

AIPS Short-Term Research Grant Final Report

Project Title: Equitable gender attitudes and women's autonomy in Pakistan

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Dates for Project: December 2021 to March 2022

Location: Sindh, Pakistan (primarily Karachi)

1 – Research Summary & Significance to Pakistan Studies

Pre-existing work about women's gender attitudes and political behavior is incomplete in its account of variation among women who have ties outside the home or *autonomy*. More specifically, this work implies that autonomous women have equitable gender attitudes and are active in political life (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006, 2008, 2010; Chhibber 2022; Prillaman 2021). Three months of exploratory fieldwork in Sindh, Pakistan, have allowed me to find variation in attitudes *among* autonomous women who belong to the same religion, same occupation, and even have similar levels of religiosity. Given this puzzling variation, my work poses the following research question: **Under what conditions does autonomy from the household lead to more equitable gender attitudes?** My outcome variable, i.e., equitable gender attitudes, has direct implications for the nature of women's political participation in Pakistan, moving beyond the binary that is whether women turn out to vote or not. In fact, attitudes can alter the nature of demand-making and government responsiveness¹. These attitudes also have implications for demand-making within the home, such as when women in Pakistan will bargain with their families. Finally, demands on the state and in the household are also connected. Specifically, seminal work on women's political preferences in Pakistan argues that women are less likely to voice their distinctive preferences under conditions of household inequality (Khan 2021). My dissertation work will add to this growing literature by exploring the connection between Pakistani women's gender attitudes and the likelihood that they will advocate for themselves.

2 – Key Outcomes

1. Conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with over 50 people, primarily women, to understand topics of political and social relevance
2. Identified puzzling variation among interviewees, the explanation for which will likely form the basis of my dissertation work for the next several years
3. Developed a high potential for collaborative partnerships with five organizations in Karachi and the rural areas of Sindh
4. Generated several new dissertation ideas, including those on the role of agriculture in Pakistan as well as women's empowerment as described above

3 – Deliverables

1. Completed a written dissertation prospectus in May 2022, using interview evidence collected while conducting exploratory fieldwork in Pakistan
2. Defended the dissertation prospectus (in a presentation in May 2022). This presentation was a major milestone in my Ph.D. program
3. Embedded survey questions in a survey currently being conducted by a non-governmental organization, data should be available by August 2022

¹ The initial project pitch for this was about politician responsiveness and electoral politics in Pakistan, but interviews helped develop the topic to be more about gender attitudes, political participation, and subsequent political responsiveness. This is tangentially related to the initial topic.