically elected government. Pakistan has made considerable democratic advances in the past few years, however women have arguably been excluded from these gains.

Although it is one of fifty nine countries to have had a female head of state in the last five decades, women’s political participation at other levels remains low. On the side of citizen participation, although universal franchise has existed on paper in Pakistan since independence in 1947, the right to vote is unevenly exercised. For one, there is a large and persistent voter registration gap between men and women across all four provinces in Pakistan, with an estimated 11.65 million eligible women excluded from electoral rolls in 2015. Figure 2 shows the distribution of this gender gap in voter registration across the two most recent rounds of general elections.

The national level gaps are mirrored at the local level. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the gender gap in voter registration across local electoral constituencies in Faisalabad (the district where this study is conducted) in the lead-up to the 2015 local elections.

Unlike the data for voter registration at the national constituency level, data for local elections is not publicly available and was obtained in person from Faisalabad Regional Election Commission, Faisalabad in 2016.
The severity of the gender gap in registration led the Free and Fair Elections Network in Pakistan to call a “Women Voters Registration Emergency” in the country in 2015. During the 2013 elections, civil society organizations documented multiple instances where women were barred from voting through informal agreements between political parties and male village leaders. Copies of handwritten agreements to this effect, bearing the names of political party candidates, are reproduced in Figure 4\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{10}Source: Aurat Foundation, a civil rights organization which engaged in election monitoring in 2013.
examples of explicit bars in the 2013 general elections mostly come from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women recorded instances of similar restrictions during local elections held in 2015 in the Punjab Province.

Figure 4: Handwritten Agreements Barring Women from Turning Out in Constituencies PK-93 and PK-95

The patterns of under-participation are even starker in inter-electoral forms of participation. Although there is no administrative data available on these forms of participation, I measure these gaps through survey questions, and report the results in Section 5.

Deep gender inequalities along socioeconomic dimensions co-exist with political inequality in Pakistan. In his seminal article on the phenomenon of missing women in Asia, Sen (1992) notes that Pakistan has the lowest ratio of women to men among large countries, which is indicative of lower access to nutrition and healthcare for women, as well as a systematic preference for sons over daughters. The standard indicators of women’s empowerment — property/asset ownership, education, and outside employment — are also alarmingly low in Pakistan. Furthermore, an important context-specific factor limits women’s opportunities in political and socioeconomic realms: cultural norms of women’s mobility and seclusion restrict women’s ability to travel unaccompanied or without the permission of a male household member or relative (Jacoby 2011; Mumtaz and Salway 2005).

Sen (1992) articulates “participatory political action” by women as a potential way to improving the situation of women’s relative deprivation in Asian countries. Indeed, there have been many interventions in Pakistan focused on increasing levels of political participation by women. During my fieldwork, I documented multiple instances of such interventions undertaken during the 2008 and 2013 national elections, including but not
limited to voter education campaigns targeted at women run by the Pakistan Election Commission, door-to-door informational campaigns funded by the World Bank (Gine and Mansuri 2011), and the setup of women’s registration camps by civil society organizations, in partnership with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). Most recently, in anticipation of the 2018 elections, the Pakistan National Assembly has passed a bill which empowers the Pakistan Election Commission to declare elections void if female voter turnout is below a certain threshold:

If the turnout of women voters is less than ten percent of the total votes polled in a constituency, the Commission may presume that the women voters have been restrained through an agreement from casting their votes and may declare, polling at one or more polling stations or election in the whole constituency, void (Elections Act, 2017)

While improving women’s levels of participation is a worthy goal in and of itself, I ask whether such improvement can actually lead to meaningful changes in women’s representation.

4 Data

To study this question, I draw on an original face-to-face survey conducted in 2016 covering 800 households in 16 local administrative units in the district of Faisalabad, located in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

The sampling for the surveys was conducted in 2 stages. First, 10 rural union councils and 6 urban municipal committees (equivalent of union councils for urban areas) were randomly sampled from among the total of 468 administrative units in the district. Each union council or municipal committee contains 6 electoral blocks or wards, 1 block/ward was randomly drawn from each randomly selected union council for surveying. Appendix A reproduces the relevant section from the Punjab Local Government Act 2013 explaining the delimitation of administrative units. In the second stage, 50 households were randomly selected in each electoral ward to receive a survey, for a total sample of 800 households. The selection rule for households is described in Appendix B.

Half of the households in each ward were randomly selected to have a married man as the primary respondent while the other half were randomly selected to have a married woman as the primary respondent. In each household, the spouses of the primary respondent received a short supplementary survey to record demographic characteristics and their preferences over a set of public goods and services, so 1600 individuals were surveyed in total. Surveys were always conducted by an enumerator of the same sex, in keeping with local norms of private interactions with non-family members of the opposite sex.

Table 1 below shows a summary of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for the 800 primary respondents in the sample; Table 2 shows the means for the same characteristics among the male and female sample (N=400 each), and p-values from a t-test of difference in means (or proportion, as appropriate) between the two samples:
Table 1: Summary Characteristics of Primary Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly HH Income (PKR)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>17,070</td>
<td>16,990</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Gender Differences in Summary Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean(M)</th>
<th>Mean(F)</th>
<th>Diff</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36.96</td>
<td>32.83</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly HH Income (PKR)</td>
<td>17,890</td>
<td>16,254</td>
<td>1,637</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, the randomly sampled married women in this sample are significantly younger, less educated and far less likely to be employed than the randomly sampled married men. This reflects national patterns of gender gaps in age at first marriage, educational attainment and employment\(^\text{11}\). Since the question about monthly income relates to the household, rather than individual earnings, there is no significant difference in the numbers reported by men and women.

To measure preferences, enumerators asked all 1600 respondents (800 primary respondents and their spouses) to rank a set of the following 12 local public goods and services:

1. Drinking Water
2. Irrigation Water
3. Sanitation/Waste Management
4. Education
5. Health
6. Job Schemes
7. Roads
8. Electricity
9. Gas
10. Income Support Schemes
11. Transport
12. Security

To guide respondents in the rank ordering process, enumerators used cards with a pictorial representation of each good/service. The picture cards were shuffled by the

\(^{11}\) According to the 2012-13 Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), the average age for first marriage among ever-married women aged 15-49 is 19.5 years, and 24.7 years for ever-married men in the same group. Thus, when randomly selecting among married respondents, it is likely that we would select an overall younger sample of women. For this age group in the nationally representative PDHS sample, 57% of women, and 29% of men have no schooling. The employment rate recorded for women in the PDHS is 29% for women and 98% for men.
enumerator before asking the question, so as to avoid the potential for the presented order of items to affect the ranking in a systematic way. It may seem intuitive to collapse some of these goods/services by theme for analysis, e.g. transport and roads could be categorized together, as could job and income support schemes. However, in the Pakistani context, these goods/services have particularly gendered patterns of use. In terms of transport, men often use personal bicycles or motorbikes when traveling by road, (72% of households in my sample own either a bicycle or motorbike), but it is not the norm for women to use bicycles or drive motorbikes themselves. Thus, women may have a stake in the quality of public transport even if their household owns a private mode of transport. Collapsing “roads” and “transport” runs the risk of masking this difference. In most contexts income and jobs schemes could potentially be collapsed under a general “livelihoods schemes” category. However in the case of Pakistan, the major state-run cash transfer program (Benazir Income Support Program) is exclusively targeted at women. Thus, respondents may have perceptions about who is more likely to benefit from a income supplementing scheme, which could drive differential preferences among men and women over this item.

To measure political participation in the survey, enumerators asked direct questions about voter registration status, voting in the last election (2015 local elections), political party membership, and attendance at rallies and community meetings in the past year. Enumerators also asked respondents direct questions about their communication with the following levels of political representatives:

1. Political party worker
2. Union Council Chairman (Local Government, directly elected in 2015)
3. Female Councillor (Local Government, indirectly elected)
4. Member of Provincial Assembly (Provincial Government, directly elected in 2013)
5. Member of National Assembly (National Government, directly elected in 2013)

Since communication with representatives is often driven by a specific need on part of an individual, respondents were also asked about their ability to access these various levels of political representatives, should a need to communicate arise.

4.1 Behavioral Measure of Preference Expression

A goal of the survey is to understand whether men and women express their own preferences when they have an equal opportunity to participate. Since the study is conducted in an inter-electoral period, I focus on an inter-electoral form of participation: communication with a local-level representative. I deploy a behavioral measurement strategy to capture gender gaps in such communication among survey respondents, when the cost of communication is either zero, or artificially equalized across male and female respondents. The measurement strategy proceeds as follows:

\textsuperscript{12}At the time of this survey, the new local level female councillors had not been appointed in the Punjab province, despite direct local level elections having taken place nearly a year prior. Given this, there was confusion over how the survey questions related to the female councillor was interpreted (e.g. some respondents understood it to mean the former female councillor) Therefore I do not report results for this level of representative
All primary respondents are compensated Rs.200 ($2) for their participation in the survey and then read the following text at the end of the survey:

Once we have collected the views of a number of households in your area, we will pass on this information to your union council chairman. We will not tell him/her which households we surveyed or what any one individual said, just what most people in the area think. However, we can only take one set of preferences from each household: yours or your spouse’s. Your union councilor will not know whether your household gave yours or your spouse’s preferences. It is your choice whether we communicate your preferences or your spouse’s preferences. Which would you like us to communicate?

The measure is designed so as to explicitly rule out particular mechanisms that could drive the choice of whose preferences to communicate. First, various costs associated with communication (time, distance, effort) are absorbed by the survey team, therefore insofar as these costs are unequally distributed across men and women, they are equalized to zero in the context of this measurement strategy.

Second, men and women in the same household are interviewed separately, in private, and by an enumerator of the same gender as them. This measurement exercise is only conducted with the primary respondent in a household. Therefore, barring the primary respondent willingly disclosing their choice to their spouse, the choice is private and anonymous. This rules out the possibility that respondents would act out of expectations of their spouse’s reaction to their choice.

Third, the respondents are also assured of the anonymity of the preferences they choose to communicate. They are told that their representative will be provided information about constituent preferences in aggregate form, and will not know which individuals’ preferences are contained in the aggregate numbers. This accounts for concerns that respondents would make their choice based on whether they think their local representative is more/less likely to respond to preferences based on the gender, or other identifiable characteristics of the individual who is communicating with them. This is likely to be a more salient constraint for women who, as anecdotal evidence reveals, are in fact devalued as informants about public goods and services by representatives.

Finally the measure forces equal levels communication of preferences. The choice available to the respondent is whether to communicate their own preferences or their spouse’s. What this measure then captures is men and women’s willingness to assert their own preferences, when the nominal level of participation is held equal.

In addition, I also measure the sensitivity of the respondent’s choice to a monetary cost. Respondents are assigned to one of three conditions:

- **Control**: It is your choice whether we communicate your preferences or your spouse’s preferences.
- **T1**: It is your choice whether we communicate your preferences or your spouse’s preferences.
preferences. However, if you want us to communicate your own, it will cost Rs.50 from the Rs.200 that we gave you earlier. If you want to communicate your spouse’s we will do that for no cost.

- **T2**: It is your choice whether we communicate your preferences or your spouse’s preferences. However, if you want us to communicate your spouse’s, it will cost Rs.50 from the Rs.200 that we gave you earlier. If you want to communicate your own we will do that for no cost.

These cost treatments are intended to measure how malleable the patterns of preference expression are among men and women, and whether they are responsive to monetary incentives. Treatment 1 reflects an extreme scenario where communicating one’s own preferences is more costly than communicating someone else’s (in this case one’s spouse’s) preferences. Treatment 2 reflects the more “realistic” condition where communicating someone else’s (in this case one’s spouse’s) preferences is relatively costly: ostensibly it is more costly to communicate someone else’s preferences over one’s own, as it involves the time and effort of getting to know (or even guessing) those preferences.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Gender Gaps in Preferences (Survey Measure)

Do men and women have different preferences over public good service provision? Previous work has found evidence of aggregate gender gaps in such preferences in the developing world \cite{Olken2010, Chattopadhyay2004, Gottlieb2016}. However, these studies have not tested whether these gendered preference gaps also exist within the same household. The “homophily principle” \cite{McPherson2001} suggests that similarity on various demographic, socioeconomic, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics structures people’s social network ties (including marriage). If we think that men and women may select into marriage based on similar preferences, or other characteristics that shape these preferences, we may see that the preference differences that exist between men and women in the aggregate are smaller, or non-existent within married couples. On the other hand, if it is conditions within the household – specifically the division of roles and labor within the household – that shape these preferences, then we should see the aggregate level differences reflected within the household.

To test whether there is indeed preference heterogeneity within the household, I pool the data on rankings of public goods and services from 800 primary respondents and their spouses (N=1600) and estimate a series of 12 seemingly unrelated OLS regressions (SUR) where the dependent variable in each model is the rank given to 1 of 12 goods or services by a respondent in a household\footnote{I follow the approach in \cite{Gottlieb2016} of using the SUR setup to allow for correlation of errors across the equations, which I expect will exist since the rank given to any one good/service depends on the rank given to the others.}. The right hand side variables include a dummy variable indicating whether respondent is a female, and household
fixed effects. The addition of household fixed effects means that the coefficient on the female dummy variable captures the within-household effect of being female on the rank given to a particular good. Figure 5 below plots the estimated coefficients on the female dummy variable from the 12 models. Note that a lower rank means a higher priority; ranking something as number one means that the respondent prefers it the most among the set of goods. Thus, negative coefficients imply that women are more likely to prefer a particular good.

Figure 5: Impact of Gender on Preferences for Local Public Goods and Service

The results are in line with the patterns of aggregate gender differences from studies in Indonesia, India and sub-Saharan Africa. Women give significantly lower ranks to (have a greater preference for) healthcare, drinking water, and income generation schemes, and higher ranks (have a lower preference) for roads and transport than the men in the same household. This analysis provides the first empirical test demonstrating that previously documented aggregate level differences also exist within the household.

Previous studies have suggested that the household division of labor shapes gender gaps in preferences. Women in these study contexts are responsible for water collection and likely to benefit disproportionately from its provision. On the other hand, men are more likely to travel by road for work, and likely to benefit disproportionately from infrastructure improvement. In a separate piece (Khan 2017), I explore why the specific mechanisms driving women’s relatively higher preference for water is different in the context of this particular district in Pakistan. Here, many households in the survey sample receive a piped water supply, and gendered norms of mobility dictate that it is actually more often men who collect water when it is required. Interviews with community organizers suggest that women’s relative preference for drinking water arises out of a concern for children’s waterborne illnesses, which are ubiquitous, and a leading cause of child mortality in this context. Women’s relative support for income generation schemes, may be driven by a higher preference for redistribution which also
exists in other contexts [Brule and Gaikwad] (2017). However, in the case of Pakistan, the major state-run cash-transfer program (Benazir Income Support Program) is targeted at women, therefore the preference in this case could potentially be driven by women seeing themselves as the likely beneficiaries of an income supplementing scheme. Similarly, women’s lower preference for roads may be related, as in other contexts, to the fact that women are less likely to travel by road for work than are men due to differential labor force participation rates. However, the added context-specific restrictions on women’s mobility mean that women in this context are less likely to travel by road than men, not just for work, but for any reason at all [Jacoby] (2011) [Mumtaz and Salway] (2005).

The household division of labor may exist across contexts as a “shaping force” [Beckwith] (2014) or an “institution” [Htun] (2005) that informs men and women’s lived experiences and preferences, but it also interacts with other contextual factors. An observationally equivalent difference in preferences across contexts may in fact be driven by different facets of the context-specific household division of labor, and its interaction with local norms.

5.2 Gender Gaps in Levels of Participation (Survey Measures)

Having established that men and women have systematically different preferences and priorities, I now turn to the question of whether they participate at different rates in the political sphere. Table 3 shows the proportion of male and female respondents responding “yes” to various self-reported measures of electoral and inter-electoral participation. Column 3 shows the gender difference in proportions, and Column 4 shows the p-value from a two-sample t-test of difference in proportions.
Table 3: Gender Gaps in Electoral and Inter-electoral Participation in Survey Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Prop(M)</th>
<th>Prop(F)</th>
<th>Diff</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral and Inter-Electoral Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to Voted</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2015</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended rally (Past Year)</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended community meeting (Past Year)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of political party</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact with Representatives in Last Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted Party Worker</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted UC Chair</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted MPA</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted MNA</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Representatives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can access Party Worker</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can access UC Chair</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can access MPA</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can access MNA</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, there is a substantially large and statistically significant gap across all measures. The usual caveats about self-reported turnout apply to the proportions who report voting in the 2015 local election, but the gap between men and women in this measure is still meaningful. Contact and communication with one’s representatives is an important tool for accountability. In particular, one of the rationales for decentralization is its potential to allows increased access to a lower level of representative. Respondents in the survey do in fact report higher levels of access to their local union council chairman than to their provincial or national representative. However, despite a majority respondents knowing their union council chairperson either directly or indirectly, a very small proportion report having approached him/her in the past year to “get something done” or “solve a problem”. Moreover, the gender gaps in such contact are substantial.

Starker still are the gender gaps in access to representatives. The question about access was phrased liberally to ask about whether the respondent could access representative either personally, or through someone in their household. Given that it was random as to whether a household had a primary female or male respondent, we should not expect systematic differences in access at the household level. The lower reports of access by women respondents suggest that not only are women less likely to have direct access to representatives, they may not even have knowledge of the indirect access they potentially enjoy through other household members.

\[14\] An alternative interpretation is that men are greatly overstating access to signal higher status and connectedness to an enumerator. However if we take this seriously, more men ought to be saying they are connected to higher levels of representatives, which does not bear out in the data.
If systematically fewer women are contacting and communicating with their representatives, it implies that their voices and opinions are likely to be absent from decision-making. In the Pakistani rural context, communication is also sometimes initiated by representatives themselves in the form of informal town-halls held prior to elections, (these are the “community meetings” referred to in [3], but women are dismally absent from such processes. This exclusion partly reflects a perception that women are less likely to be informed about services and community needs; a former councillor stated in an an interview “Women are usually inside so they know less about these things” [15]. However, women’s opinions may be discounted, even with regards to the realms of planning in which their interior positionality in the household provides them with specialized knowledge. In another interview with a male civil society organizer whose organization conducts trainings for newly inducted local councillors, the interviewee stated: “When I built my house, I didn’t ask my wife where to put the fan in the kitchen. If I had asked her I would have known not to put it where I did. This is the state of women’s representation in local planning” [16].

The absence of women’s voices in the political sphere is a serious problem, but these anecdotes point to a different obstacle: women’s voices may not be taken seriously by representatives even when they are present. This is in line with the pattern documented in a recent study by Parthasarathy et al. (2017), who find that despite increased participation by women in village councils in India, there are no impacts on agenda setting or responsiveness from the representatives present at council meetings. Importantly, it is unreasonable to expect that women are unaware of this dismissal of their voices. Rather, this may negatively influence their willingness to participate at all, and their expectations of the gains from doing so. A thorough exploration of constraints to representation on part of external actors (specifically representatives) is outside the scope of this paper. In the next section, I turn to another constraint which may limit the gains from women’s participation: women’s own reticence to assert their distinctive preferences when they participate.

5.3 Gender Gaps in Preference Expression (Behavioral Measure)

Primary respondents in the survey sample are asked to rank a set of public goods and services and then asked to choose whether they would like their own, or their spouse’s preferences to be communicated to their local representative. Given the low baseline levels of communication between respondents and their representatives reported in the survey, this is a unique opportunity. Respondents are assured that their choice is private and anonymous. Communication of some sort is guaranteed in this exercise: a set of preferences will be communicated, it is simply up to the respondent to choose whose preferences ought to be communicated. Figure [6] shows the proportion of respondents that choose to communicate their own preferences across each of the 3 cost conditions. The control represents the condition where there is no cost, T1 represents the condition where communicating one’s own preferences is relatively costly (it involves giving up 25% of the survey sitting fee), T2 represents the condition where communicating one’s preferences...
spouse’s preferences is relatively costly (it involves giving up 25% of the survey sitting fee).

The stark gender gap in the control condition is the core finding of this paper. In this condition, most men choose to communicate their own preferences, and the trend is exactly reversed for women, most of whom choose to communicate their spouse’s preferences. This is consistent with multiple explanations that could drive individuals’ choice under conditions of privacy and anonymity. Greater altruism or other-regarding preferences on part of women may make them more likely to forego the opportunity to communicate their own preferences, in favor of communicating someone else’s (in this case their spouse’s). In their review of existing evidence on gender differences in altruism Croson and Gneezy (2009) determine that the evidence on other-regarding preferences is inconclusive; what emerges instead is that women are more sensitive to the social context of experiments than men. It is difficult to parse this out within the context of a single study where the experimental context is not varied. The results may also reflect a gendered difference in the preference for exercising agency. In a lab experimental setting in Pakistan, Afzal et al. (2016) find that women subjects are less willing to forego a material payoff to guarantee their own choice in the context of a low-stakes consumption choice. They interpret this as a “low demand for agency” on part of women, stemming from them having internalized a subordinate position within the household. Finally, as I will argue, women’s unwillingness to communicate their own preferences could reflect a lower value placed on the preferences themselves.

Women and men also respond differently to the cost treatments. In the case of Treatment 1, where it is relatively costly to communicate one’s own preferences, the gender gap is no longer significant. Less than a quarter of all respondents are willing to give up Rs.50 to communicate their own preferences over their spouses. In Treatment 2, where it is relatively costly to communicate one’s spouse’s preferences, the gender gap
remains. Hardly any men are willing to give up Rs.50 to communicate their spouse’s preferences in place of their own, but nearly 20% of women are willing to do so.

I estimate the following model (with ward fixed effects) to capture the gender differences in choice, and the differential sensitivity of this choice to the two cost treatments. Figure 7 displays the conditional coefficients on Treatment 1 and 2 by gender, and Table 4, columns 1 and 2 show the corresponding regression results:

$$\text{Choice}_{i,j} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Female}_i + \beta_2 T1_i + \beta_3 T2_i + \beta_4 (\text{Female} \times T1)_i + \beta_5 (\text{Female} \times T2)_i + \beta_6 \text{Ward}_j + \epsilon$$

Figure 7: Estimated Effect of Cost Treatments on Choice to Communicate Own Preferences, by Gender

The coefficient on T1 is significantly smaller for women than it is for men. There are multiple possible interpretations for this differential sensitivity to the treatment. First, the effect of an additional cost on communicating one’s own preferences may be smaller for women due to floor effects – so few women choose to communicate their own preferences to begin with, that the added cost does not have the potential to change their overall behavior by very much. On the other hand, men are highly sensitive to the treatment, and most are willing to give up the opportunity to communicate their own preferences in favor of their spouses when it is costly to do so. Given that costs of communication for men in the real world (in terms of mobility and access to representatives) might be lower than those for women, their behavior in response to this treatment suggests that they could potentially be incentivized to communicate women’s preferences to representatives. This is reflective of how women actually access representatives indirectly in the everyday. In the survey I also ask men and women about who they would approach if faced with various problems related to local public good and service provision. For instance, I ask respondents about who they would approach if there was no female doctor at their local Basic Healthcare Unit (BHU). 44% of men say they would directly approach their local councillor, and only 13% say they would first approach their spouse. Meanwhile only 15% of women say they would directly approach their local councillor, and 38% say they would first approach their
spouse. This is especially striking given that the problem in question, that of a female doctor, is ostensibly one that disproportionately affects women.

On the other hand, the coefficient on T2 is significantly larger for women than it is for men. Again, this may reflect a ceiling effect for men: so few men choose to communicate their spouse’s preferences to begin with, that an additional cost to doing so cannot discourage a much larger proportion from doing so. In the case of women, on the one hand the jump in the proportion willing to communicate their own preferences in response to the cost treatment is striking. Equally striking though is that a significant proportion of women (nearly 20%) are willing to give up Rs.50 to assert their spouse’s preferences in place of their own.

One way to interpret the relative sensitivities to the treatments is by thinking of the population of survey respondents as comprised of 3 types of individuals: those who will always assert their own preferences over their own spouses regardless of cost, those who will do so only when incentivized, and those who will never do so. The gender gaps are indicative that there is a significantly higher proportion of the first type (those who always assert) among men, and of the third type (those who never assert) among women.

In addition, I pool the two cost treatments and test whether the gender gap persists when there is any cost imposed on communication, regardless of whether the cost is attached to communicating one’s own or one’s spouse’s preferences. I find that women are significantly less likely to communicate their own preferences. Figure 8 shows the difference in means across men and women choosing to communicate their own preferences in the control and in the pooled cost treatment conditions, and the results from regression models pooling the two cost treatments are shown in Table 4, columns 3 and 4.

Figure 8: Proportion of Respondents Choosing to Communicate Own Preferences Across Cost Conditions, by Gender
Table 4: Effect of Cost Treatments on Choice to Communicate Own Preferences, OLS Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Choose to Communicate Own Preferences=1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>−0.296***</td>
<td>−0.640***</td>
<td>−0.297***</td>
<td>−0.640***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>−0.421***</td>
<td>−0.690***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>0.326***</td>
<td>0.081*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.048</td>
<td>−0.305***</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*T1</td>
<td>0.539***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*T2</td>
<td>0.491***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*PooledT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.514***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.627***</td>
<td>0.804***</td>
<td>0.621***</td>
<td>0.797***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ward FE?             | Yes                                    | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations         | 800                                    | 800 | 800 | 800 |
| R²                   | 0.479                                  | 0.538| 0.106| 0.165 |
| Adjusted R²          | 0.467                                  | 0.526| 0.087| 0.146 |
| Residual Std. Error  | 0.365 (df = 781)                       | 0.344 (df = 779) | 0.477 (df = 782) | 0.462 (df = 781) |
| F Statistic          | 39.816*** (df = 18; 781)               | 45.367*** (df = 20; 779) | 5.462*** (df = 17; 782) | 8.575*** (df = 18; 781) |

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

6 Further Analysis

What makes men and women more or less likely to assert their preferences? In this section I analyze how the choice to assert one’s own preferences is shaped by various factors.

6.1 Preference Differences

If individuals behave in a self-interested way, they ought to be particularly concerned about asserting their own preferences when these preferences are substantially different from the alternative (in this case, the spouse’s preferences). To test this, I look at whether the choice made by respondents is sensitive to how different they think their own preferences are from their spouse’s preferences. I measure this perception using a 4 point scale (0: No difference to 4: Completely Different). I also measure the actual
difference in preferences using a Euclidean distance measure of difference in ranks accorded to different public goods and services by respondents and their spouses. I then estimate the following model:

\[
\text{Choice}_{i,j} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Female}_i + \beta_2 T1_i + \beta_3 T2_i + \beta_4 \text{PerceivedDiff}_i + \beta_5 \text{ActualDiff}_i + \beta_6 (\text{Female} \times \text{PerceivedDiff})_i + \beta_7 (\text{Female} \times \text{ActualDiff})_i + \beta_8 \text{Ward}_j + \epsilon
\]

Figure 9 displays the conditional coefficients on gender, by perceived and actual differences in preferences. Counter to a logic of self interest, women’s willingness to communicate their own preferences in fact decreases in how different they perceive their preferences as being, and in how different they actually are. Table 5 reports the corresponding regression results:

Figure 9: Estimated Effect of Gender on Choice to Communicate Own Preferences, by Perceived and Actual Distance from Preferences of Spouse

This finding has grave implications for the prospects of women’s representation. A difference in men and women’s willingness to assert their own preferences would not have distributional consequences if they were communicating the same content at the end of the day. However, this pattern suggests that women are least willing to make their preferences known to representatives when it matters the most, i.e. when they are substantively different.

Explanations of an overall ”low demand for agency” (Afzal et al. 2016) cannot explain why women would be especially unwilling to assert their preferences when they see those preferences as distinct. This pattern is more consistent with women systematically undervaluing the content of their preferences.

The pattern is also consistent with a logic of what constitutes “appropriate” behavior for women. For instance, it may be “appropriate” for women to speak up within
the household, only as long as it is to voice agreement. In my survey, I ask respondents whether they would feel comfortable expressing their preference about a political candidate if their preferences from different from other members of the household. 78% of men say yes, while only 53% of women do. These results imply that women’s unwillingness to express a dissenting view on political issues within the household potentially extends to environments outside the household. Women are reticent to express a dissenting view from their spouse even when their choice to do so is completely confidential, and the audience for their preferences is not other household members, but rather a political representative.

Table 5: Effect of Actual and Perceived Preference Differences on Choice to Communicate Own Preferences, OLS Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Choose to Communicate Own Preferences=1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)         (2)          (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>−0.174***   −0.174**   −0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.049)     (0.082)     (0.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Diff.</td>
<td>0.039       0.035       0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)     (0.032)     (0.032)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Diff.</td>
<td>0.019**     0.018**     0.018**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)     (0.009)     (0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*PerceivedDiff</td>
<td>−0.134***   −0.129***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.046)     (0.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female*ActualDiff</td>
<td>−0.020      −0.021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)     (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.591***    0.524***    0.496***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.061)     (0.073)     (0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward FE?</td>
<td>Yes         Yes          Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Treatment 1?</td>
<td>Yes         Yes          Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Treatment 2?</td>
<td>Yes         Yes          Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>800         800          800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.485       0.482       0.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.471       0.469       0.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>0.363 (df = 779)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>36.639*** (df = 20; 779)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
6.2 Empowerment Within the Household

If women’s lower willingness to assert their preferences is borne out of a subordinate position in the household, then greater empowerment within the household should be related to greater willingness to assert preferences. This may of course, also hold true for men. To the extent, that their greater willingness to assert preferences is borne out of a superior position within the household, we may expect that factors that predict such empowerment make men all the more likely to assert their own preferences. For this analysis, I split the sample into men and women and analyze how within-household empowerment affects their choice of preference expression. To measure within-household empowerment, I construct an index of variables that are generally deemed to be predictive or reflective of empowerment.

Spousal Age Difference

Early marriage and spousal age difference has been shown to be predictive, especially in the South Asian context, of poorer health outcomes for women, and a greater risk for intimate partner violence (Kishor and Gupta, 2009). As such, a large age difference, where the woman is younger than her spouse may be reflective of a power differential within the household favoring the man.

Spousal Education Difference

Education in its own right may influence the value women place on their own preferences. Anecdotal information suggests that external actors devalue women’s preferences because they see women as less informed about matters outside the home. This is not entirely false: women do report watching less political news, and reading the newspaper less often. Women may devalue their own preferences because they see themselves as less informed. However, a woman’s individual level of education may be less important for her status within the household than her education relative to her spouse. A woman with a certain level of education may still defer to her spouse if he is more educated than her. While I control for individual education in analysis, I only include spousal education difference in the empowerment index.

Employment Outside the Home

There are significant differences in the levels of employment among men and women in the sample (see Table 2). However, even among women who work, many work within the home, while nearly all employed men who work outside the home. Sen (1992) describes various channels through which employment outside the home can affect women’s status within the home:

First, outside employment for wages can provide women with an income to which they have easier access, and it can also serve as a means of making a living on which women can rely, making them less vulnerable. Second, the social respect that is associated with being a “bread winner” (and a “productive” contributor to the family’s joint prosperity) can improve women’s status and standing in the family, and may influence the prevailing cultural traditions regarding who gets what in the division of joint benefits. Third, when outside employment takes the form of jobs with some security and legal protection, the corresponding rights that women get can make their
economic position much less vulnerable and precarious. Fourth, working outside the home also provides experience of the outside world, and this can be socially important in improving women’s position within the family. In this respect outside work may be “educational” as well.

**Decision-making Power**

Many scholars emphasize the element of agency and the ability to make strategic decisions as a key part of empowerment (Kabeer 1999). As part of the survey, I measure whether men and women are either the primary or joint decision-makers over a set of household decisions relating to everyday household purchases, major household purchases and decisions about seeking healthcare (whether to see a doctor, and which doctor to see).

The index is a weighted average of each of these variables. I use the inverse covariance weighting method which optimizes information content from variables that are considered to be related *a priori* by up-weighting variables that provide “new” information (Anderson 2008). Figure 10 shows how this index is distributed among male and female respondents. Unsurprisingly, men are, on average, far more “empowered” than women.

![Figure 10: Household Empowerment Index, by Gender](image)

**Gender Equitable Attitudes**

I also test whether individuals’ communication choices are related to gender equitable attitudes. To measure this, I include a predictor of gender equitable attitudes on an ostensibly unrelated topic: whether respondents think household chores are solely a woman’s responsibility. The responses are coded on a 4 point scale (0: Completely Agree to 4: Completely Disagree) where a higher number indicates a more equitable attitude. I expect that respondents with more gender equitable attitudes towards women may be more likely to communicate women’s preferences (for men, this means their spouse’s preferences, for women this means their own preferences).

Table 6 shows results from the following model, run separately for men and women. All variables are standardized for ease of interpretation.
Choice_{i,j} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Age}_i + \beta_2 \text{Education}_i + \beta_3 \text{HH Empowerment}_i \\
+ \beta_4 \text{Equitable Attitude}_i + \beta_5 \text{Perceived Diff.}_i + \beta_6 \text{Actual Diff.}_i \\
+ \beta_7 T1_i + \beta_8 T2_i + \beta_9 \text{Ward}_j + \epsilon

Table 6: Effect of Household Empowerment on Choice to Communicate Own Preferences, OLS Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: Choose to Communicate Own Preferences=1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Empowerment</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.057**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable Attitude</td>
<td>-0.030*</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Diff.</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.056***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Diff.</td>
<td>0.035**</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.896***</td>
<td>0.152*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement FE?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Treatment1?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Treatment2?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R^2</td>
<td>0.553</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error (df = 376)</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>0.357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic (df = 23; 376)</td>
<td>22.444***</td>
<td>15.730***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Household empowerment is positively related with women’s willingness to assert their own preferences. Importantly, education levels and age at the individual level do not predict women’s choices. There is something about the relative position in the household that is key for women’s preference expression. The gains from household empowerment for women are similar in size to the negative effect of perceived difference of preferences. These results suggest both that an inferior status within the household
may constrain women’s assertion of their preferences and that household empowerment may indeed be a promising pathway for women’s preference assertion. However, there is no similar relationship for men. One explanation for this is that the index is constructed of factors generally thought to predict women’s household empowerment. It is possible that men’s position within the household, and their preference assertion, is determined by other factors not captured by this index. Another possibility is ceiling effects: men are simply far more likely to communicate their preferences on average, and there is lower variation in their levels of empowerment as measured by this index. However, men’s willingness to communicate their own preferences over their spouses is decreasing in gender equitable attitudes: men who believe that women are not solely responsible for household chores are more likely to communicate their spouse’s preferences in this behavioral measure. This is consistent with men valuing women’s preferences over public goods and services more if they do not think of women’s role in the household as confined to housework.

7 Conclusion

There are well-documented gender inequalities in levels of political participation around the world. These gaps are particularly stark in Pakistan, where women are missing from electoral rolls in large numbers, face informal bans from turning out to vote, report negligible levels of contact with their representatives, and enjoy at best low levels of indirect access to local levels of government. In this paper, I first show that the exclusion of women’s voices from the political sphere has potential material and distributive consequences. Women hold systematically different preferences over what goods and services they want to see provided in their communities. These preferences are rooted in a gendered division of labor which implies that certain goods and services – such as drinking water – provide them disproportionate benefits. The heterogeneity of preferences between men and women is observable within households.

Past and planned interventions by external actors working for democracy promotion, and policy measures undertaken by the Pakistani state are directed towards improving the level of women’s participation and bringing it on par with that of men. While achieving equality in political participation among men and women is a worthy goal, I argue that it is not sufficient to guarantee the representation of women’s preferences in the political sphere. Even when they engage in acts of participation, women may be held back from asserting their own preferences. Using a behavioral measure of participation I show that when men and women are given an equal opportunity to communicate their demands to their representative, they use this opportunity in markedly different ways. Men use it to assert their own preferences, while women use it to forward the preferences of their spouses. Moreover, women are especially unwilling to assert their own preferences when they perceive these preferences as being distinctive from their spouse, which is consistent with a logic of systematic undervaluation of their preferences.

Ultimately, this finding challenges the theoretical relationship between women’s political participation and the substantive representation of their preferences and interests. Evidence from Western industrialized democracies shows that policies shift in the di-
rection of women’s preferences when women are extended the right to participate in politics. My results demonstrate that this is unlikely to be true in contexts where extreme gender inequality at the level of the household precludes women from expressing distinctive preferences within the household, and from using their legal rights to act on their distinctive preferences outside of it.

The purpose of highlighting the limited representational gains from women’s participation is by no means to undermine the importance of equal rights to political participation. Rather it is to draw attention to the deep implications of inequality in the household, a sphere which is often overlooked in mainstream theories of democratic politics. Okin (1989) notes this oversight within contemporary political philosophy and 20th century theories of justice: the question of how ”disparity within the family” shapes prospects for social and political equality more broadly has received little attention. This paper attempts to correct for that oversight. The findings demonstrate that, especially in the case of women, the household serves as an important mediator between citizens and the state, and that ignoring it, either in analysis, or in the design of policy, runs the risk of doing the subjects of the analysis and the intended targets of the policies a disservice.
References

Afzal, Uzma, Giovanna d’Adda, Marcel Fafchamps and Farah Said. 2016. “Gender and agency within the household: Experimental evidence from pakistan.”.


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Appendix A: Punjab Local Government Act, Chapter II, Parts 9 & 10

9. Delimitation of Union Councils

(1) A Union Council shall be an area consisting of one or more revenue estates or, in the case of an area where revision of settlement under the law has not taken place, one or more census villages or, in the case of an urban area, a census block or blocks as determined for purposes of the last preceding census or a census block or blocks and a revenue estate or revenue estates, delimited and notified as such by the Election Commission.

(2) For purposes of delimitation of a Union Council:
(a) the area of a Union Council shall be a territorial unity;
(b) the boundaries of a Union Council shall not cross the limits of the Metropolitan Corporation, a Municipal Corporation or a District Council; and
(c) the population of Union Councils within a local government shall, as far as possible, be uniform.

(3) The Election Commission shall delimit a Union Council into six wards for the election of members on the general seats.

(4) For purposes of delimitation of a ward of a Union Council:
(a) a ward shall consist of a village, one or more adjoining villages or, in case of an urban area, a census block or adjoining census blocks;
(b) the boundaries of a ward shall not cross the limits of the Union Council; and
(c) the population of wards within a Union Council shall, as far as possible, be uniform.

10. Delimitation of wards in Municipal Committees

1) The Election Commission shall delimit a Municipal Committee into wards for election of members of the Municipal Committee on general seats.

(2) For purposes of delimitation of a Municipal Committee:
(a) a ward shall consist of a census block or adjoining census blocks;
(b) the boundaries of a ward shall not cross the limits of the Municipal Committee; and
(c) the population of wards within a Municipal Committee shall, as far as possible, be uniform.
Appendix B: Household Sampling Procedure

This describes the sampling procedure used to select 50 households within an electoral block/ward:

- Locate the following 5 predetermined landmarks in the dwelling
  - Health (BHU, if none, select dispensary, if none, select pvt. clinic)
  - Education (largest govt. primary school, if none, select largest pvt. primary school)
  - Mosque (main mosque)
  - Main Market area
  - Transformer

- Begin with any of these landmarks, use the right hand rule select every 3rd household until 10 households are surveyed. So, e.g. start at the main market area, begin to walk right and select household #3, #6, #9, #12, #15, #18, #21, #24, #27, #30

- Again, male and female enumerators are to alternate so that male enumerators takes #3, #9, #15, #21, #27 and female enumerators takes #6, #12, #18, #24, #30 (or the other way around). The gender alternation is crucial otherwise one-gender surveys will be non-randomly clustered.

- After 10 households from the first landmark using the rule have been completed, go to the next landmark and repeat the procedure.

- By the end 50 households will be selected in this way randomly taking 10 households starting from all 5 landmarks

- If no one can be interviewed at the randomly selected household e.g. dwelling is empty, no one was available, selected person did not provide consent, then select the neighboring dwelling immediately to the LEFT of the selected dwelling