

# Culture, Capital and the Gender Gap in Political Economy Preferences: Evidence from Meghalaya's Matrilineal Tribes\*

Rachel Brulé<sup>†</sup>      Nikhar Gaikwad<sup>‡</sup>

November 9, 2016

## Abstract

What explains the gender gap in political preferences and engagement? Political economy scholars typically either focus on the independent effects of economic and cultural determinants or treat culture as a byproduct of material processes when studying gender disparities in representation. Yet, a vast body of work in anthropology argues that culture itself structures how men and women access wealth, with implications for their political preferences and behaviors. Isolating these channels of influence is fraught with methodological difficulties because culture and capital, along with political institutions and biological factors, are correlated with gender in most societies. We leverage the unique setting of Meghalaya, where the world's few remaining matrilineal tribes live alongside patrilineal communities. Both groups share similar patriarchal cultures and political institutions. Yet, while men inherit wealth in patrilineal settings, it is women who are heirs to property and assets in matrilineal societies. We exploit this variation in social norms related to wealth ownership and management. Employing a series of survey experiments and behavioral games on representative samples of both communities, and drawing on extensive qualitative evidence, we document that the traditional gender gap prevails in patrilineal groups, but reverses in matrilineal tribes. Our findings underscore how culturally sanctioned inequities in resources are key drivers of the gender gap.

*Keywords:* Gender gap, political economy preferences, political participation

---

\*We are grateful to Clarissa Lehne, Mai Mahmoud, and Aliz Toth for excellent research assistance. We thank Eric Arias, Crispin Bates, Namrata Gaikwad, Philip Keefer, Sarah Khan, Selma Walther, Paul Zachary and participants at the University of California, Berkeley, New York University, Abu Dhabi, George Mason University, the German Economic Association's Development Economics and Policy Conference, and the European Conference on South Asian Studies for helpful comments. Bhartendu Trivedi, Antony Syiemiong, the MORSEL team, and the Asian Confluence staff provided indispensable help.

<sup>†</sup>Assistant Professor of Political Science, Social Sciences Division, New York University Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box 129188, Abu Dhabi, UAE; reb11@nyu.edu

<sup>‡</sup>Fellow, Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance, 445A Robertson Hall, Princeton University, Princeton NJ, 08544; ngaikwad@princeton.edu

# 1 Introduction

Around the world, women are significantly underrepresented in political life, from participation to elected positions (Schwab et al., 2014). A gender gap is also evident in policy domains, with women and men expressing systematically different preferences about how the state should raise and invest resources. Women are more likely than men to favor redistribution, social security, and insurance, for example (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006). Moreover, gender differentials in political participation and political economy preferences are closely connected; women’s and men’s policy preferences diverge most significantly where women’s political participation is lowest (Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, 2015). Explaining this variation is crucial for remedying gender-related inequities in the political arena and grasping fundamental dynamics of participation, representation, and human development (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Fox and Lawless, 2014; Kanthak and Woon, 2015; Mendelberg, Karpowitz and Oliphant, 2014).

What explains the gender gap in political engagement and political economy preferences? In attempting to answer this question, scholars tend to oscillate between two main determinants. One set of theories argues that culture—most overtly, social norms associated with patriarchy—plays a critical role in shaping gender relations (Sen, 1990; Agarwal, 1994; Akerlof and Kranton, 2010; Platteau and Peccoud, 2010). Patriarchal culture, in which the distribution of power privileges men over women, can influence policy preferences and modes of participation by defining behavioral prescriptions about gender roles in society (Croson and Gneezy, 2009).<sup>1</sup> A second line of argument focuses on economic factors. Material resources—in particular, wealth, assets, property, and income—can shape individuals’ preferences over economic policies and political structures. Men’s and women’s starkly unequal ownership of economic resources may create different viewpoints about how to engage the state and use its policymaking levers (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006; Iversen and Soskice, 2001; Edlund and Pande, 2002; Deere and Doss, 2006).<sup>2</sup>

Scholars have long focused on adjudicating the relative importance of each of these theoretical determinants of the gender gap.<sup>3</sup> The political economy literature has come down heavily in favor of economic factors as the root cause of gender differentials in the political domain (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Iversen and Soskice, 2001). In one perspective, culture may even be a by-product of material forces. Cultural norms

---

<sup>1</sup>Patriarchy is typically defined as a system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from positions of influence. Most societies in the world exhibit patriarchy to varying degrees.

<sup>2</sup>Outside of cultural and economic determinants, scholars also point to political institutions as important triggers of gender-based disparities in representation (Miller, 2008; Lizzeri and Persico, 2004; Bhavnani, 2009). Others contend that biological factors predispose men and women toward different traits and policy preferences (Barres, 2006; Colarelli et al., 2006; Schulte-Rüther et al., 2008). We engage with these alternate determinants in subsequent sections of the paper.

<sup>3</sup>In explaining gendered differences in political behavior, Burns, Schlozman and Verba (1997, 374) posit, for example, that “there has long been a tension within the social sciences - dating back to differences between the successors to Marx and Weber - over whether social action springs from material conditions or whether values and beliefs have an independent influence on behavior.”

about public and private gender roles could have sprung from historical disjunctures when the organization of economic activity shifted to promote modes of production that advantaged men (Boserup, 1970; Alesina, Giuliano and Nunn, 2013). These arguments have impacted both academic and policy discourse, influencing how scholars evaluate the gender gap and how practitioners attempt its reduction.<sup>4</sup> However, by treating culture and resources as independent determinants, or culture as an outgrowth of material processes, prevailing approaches have missed an important part of the story. Culture has both non-material *and material* dimensions. Cultural norms themselves distribute economic advantages to members of particular genders. If the resulting material inequities influence political preferences and behaviors, then culturally sanctioned norms governing wealth would be essential precursors to the political economy gender gap.

A large body of work in anthropology documents that cultural mores mediate which gender has access to, and control over, economic resources (Levi-Strauss, 2008; Evans-Pritchard, 1951). Patrilineal cultures—which transmit wealth from father to son, and which comprise the vast majority of the world—exclude women from ancestral sources of inheritance and control over wealth (Agarwal, 1994; Quisumbing, 2003; Rao, 2012). Scholars examining the gender gap exclusively within patrilineal cultures might identify resource differentials between men and women as evidence that material factors trigger representational shortfalls. But another explanation is equally tenable. Cultural norms that privilege men with access to wealth, rather than economic resources on their own, may be the mainspring of gender disparities in political engagement and political economy preferences. We posit that this is the case. One way to evaluate this possibility is to compare societies in which cultural norms accord *different* genders access to resources. Indeed, some cultures grant inheritance and property rights to women, making them the dominant owners and arbiters of household wealth (Schneider and Gough, 1962; Ferguson, 1999). A reversal of the gender gap in these cultures would indicate that culturally sanctioned inequities in resources are key drivers of the political economy gender gap.

The purpose of this paper is to devise and implement a rigorous test of this hypothesis. We leverage the unique cultural setting of Meghalaya, in northeast India. It is home to the Garo, Khasi, and Jaintiya tribes, among the few remaining practicing matrilineal communities in the world. In matrilineal societies, cultural traditions specify that ancestral property and family titles are transferred from mother to daughter. In effect, they distribute economic resources exclusively via women. Matrilineal societies are not matriarchal; men still occupy positions of authority in the household and community, and men and women jointly manage economic resources (Schneider and Gough, 1962, 6). Living side-by-side with Meghalaya’s matrilineal tribes are several patrilineal communities. These patrilineal groups maintain conventional social norms regarding inheritance and economic decision-making. Property passes from father to son, such that economic resources are owned and controlled only by men. Thus, one society distributes wealth through women, with egalitarian management responsibilities (matrilineal) while

---

<sup>4</sup>Many initiatives have focused, for example, on equalizing women’s access to credit and employment opportunities with the goal of eliminating the political economy gender gap (World Bank, 2011, 26-30).

the other neighboring society distributes wealth and responsibility for wealth management via men (patrilineal).

We exploit this variation in cultural norms governing wealth across neighboring matrilineal and patrilineal societies in order to isolate the determinants of the political economy gender gap. Importantly, both patrilineal and matrilineal tribes consistently exhibit patriarchal political practices, and are governed by a similar set of state and municipal-level political institutions. Men typically hold positions of political leadership in both communities. That is, even in matrilineal tribes, where women have exclusive access to inheritance and wealth, it is men who generally occupy formal positions of political power. This common patriarchal structure across matrilineal and patrilineal groups allows us to effectively hold constant dominant political and institutional factors that might alternately explain the gender gap.

Our results are based on a large, face-to-face survey of representative samples of men and women in neighboring matrilineal and patrilineal communities, along with extensive ethnographic and qualitative evidence. Our questionnaire embedded survey experiments and behavioral games that probed individuals' preferences about both taxation and redistribution via the state and about private, charitable giving. It also examined respondents' patterns of political participation across a range of formal and informal contexts. Overall, we find that cultural norms about wealth ownership and management predict variation in political participation and policy preferences regarding the welfare state. In effect, they explain the political economy gender gap. This finding suggests that culture drives gender differentials in the political arena—but it does so via its impact on economic resources.

We first demonstrate that the gender gap in political engagement is contingent on cultural norms about the gender-specific distribution of economic resources. Both patrilineal men and matrilineal women in our sample are more politically engaged than patrilineal women and matrilineal men, respectively. This extends Schlozman, Burns and Verba (1994)'s findings from the U.S. that wealth differentials between women and men influence the gender gap in political engagement. Because political action is costly, successful engagement with the state requires individual investment of wealth. In societies where men own more wealth than women, men have a larger stock of resources with which to engage in political participation. We show, however, that cultural norms are essential precursors to this relationship between wealth, gender, and political participation. When women are culturally excluded from wealth ownership (as in patrilineal communities), they exhibit lower levels of political engagement than men. Alternately, when women are traditional owners of economic resources—i.e., matrilineal women—their participation in the political arena exceeds that of men.

Second, we demonstrate that traditional wealth ownership and control patterns systematically influence political economy preferences. In matrilineal cultures, where women and men jointly manage wealth, both genders have an equal stake in spending decisions; they are thus expected to have similar preferences regarding household budgets. In patrilineal cultures, by contrast, men—who exclusively own and manage wealth—should

be uniquely sensitive to budgetary costs relative to women. We find that patrilineal men as well as matrilineal men and women are more likely to oppose redistribution when it imposes a monetary cost on them. They also behave similarly when it comes to private giving, revealing an equal willingness to contribute funds to non-state philanthropic causes. By contrast, patrilineal women remain insensitive to the personal costs associated with funding welfare state policies, and are significantly less likely to contribute personal funds to charities. These results resonate with Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006, 2010), who posit that gender-based support for welfare state policies depends on expectations about whether policies yield net costs or benefits. We extend this finding by specifying that cultural norms drive how men and women develop expectations about the distributive impact of policies. In patrilineal societies, men disproportionately bear the costs of welfare state policies, whereas women benefit more from redistribution; this drives a wedge in policy preferences. But in societies where women and men have equal stakes in wealth management, the gender gap in policy preferences effectively evaporates.

Overall, we find that cultural norms about wealth ownership and management explain entirely the gender gap in political economy preferences and modes of political engagement. Our analysis suggests that biological factors or institutional structures are inadequate explanations for gender-related inequities in representation. Additionally, studies that either focus on cultural determinants without taking into account economic factors, or highlight material considerations without adequately incorporating the role of culture in mediating access to wealth, provide incomplete explanations for the stubborn disparities in men’s and women’s political representation observed around the world.

## 2 Culture, Wealth, and the Gender Gap

The political economy gender gap is a widely acknowledged phenomenon, credited with explaining resource allocation in domains from public health to capital investments (Clots-Figueras, 2011; Miller, 2008; Schwab et al., 2014). Despite efforts to close this gap, the World Economic Forum’s 2014 Gender Gap Report reveals its persistence, particularly in political participation and representation. Globally, women are one-fifth as likely as men to hold political positions. This disparity is striking in light of the closing gender gap in health and survival (96 percent parity between women’s and men’s health) and education (94 percent parity) (Schwab et al., 2014). Men exhibit higher levels of political engagement and knowledge; women assume that men are more politically knowledgeable and competent (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Kanthak and Krause, 2010; Mendez and Osborn, 2010; Fox and Lawless, 2011).

A gender gap also exists in individuals’ political economy preferences. Substantively, the gap is particularly wide with respect to preferences about the welfare state.<sup>5</sup> Women

---

<sup>5</sup>In particular, see: Mendelberg, Karpowitz and Goedert (2014); Huddy, Cassese and Lizotte (2008); Hutchings et al. (2004); Kathlene (1995); Norrander and Wilcox (2008). Limited studies on the developing world’s contemporary gender gap find that it mirrors the “traditional” gap found in postwar Europe and the U.S. (Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Lewis, 2004; Bohn, 2011, 450).

are more likely than men to identify issues of “care” and social support as their top policy priority, with taxes at the bottom of their preference ranking (Mendelberg, Karpowitz and Goedert, 2014; Crowder-Meyer, 2007). Men’s preferences are reversed. They are more likely to prioritize financial concerns about employment and taxation, with “care” issues their lowest ranked concern.<sup>6</sup> These preferences have direct implications for the welfare state’s scope and effectiveness: women prioritize state action to redistribute wealth and opportunity, whereas men typically prefer a smaller, leaner welfare state in order to maximize personal wealth.

Survey data corroborate these claims. Table 1 and Figure 1 present data from the World Values Survey (WVS), International Social Survey Program (ISSP), and Indian National Election Study (NES) to study differences between men’s and women’s opinions on political engagement and political economy preferences. In terms of participation, men are more likely to express interest in politics than women globally (35 percentage points) and across India (42 percentage points). In India, men’s political engagement significantly exceeds women’s on a number of dimensions. Men are 56 percentage points more likely to attend election meetings and 34 percentage points more likely to talk about politics compared to women, for example. A stark gender gap is also apparent in policy preferences. Men are significantly less likely than women to prefer an expanded welfare state and government spending on social services—from employment and unemployment assistance to education and health spending. Globally, women are 14 percentage points more likely to agree that the government should provide a job for everyone who wants one and 10 percentage points more likely to argue that the government should reduce income differentials between the rich and the poor. In India, similarly, men are 27 percentage points less willing to support the position that the “government should take more responsibility to ensure everyone is provided for.”

[Table 1, Figure 1]

The literature offers several explanations for the political economy gender gap. One emphasizes the importance of culture, structured by distinct sets of social norms, including norms prescribing gender-specific social roles and responsibilities. A second points to economic resources such as income and wealth. Scholars also underscore the importance of institutions and biological factors in driving gender-based differentials in the political arena. We posit that each of these theories are missing an important determinant of the gender gap: culture’s role in determining how individuals belonging to particular genders own and control economic resources within the household.

## 2.1 Culture and Norms

One set of theories argues that culture is responsible for the gender gap. Culture is manifest in social norms or prescriptions about how individuals should behave as members of

---

<sup>6</sup>See: Mendelberg, Karpowitz and Oliphant (2014); Aries (1998); Kathlene (1994); Conover (1988); Welch and Hibbing (1992); Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler (1998); Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999); Alvarez and McCaffery (2000); Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006); Miller (2008); Reingold and Smith (2012).

households, communities, and states (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Inglehart and Norris, 2003). For example, patriarchal cultures typically feature norms that restrict women to the domestic sphere and exclude them from political life, just as they encourage men to enter the public sphere and become politically engaged (Goldin, 1990; Lundberg and Pollak, 1994; Stevenson and Wolfers, 2006). Crucially, behavioral prescriptions often discourage women from articulating and acting on their political preferences. Gender differences in levels of political activity are “construed as the natural outgrowth of distinctive processes of social learning and ... roles that [center] women in the private domain of the home and men in the word outside” (Schlozman, Burns and Verba 1994, 963; see also Angus et al. 1960; Duverger 1955).

A similar argument links social norms to gendered differences in policy preferences. Patriarchal cultures might encourage women to prioritize social welfare and pro-poor policies based on gender-specific norms about the appropriateness of displaying empathy or providing care. Here, women’s identification with domestic support roles is often credited with explaining women’s relatively greater support for “nanny” [welfare] state policies (Lundberg and Pollak, 1993; Inglehart and Norris, 2000). Indeed, recent evidence from across African states finds that social prescriptions about the “ethics of care” explain why women are more likely than men to prioritize poverty reduction policies (Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, 2015). Meanwhile, when men are expected to be the dominant familial protectors and providers, they are relatively less likely to support state policies that restrict individual agency to own and manage wealth. Social norms also influence how women and men access information. Given that political knowledge and affiliations predict policy preferences, they serve as channels linking social norms to gender disparities in individual attitudes toward the state (Gillion, Ladd and Meredith, 2014; Coffe and Bolzendahl, 2010; Parry and Moyser, 1990).

## **2.2 Wealth Ownership and Management**

An alternate explanation for the gender gap examines the impact of economic resources on political empowerment (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994). Income, for example, is a significant determinant of political participation. Because political participation requires costly contributions of time and wealth, gender-based differences in control over economic resources such as income can be important drivers of disparities in political behavior (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006; Kunovich, Paxton and Hughes, 2007). Men typically own and control more material resources than women; they are thus more likely to be politically engaged. In contrast, given that women earn considerably less and own fewer assets than men, they face resource-based disadvantages in political participation (Schwab et al., 2014; Deere and Doss, 2006; Doss et al., 2011; Agarwal, 1994).

Wealth similarly informs preferences about political economy policies (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Kelly and Enns, 2010; Newman, 2015; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006; Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Apart from wealth ownership, wealth management

plays a key role in this process; as Burns, Schlozman and Verba (1997, 373) show, “control over major financial decisions” within households enhances individuals’ abilities to engage with the state. If men own and manage more wealth than women, they are more likely to perceive taxation to support the welfare state as a direct financial burden. These wealth disparities explain why men are more sensitive to the cost of redistribution. When women do not own or manage household wealth, the lack of independent access to material resources disrupts the link between taxation and perceptions of the welfare state as a financial burden. Financial dependence also creates an additional reliance on the state for public goods such as education and health services. Overall, material disparities lead women to prefer higher levels of public goods than men because women typically gain more from state redistribution, while bearing fewer of the costs.

## 2.3 Relationship Between Culture and Wealth

The dominant scholarship on the gender gap in political participation and political economy preference treats economic resources and cultural factors independently. For example, Verba, Burns and Schlozman (1997, 1052) cite two distinct explanations for gender differences: either “women’s disadvantage with respect to resources associated with political engagement” or “gender differences in social roles and family responsibilities.”<sup>7</sup> As a result of this bifurcated perspective, scholars mainly attempt to adjudicate the relative importance of resources versus norms in explaining divergences in gender-based political preferences and behavior.

In the course of evaluating both determinants, the political economy literature has argued that material factors supersede culture in explaining gender differentials in politics (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Iversen and Soskice, 2001; Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 1997). Some scholars even conclude that culture and norms are merely an outgrowth of material determinants (Boserup, 1970); as Alesina, Giuliano and Nunn (2013, 474) find, “differences in traditional farming practices...have shaped the evolution of norms and beliefs about the appropriate role of women in society.” This argument implies that equalizing the distribution of economic goods across genders should be sufficient to eliminate the gender gap. Indeed, important policy interventions have been structured on the assumption that economic factors alone—for example, women’s microcredit schemes—can significantly empower women in the political domain (see, e.g., Yunus, 2001; Armendariz, Beatriz and Morduch, 2005; Banerjee and Dufflo, 2011).

We posit that existing approaches—either the separate focus on economic resources and cultural norms, or the singular focus on material factors and their different pathways of influence—miss a crucial part of the story. Culture can influence the gender gap via its impact on resources. Culture has both non-material *and material* dimensions. A long line of work in anthropology documents that cultural norms structure wealth-generating

---

<sup>7</sup>Much prior literature divides neatly into one of these two categories; “while Baxter and Lansing (1983, 43-6) attribute gender differences in political interest to differences in resources, Flora and Lynn (1974) attribute the disparity between women and [men] in political efficacy to gender-based social roles” (Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997, 1052).

opportunities for individuals belonging to different genders (Durkheim 1893, Bourdieu 1984[1979], 2001[1998], 2005; Geertz 1973). We argue that culturally specified norms governing the access to, and control over, resources are key predictors of gender disparities in political participation and preference formation.

One reason why scholars might have overlooked the relationship between cultural norms regarding resources and gender disparities is that it is typically quite difficult to observe variation in culture. Most societies in the world are both patriarchal and patrilineal. In such societies, patriarchal norms favor men on a host of non-material dimensions, as well as consistently accord men more inheritance and wealth-generating opportunities. At the same time, men on average also own and control more material resources than women. Suppose we find a relationship between wealth and gender disparities in these societies. This could be interpreted as evidence that material factors explain the gender gap. Yet if cultural norms discourage women from acquiring similar levels of resources as men—a finding that is consistent with cross-national survey data<sup>8</sup>—then culturally sanctioned inequities in wealth might serve as the root cause of gender differentials. Disentangling the impact of culturally specified norms governing wealth from the independent impact of wealth is therefore challenging in such societies.

However, within patriarchal systems, patrilineal and matrilineal cultures prescribe starkly different economic roles for women and men in the household and in society. We highlight two important distinctions. First, patrilineal cultures distribute ownership rights to resources exclusively to men, whereas matrilineal cultures distribute these rights to women only. Prior work finds that patrilineal norms favoring men over women in distributing familial wealth can systematically curtail women’s opportunities to accumulate and control wealth (Agarwal, 1994).<sup>9</sup> Matrilineal norms that place women at the center of lineage and inheritance have the opposite effect (Schneider, 1984; Chacko, 1998; Stivens, 1996; Nongkinrih, 2002). Second, each culture prescribes different norms about resource management and financial decision-making. Patrilineal cultures allocate resource management rights exclusively to men, magnifying gender imbalances in the control of resources. Matrilineal cultures, by contrast, allocate wealth management rights to both women and men, in turn, equalizing access to financial decision-making.

If culturally sanctioned norms about resource ownership and control impact the gender gap, we predict that the gender gap in political participation and political economy preferences will vary across patrilineal and matrilineal cultures. Because political participation is a costly endeavor, requiring personal investment of money and time, we expect to see distinct gender-based patterns in participation across both societies. Cul-

---

<sup>8</sup>As Table 1 shows, globally men are 14 percentage points less likely than women to believe that “both the man and woman should contribute to the household income,” and 6 percentage points more likely to believe that “if a woman earns more money than her husband, it’s almost certain to cause problems.”

<sup>9</sup>For example, cultural traditions that transmit wealth from father to son systematically exclude women from ancestral sources of inheritance, influencing women’s economic autonomy, intra-household bargaining, and wealth-enhancing investment opportunities.

tural norms governing inheritance and wealth should enable the gender privileged with resource ownership (e.g., men in patrilineal groups) to participate in politics, hold politicians accountable, and trust the resulting political institutions that they have helped shape. In contrast, the gender that is excluded from wealth ownership will be less able and less likely to have a stake in the political process. This gender will have lower levels of political participation, engagement, and trust in political institutions. Put differently, we expect men to participate more in politics in patrilineal societies, but women to be more politically engaged in matrilineal societies.

Next, because the welfare state serves as an arbiter of access to material resources and opportunities (Skocpol, 1992), we expect individuals' political economy preferences related to taxation, redistribution, and private giving to diverge across both groups. Where cultural norms systematically exclude one gender from resource ownership and management, we expect the disadvantaged gender to prefer more state intervention—as a means of re-balancing access to resources—compared to the advantaged gender. Concretely, in patrilineal cultures, women will prefer more state intervention than men. In contrast, where cultural norms provide relatively gender-balanced access to, and control over the management of resources, we expect both genders to have similar preferences over the spending of household wealth on state-led redistribution policies. Thus, gender-equitable resource management norms leads us to predict no gender gap in political economy preferences within matrilineal cultures.

## 2.4 Biological Factors

We also explore the hypothesis that there are inherent differences between men and women that might alternately explain the political economy gender gap. Scholars across fields from psychology to experimental economics have identified biological factors as important triggers driving differences in policy preferences between women and men,<sup>10</sup> although these claims remain the subject of fierce debate (Croson and Gneezy, 2009).

One line of thinking argues that genetic differences between men and women undergird gender-related differences in the public domain (Barres 2006, 133; see also, Lawrence 2006; Baron-Cohen 2003; Mansfield 2006). Specifically, these theories posit men are biologically predisposed to systematize, analyze, and compete more than women, whereas women are better able to empathize, communicate, and care for others (Barres, 2006). Studies find similar sex differences in revealed preferences about competition in socio-economic domains across cultures and time periods (Buss, 1989; Croson and Gneezy, 2009).<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, some scholars argue that differences in underlying social

---

<sup>10</sup>Campbell (2002) finds, for example, over 110,000 studies on women, gender and sex differences published in academic journals over the last two decades of the 20th century.

<sup>11</sup>Biological factors can include both physiological and psychological components. Physiological accounts indicate that hormonal and genetic differences might lead men to be more risk-prone and competitive, and less altruistic, averse to inequality, and empathetic than women (Croson and Gneezy, 2009, 249-54). Researchers have attempted to measure variation in altruism using methods ranging from behavioral games (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003) to neuroimaging (Schulte-Rüther et al., 2008) to tracking

norms and their impact on self confidence and bias play a decisive roll in driving differences between men’s and women’s preferences and behavior (Barres, 2006; Gneezy et al., 2003; Fels, 2004). These variations plausibly have downstream implications for political engagement and preferences over economic policy. For example, patriarchal norms may build men’s self confidence and willingness to be aggressive, while limiting women’s confidence and self-expression (Fox and Lawless, 2014). This might encourage men to participate more in the political arena and to prioritize certain policy types such as security over public health (Inglehart and Norris, 2000; Doepke, Tertilt and Voena, 2012). These theories’ relevant prediction is that men and women consistently behave in a similar way across patrilineal and matrilineal societies.

## 2.5 Political Institutions

Alternately, some scholars argue that economic and cultural determinants of the gender gap pale in comparison to the importance of political institutions. Institutions may determine control over economic modes of production, for example. As early as in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, for example, Engels describes how political institutions reinforce and magnify patriarchal practices that privilege men’s monopoly over the state and economy (Folbre, N.d.; Engels, 1884, 228). Boris and Bardaglio (1983, 72-73) argues similarly that the “nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw not the decline of patriarchy but its transformation from a familial to a state form.” These institutional transformations have important implications for gender-specific modes of political participation. At a basic level, prior to universal suffrage, women were forbidden from the electoral arena and deprived of a formal political voice; such extreme forms of political exclusion are still prevalent in many parts of the world today. But even after franchise mandates expanded to include women, they continued to face more subtle institutional barriers to political inclusion, such as political parties’ reluctance to recruit women (Fox and Lawless, 2011). The relevant theoretical prediction for our study is that similar forms of gender gaps should emerge in societies that share common formal political institutions.

## 2.6 Empirical Challenges in Studying the Gender Gap

Capturing the origins of the gender gap is fraught with methodological difficulties because the determinants typically discussed above—cultural norms, economic resources, biological factors, and political institutions—tend to be correlated with gender in patriarchal and patrilineal settings, which comprise the vast majority of the world. In order to evaluate the impact of culturally specified norms about wealth ownership and control, we need to compare the determinants of the gender gap in two cultures that share similar patriarchal settings but differ only in terms of cultural norms regarding wealth ownership and control. The setting of our study helps us achieve this goal.

---

nonverbal indices of emotion (Leiman, 1978; Marcus, Roke and Bruner, 1985).

### 3 Meghalaya’s Matrilineal Society

We leverage the unique setting of Meghalaya, a state in northeast India, where matrilineal tribes and patrilineal societies live in close proximity, to examine how culture, via its influence on economic entitlements, affects the gender gap in political preferences and behavior. Our study is situated in Meghalaya’s capital city, Shillong. Shillong is located in Meghalaya’s East Khasi Hills, one of the state’s eleven districts. The city’s population is 354,325, just over a tenth of the state’s total (*Shillong City Census*, 2011).

**Demography** Matrilineal tribes, in particular the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos make up approximated 91 percent of Meghalaya’s tribal population. The remaining 9 percent comprises patrilineal tribes (Registrar General, 2011*a*). Mizos and Hmars are the most numerous patrilineal tribal groups in Shillong, and have been settling across Meghalaya, and especially in Shillong, since the state’s inception (Haokip and Padhi, 2013). Both traditionally transmit wealth via sons (Sen, 1992; Nunthara, 1996; Mahapatra, 2008; Press, 2012). Additionally, 14.1 percent of Meghalaya’s population is non-tribal. This population segment is centered in Shillong (Registrar General, 2011*b*). A vast majority of this group is from other northeastern states, particularly Assam and Manipur. The remainder primarily comes from mainland Indian states. All of these groups practice patrilineal inheritance (Singh, 1998; Kunreuther, 2009; Chakraborty and Kim, 2010).<sup>12</sup>

**Matriliny** All matrilineal tribes in Meghalaya practice matrilineal customs of inheritance. According to this system, daughters inherit family property and wealth, and retain inalienable residency rights (Gurdon 2004, Bareh 1967; Nakane 1967). Given women’s own stake in property, it is unsurprising that they also play a considerable role in managing property and finances (Cantlie 1974, 26; Nongbri 2000, 370; Karna 2005, 120). At the same time, men play an important role in managing household resources, including property. As Nongkinrih (2002, 163) explains, there is equitable “division of authority between the head of the ‘iing’ [lineage] (mother) and her eldest brother” for managing resources. When important decisions arise, both sit with other adult family members to “take collective decisions on various urgent and important issues” related to “managing the property.” Women and men widely share decision-making over household resources; “the law of inheritance...is that both husband and wife manage the house and the earnings of both or either of them pass to the general management of both. Neither of them can dispose of or part with their personal earnings without mutual agreement” (Bareh 1967, 331).

**Patriarchy** Meghalaya’s matrilineal societies are not matriarchal (Bareh 1967, Syiem 1998). Whereas a matriarchal system is based on the possession of primary power by

---

<sup>12</sup>Meghalaya’s population is just over 70% Christian (predominantly Presbyterian and Catholic), 13% Hindu, 4% Muslim and about 13% Animist (*Population by Religious Communities*, 2001). The Serampore Mission first introduced Christianity to the Khasi-Jaintia hills in 1813-1838. Permanent mission work followed with the advent of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist’s Foreign Mission in 1841 and the Catholic Mission in 1890 (Subba, Puthenpurakal and Puykunnel, 2009, 178).

women at the exclusion of men, the matrilineal system allocates authoritative responsibilities among male members of the descent group. As Schneider and Gough (1961, 7) document, matrilineal and patrilineal systems are both patriarchal in the sense that the “roles of men and women are identically defined in both groups, men having authoritative roles and women having responsibility for child care.” The key difference between the two groups is that, although the lines of authority run through men, rules of succession run through women in matrilineal systems.<sup>13</sup>

**Political Institutions** It is important to note that both matrilineal and patrilineal communities in Meghalaya retain similar patriarchal political institutions. Political office remains a strictly male domain (Pakem, 1994; Kama, Gasa and Thomas, 1998; Nongbri, 2000). Despite women’s economic integration, they are largely excluded from positions of leadership in the *Dorbars*, the traditional forms of local government in the region (Pakem, 1994; Kama, Gasa and Thomas, 1998; Nongbri, 2000). Indeed, only once in recorded history has a woman managed to become a *Rangbah Dong*, or block headman (Ryntathiang and Nongkhlaw, 2015). These practices are consistent with the broader finding that in matrilineal societies, “the role of men as men is defined as that of having authority over women and children...positions of highest authority within the matrilineal descent group will, therefore, ordinarily be vested in statuses occupied by men” (Schneider and Gough 1961, 7).<sup>14</sup> Thus, any observed variation in political behavior and preferences across matrilineal and patrilineal communities does not occur due to political or institutional structures. While women are excluded from formal positions of authority, they are permitted to attend meetings and voice their concerns. In sum, local governance is formally a male-led domain, although women are active participants in the political process.

**Basis for Comparison** Meghalaya thus provides a unique geographic setting where two cultures—matrilineal and patrilineal—have lived side by side for generations. The only variation across both groups is culture, where the main cultural variation is the inheritance system traditionally practiced. We leverage this variation to study whether social norms determine political preferences and behavior by influencing access to, and control over, economic resources. If cultural norms about wealth ownership and management are important determinants, the political gender gap commonly observed in patrilineal societies should reverse or close in matrilineal societies.

## 4 Research Design and Sampling Strategy

To study the determinants of the gender gap in political economy preferences and participation, we conducted a large-scale, face-to-face survey on a representative sample of

---

<sup>13</sup>Historical narratives suggest that the Khasis have always maintained a matrilineal system, although primary source evidence for this claim is scarce; as put by Bareh (1967), “the matrilineal organization [of Meghalaya] was deeply rooted since time immemorial.”

<sup>14</sup>Additionally, Syiem (1998) notes, “Male domination can be seen in various areas of Khasi social life particularly in matters of state and village administration. With few exceptions, political administration has been an exclusive male prerogative.”

Shillong between March and July 2015. A team of sixteen enumerators overseen by four field supervisors interviewed a 3,509 adult Shillong residents.

In order to enhance the strength of our comparisons, we obtained equal samples of men and women, matrilineal and patrilineal groups, and rich and poor citizens. Patrilineal communities were drawn equally from two population groups: respondents with ancestral roots in the northeastern states (including non-tribal individuals from Assam and Manipur) and those with ancestral roots in the rest of India. All participants were Indian citizens who had lived in Shillong for at least ten years. Table 2 presents a summary of the three ethnic groups of interest.

[Table 2]

To ensure a rigorous sample selection process, we first completed a listing exercise of all citizens living in 25 randomly selected wards distributed evenly around Shillong between August 2014 and February 2015. This produced a dataset of over 25,000 adult individuals (18 years or older). We used these lists to randomly select individuals by gender, matrilineal or patrilineal background, and wealth status (weighted probability sampling within localities, based on locality-specific wealth composition). We drew a sample from each ward (our primary sampling unit) in proportion to its population size relative to urban Shillong as a whole. We contacted approximately 15% of the individuals on our census lists. Refusal and attrition rates were 8 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of our sample.

[Table 3]

Enumerators' genders and ethnic backgrounds matched those of their respondents to encourage trust between respondents and enumerators and to reduce potential social desirability bias.<sup>15</sup> The survey was translated from English into Khasi, Hindi and Mizo, allowing respondents to communicate in the language in which they were most comfortable.<sup>16</sup> Enumerators used hand-held tablet devices that automated the randomization process in our experiments.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from the survey, we conducted one hundred qualitative interviews and two weeks of focus group discussions in order to probe the mechanisms underlying our experimental findings. Representative quotations from these interviews are presented alongside our survey findings. Because the tribal groups we surveyed possess a unique cultural her-

---

<sup>15</sup>Studies of the impact of the gender and ethnicity of interviewers on interviewees' responses include: Kane and Macaulay (1993); Cilliers, Dube and Siddiqi (2015).

<sup>16</sup>Translations were checked and reverse translated to guarantee equivalence in meaning.

<sup>17</sup>The survey process included a number of checks on enumerator probity. Supervisors, who were rotated on a regular basis between four groups of four enumerators each, randomly selected which enumerator they would monitor each day. Enumerators were required to record the address of each respondent they had interviewed; both the supervisors and the data and project managers returned to an evenly distributed selection of these households to validate previously recorded answers.

itage, we sought to ensure that our study would neither interfere with nor disrupt our respondents' cultural beliefs and practices.<sup>18</sup>

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Political Participation and Accountability

The starting point of our analysis is the well-documented gender gap in political participation and accountability that prevails in most societies around the world. To determine whether gender differentials exist in our matrilineal and patrilineal samples, we probed survey respondents with simple, straightforward questions about their political behaviors. First, we asked respondents whether they had voted in Meghalaya's most recent state election.<sup>19</sup> As Table 4a reports, the patrilineal group's results are reversed in matrilineal societies. In the patrilineal group, men are 11 percentage points more likely than women to report having voted ( $p=0.000$ ). In the matrilineal group, the results effectively flip. Here, women are 9 percentage points more likely than men to have cast a ballot in the previous state election ( $p=0.000$ ). These results are striking. As discussed earlier, in Meghalaya's matrilineal tribes, it is men who typically run for and hold office. Our results show, however, that women are much more likely to go to the polls and decide their community's representatives.

[Table 4]

Not only do women vote in higher numbers than men in our matrilineal tribes, they are also more likely to trust their political representatives. We asked our respondents whether they trusted their (a) local legislators, and (b) political parties.<sup>20</sup> Matrilineal women are 8 percentage points more likely to trust their local legislators ( $p=0.000$ ) and 13 percentage points more likely to trust their political parties ( $p=0.000$ ), as compared to matrilineal men (Tables 4c and 4d, respectively). Among the patrilineal respondents, however, a traditional gender gap emerges. Patrilineal men are 9 percentage points more likely to trust their local legislators ( $p=0.000$ ) and 7 percentage points more likely to trust their political parties ( $p=0.007$ ) than patrilineal women.

Why do patrilineal men and matrilineal women vote in higher numbers and trust their representatives in greater proportions than their respective co-genders? Scholars have argued that an important predictor of political participation is political account-

---

<sup>18</sup>First, the main survey was preceded by eight months of qualitative fieldwork to ensure the appropriateness and sensitivity of its content. Second, all of our enumerators, supervisors, and data operators were recruited from local tribal groups. Third, our project team obtained permission from the block council and headmen in every locality included in the survey before initiating survey work. This project received Institutional Review Board Approval from each author's university.

<sup>19</sup>Specifically, our question read, "Did you vote in Meghalaya's most recent MLA election? Yes or No."

<sup>20</sup>Our questions were framed, "Do you trust local legislators to do the right thing for people in Shillong?" and "Do you trust political parties to do the right thing for people in Shillong?"

ability: the ability to hold one’s representatives accountable for their actions. We thus asked respondents whether it was possible for them to hold local politicians accountable for the functions that they are supposed to be performing. They could respond either yes (1) or no (0). Akin to the prior results, we find a distinct gender gap within both cultural groups (Table 4b). While 63 percent of matrilineal women report being able to hold elected officials accountable, the corresponding proportion among matrilineal men is only 51 percent. Patrilineal men are qualitatively similar to matrilineal women: 66 percent of patrilineal men feel that it is possible to hold officials accountable. But in this community, we uncover a traditional gender gap. Only 39 percent of patrilineal women report being able to hold their elected representatives accountable.

In our qualitative research, we found widespread consensus that matrilineal women are politically very active in Meghalaya. We asked respondents to share their experiences about how women participate in the political arena. One woman said, for example: “Women of our locality are active in politics, during election we can see that they will leave everything and run for campaigning, accompany the candidate during house to house visit and attending public meetings [*sic*].”<sup>21</sup> Another said that, “There are some [women] who are very active that they even forget their children. Every day they will go to the candidate’s house, meeting and rally to canvass for their candidate.”<sup>22</sup> A different interviewee shared: “I see in my own family especially my mother was very active and used to take part in many political activities along with friends, other take part as voters [*sic*].”<sup>23</sup> Men appear to agree. One respondent said that women “actively participate, their numbers are more than the men, they are in rallies, meetings, canvass, etc.”<sup>24</sup> Another mentioned a similarly diverse range of women’s strategies for political engagement: “some of them are members of mahila [women’s] groups, some are followers, and others are polling agents and volunteers.”<sup>25</sup>

## 5.2 Preferences about Welfare State

To assess the determinants of preferences about the welfare state, we opened the experimental portion of our survey with a question assessing respondents’ welfare policy preferences. The text follows, with the experimental treatment in brackets:

In Meghalaya, many people lack access to essential services like water and electricity. Do you support an increase in the funding of government programs that provide essential services for the poor [*even if this means that the government must raise money from people like you*]?<sup>26</sup>

We use this question to test the effect of gender-specific wealth ownership norms on individuals’ political economy preferences. The treatment introduces a personal, financial

---

<sup>21</sup>Interview #38, Female, June 20, 2014.

<sup>22</sup>Interview #39, Female, July 4, 2014.

<sup>23</sup>Interview #15, Female, Shillong, May 15, 2014.

<sup>24</sup>Interview #34, Male, Shillong, June 16, 2014.

<sup>25</sup>Interview #43, Male, Shillong, May 7, 2014.

<sup>26</sup>The setup of this question is based on Margalit (2013).

cost to individual support for the welfare state. In effect, it ties support for state provision of essential services to personal financial obligations. We expect treated individuals' support for welfare state policies to decrease the more they anticipate contributing to the welfare state.

Table 5 reports the treatment's effect on the average preference for the welfare schemes proposed. Columns 1-4 present the treatment effect on average welfare preferences for patrilineal groups. These results indicate a decisive gender gap in policy preferences among our patrilineal respondents, which is similar to patterns commonly seen around the world: men react negatively to the introduction of a tax to support welfare, but women's support for welfare services is resistant to the introduction of a personal cost. On average, 98 percent of women support increasing government provision of essential services for the poor. The treatment does not alter patrilineal women's support for the welfare state ( $\beta=-0.00$ ;  $p=0.827$ ). In contrast, patrilineal men are significantly affected by the treatment, decreasing their support for state-provided services by three percentage points ( $p=0.016$ ).

[Table 5]

Culturally sanctioned inequalities in wealth ownership and management across genders explain the difference in the treatment effect. Patrilineal men, as traditional inheritors and managers of wealth, react negatively to the possibility of bearing a personal economic cost. As Appendix A3 indicates, the treatment effect on patrilineal men is driven by men who own assets ("high wealth" men)—those who would be expected to disproportionately bear the cost for expanding welfare state policies ( $\beta=-0.04$ ;  $p=0.06$ ). Patrilineal women, on the other hand, traditionally neither own nor manage the wealth that is referenced in this treatment. It thus follows that both wealthy and poor patrilineal women remain insensitive to the cost imposed by expanding the welfare state. This is clear in Appendix A3, where the treatment has a statistically insignificant effect both on patrilineal women with assets and without assets.

In contrast to our patrilineal sample, the gender gap closes in our matrilineal sample. The treatment significantly deters both men and women from supporting the state's provision of essential services. Support for these policies drops similarly across both genders: by four percentage points for men ( $p=0.029$ ) and for women ( $p=0.001$ ).

This convergence in preferences can be explained by matrilineal culture's distribution of wealth ownership and management rights. Women customarily retain exclusive inheritance entitlements, but they also share wealth management responsibilities with men. As a result of men's and women's joint management of wealth, both genders have an equal stake in financial decisions, particularly about how to spend the household budget. Thus, both matrilineal men and women exhibit sensitivity to the cost of redistributive policies. This interpretation is bolstered by sub-sample analyses. Appendix A3 shows that both matrilineal men with assets ( $\beta=-0.06$ ;  $p=0.035$ ) and women with assets ( $\beta=-0.04$ ;  $p=0.006$ ) respond to the treatment by lowering their support for the

welfare state.<sup>27</sup> This variation in preferences regarding support for the welfare state follows our theory’s predictions about the importance of culturally sanctioned norms about wealth ownership and management. Where wealth ownership and management norms preclude one gender’s access to economic resources (i.e., in our patrilineal sample), preferences about the welfare state diverge. In contrast, preferences converge where wealth ownership and management norms accord both genders access to—and a stake in managing—wealth.

Evidence from our qualitative interviews reaffirms this interpretation. Matrilineal women tend to express views about taxation and redistribution that echo the findings of our survey experiments. When asked whether the government should raise money from the rich to help poor citizens, for example, one woman said, “I don’t agree with this because most of the rich people became rich because of their hard work.”<sup>28</sup> Another woman said that, “the government cannot raise money from the rich. This is because the rich earn because of their hard work so it is not fair for the government to raise money from the rich.”<sup>29</sup> A third respondent agreed, saying, “no, it is not right as it is their private property. But it is possible if they want to give by their own will not by force.”<sup>30</sup>

### 5.3 Revealed Preferences: A Behavioral Experiment

Next, we implemented a harder test to probe our respondents’ preferences about the welfare state. We introduced a behavioral experiment similar to the “welfare state” survey experiment. The behavioral component in this exercise comprised the mailing of postcards. Surveyors began with the following text:

You have the chance to raise your voice about an issue that matters in Shillong. Your response will help us to understand what really matters to people in Shillong. Please choose whether you support or do not support the following. The card is already stamped and addressed to the survey company. All you need to do is post it. If you wish to post this card, please do so within the next month.

The postcard text, with the experimental treatment in brackets follows:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I **support**

I **oppose**

---

<sup>27</sup>The treatment also lowers policy support among matrilineal women who have fewer assets ( $\beta = -0.03$ ;  $p = 0.067$ ), a finding consistent with our qualitative research that shows that matrilineal women across the board believe that all women in their community have traditional responsibility for asset ownership, regardless of the amount of assets they possess.

<sup>28</sup>Interview #36, Female, June 17, 2014.

<sup>29</sup>Interview #97, Female, August 28, 2015.

<sup>30</sup>Interview #82, Female, August 15, 2015.

raising the level of funding for government programmes that help the poor and the unemployed with training, employment and social services [*even if this means that the government must raise money from people like me*].

We report the mean impact of the treatment on individuals' policy support or opposition expressed in the received postcards.<sup>31</sup> Note that comparing results only among postcard senders might produce biased estimates of treatment effects if the treatment systematically impacts respondents' willingness to mail the postcards. We conducted several tests to evaluate this concern. First, we checked whether individuals' propensity to submit a postcard is related to their treatment status. There is no significant relationship between treatment status and postcard submission rates, suggesting that the treatment is independent of our ability to observe individual preferences.<sup>32</sup> Second, we test the relationship between individuals' propensity to submit postcards and treatment status, conditional on relevant covariates. These covariates included the distance of one's neighborhood from a post office as well as age, education, wealth, religion, marital status, and the household head's gender. Again, we find that individuals' propensity to submit postcards is independent of treatment status.

[Table 6]

Table 6 presents the results of our behavioral study. We uncover findings that are similar to, and larger in magnitude than, the results obtained in the survey experimental question. Columns 1-4 restrict the sample to patrilineal groups. It presents the effect of introducing the personal cost of the welfare policies on the mean proportion of postcards submitted opposing such policies. We find evidence in support of a traditional gender gap: introducing an explicit cost makes traditional wealth holders—men—12 percentage points more likely to oppose welfare state policies ( $p=0.036$ ). By contrast, the cost does not have a significant effect on women's support for the welfare state ( $\beta=0.04$ ;  $p=0.156$ ). The results among matrilineal groups differ, however. Women, the traditional wealth holders, are 14 percentage points more likely to oppose welfare state policies when they are primed to consider the cost of the policies ( $p=0.001$ ).<sup>33</sup>

Overall, these results suggest that wealth ownership and management norms make both patrilineal men and matrilineal women responsive to the individual cost of the welfare state. In contrast, the gender excluded from wealth ownership and management—patrilineal women—remain supportive of the welfare state regardless of its cost.

---

<sup>31</sup>12.02 percent of respondents (410 of 3,410) submitted postcards, a figure higher than averages reported in comparable studies.

<sup>32</sup>A two-tailed t-test of differences in mean proportion of respondents sending postcards finds a difference of -0.007 between treatment (11.7 percent submit postcards) and control groups (12.4 percent submit postcards),  $t=0.505$ .

<sup>33</sup>Those traditionally excluded from holding wealth—here, men—do not significantly alter their preferences when policies introduce an explicit cost.

## 5.4 Preferences about Private Giving

Canonical studies establish a negative relationship between wealth and support for *state-provided* public goods, arguing that material self-interest leads wealthier individuals to be less supportive of taxation by the government (Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Iversen and Soskice, 2001; Rehm, 2011). Scholarship tells a different story with regard to *private giving* and donations, however. Wealthier individuals are consistently more likely to make philanthropic donations and give to charitable causes (Becker, 1974; Reece and Zieschang, 1985; Kingma, 1989; Andreoni, 1990, 2006; Schervish and Havens, 1998).

Our prior tests probed the role of cultural norms about wealth ownership and management in explaining gender-specific variation in preferences for state-provided public goods. We now interrogate their explanatory power in the domain of private giving: charity that mimics public goods provision, namely humanitarian relief. In order to assess respondents' levels of charitable giving, we employed a version of the traditional dictator game used by Eckel and Grossman (1996), in which the usually anonymous recipient is replaced with a well-respected charity organization, the American Red Cross (here the Indian Red Cross). We introduce this charity to all respondents by explaining: "The Indian Red Cross is a voluntary humanitarian organization that provides relief in times of disasters or emergencies and promotes health and care of vulnerable people and communities."

Respondents were given a marked envelope containing Rs. 100 in ten-rupee bills (approximately \$4.50, accounting for purchasing power parity) and told that this money was theirs to keep and use as they wished. They were then offered the opportunity to donate some or all of this money to the Meghalaya Chapter of the Indian Red Cross. The address and phone number of this branch was given to respondents, so that they could later confirm the organization's receipt of funds from this project if they wished. Enumerators exited the room, leaving respondents with a locked box with a slot through which they were to deposit their envelope, once they had decided how much money, if any, to keep and how much money to give. Before leaving the room, enumerators asked respondents two questions about the instructions to confirm their comprehension of the task. The script for this question can be found in Appendix A1.

We expect that individuals' revealed preferences for private giving (i.e., humanitarian relief) will be contingent on the wealth ownership and management norms of the culture to which they are subject. Where gender egalitarian wealth management norms dominate, we expect to see convergence between men and women's preferences for private giving. Where gender inegalitarian norms about wealth distribution prevail, we expect to see a divergence between men's and women's preferences.

Table 7 reports the mean differences in Red Cross donations across our four groups of interest. As was the case with individual preferences for state-provided public goods, the results for our patrilineal sample evidence a significant gender gap in private charity, with men yielding a mean donation five rupees larger than women's ( $p=0.000$ ) Among matrilineal men and women, however, the gender gap disappears; the difference between

matrilineal men and women’s average donation is insignificant ( $p=0.679$ ) and both means closely resemble that of patrilineal men. In other words, the main variation in charitable giving appears to occur not by gender, but rather by control over economic resources.

[Table 7]

We further unpack the role of wealth ownership and management norms in Appendix A4. Patrilineal men with assets give four Rupees more (a six percentage increase) to charitable causes than men without assets ( $p=0.036$ ). That is, the more wealth patrilineal men possess, the more willing they are to contribute to private charities. The same relationship holds for both matrilineal men and women. As Appendix A4 shows, matrilineal men with assets give twelve Rupees more (an 18 percentage increase) than men without assets ( $p=0.000$ ). Similarly, matrilineal women with assets give ten Rupees (a 15 percentage increase) more than women without assets ( $p=0.000$ ). As with public goods preferences, all three groups with a stake in managing wealth have similar preferences about private giving. In contrast, wealth differentials appear inconsequential for patrilineal women. Women with assets behave no differently compared to women without assets ( $p=0.580$ ). For patrilineal women, their traditional exclusion from wealth ownership and management makes them uniformly less willing to donate to charities.

Our qualitative research supported the finding about the closing of the gender gap between matrilineal women and men. When sharing her opinions, one woman stated that private giving is “not an obligation, but [citizens] can help if they want to. They have the money and the resources to do so and they can build or bring big companies to the state and thus generate employment for the poor and the deserving.”<sup>34</sup> Another interview responded: “The poor should learn to stand on their own feet and they should follow the examples of the people who become rich due to their hard work. The rich people, if they want, they can donate the surplus to the poor. They should provide charity like donating clothes and needful things.”<sup>35</sup> A third woman said, “Yes, I strongly believe that it is an obligation of the people with high economic status to help the people who have low economic status.”<sup>36</sup> Men echoed similar viewpoints, saying, for example, that “the rich can help the poor by providing funds to those agencies who deal with poor people like orphanage[s], [and homes for] aged people.”<sup>37</sup>

## 5.5 Preferences about Public Goods Distribution Mechanism

Next, we investigate gender-specific differences in preferences around the distribution of public goods. Our theory implies that gender inequalitarian wealth ownership and management norms should lead to divergent preferences about how to distribute public goods. Relatively more gender egalitarian norms, by contrast, should lead to convergent

---

<sup>34</sup>Interview #17, Female, May 17, 2014.

<sup>35</sup>Interview #55, Female, December 8, 2014.

<sup>36</sup>Interview #45, Female, July 13, 2014.

<sup>37</sup>Interview #88, Male, August 24, 2015.

preferences in this domain. To assess these claims, we asked respondents to choose between two cash transfer policies. The text follows:

Which policy would you prefer?

(0) The government will give Rs. 1,000 per month in cash to household heads of poor families to improve their welfare.

(1) The government will spend [*Rs. 1,000/Rs. 700*] per month on programs to improve the welfare of poor families.

Respondents were asked to indicate a preference for distribution directly to the household head (0), or for distribution indirectly via government programs (1). This experiment allows us to test the impact of financial incentives on individual preferences for whether the household head or the state should control poverty reduction resources. Specifically, our treatment examines the impact of providing 43 percent more cash given directly to the household head versus the government, in comparison to an equal distribution of financial resources.

Our hypothesis is that in cultures with gender-egalitarian wealth ownership norms (i.e., matrilineal cultures), the treatment will nudge individuals to support the household head receiving more resources, as both genders are able to manage the increased household wealth. In contrast, we hypothesize that in cultures with gender-inegalitarian wealth ownership norms (i.e., patrilineal cultures), the treatment will increase support for the direct distribution of resources to the household head only in the gender that owns and controls wealth and is likely to benefit from more of it (that is, men).

Table 8 displays the treatment effect for each of our four groups of interest. Amongst matrilineal groups, both women and men are significantly more likely to prefer direct cash transfers to the household head when the experimental treatment increases the value of direct transfers, relative to indirect transfers. In other words, where both women and men have a stake in wealth management, women's and men's preferences converge around maximizing the household's net wealth. Amongst patrilineal cultures, the group responsible for both wealth ownership and management (i.e., men), also adjusts its preferences to maximize the relative benefits of direct cash transfers. However, patrilineal women, who are excluded from wealth ownership and management, do not shift their preferences. Lacking direct control over household wealth, patrilineal women continue to support the government's indirect expenditure of resources, even when it results in fewer resources for a given household. Once again, the traditional gender gap in political economy preferences is pronounced within patrilineal groups, whereas preferences converge within matrilineal groups.

[Table 8]

Our qualitative research finds widespread acknowledgment of egalitarian household decision-making norms among matrilineal groups. Across Khasi women and men, respondents emphasized that household decision-making is a collective process. In one woman's

words: “We usually sit and decide things together as a family. We all have equal rights in decision making in every aspect of the family like household budget, education, child bearing and politics.”<sup>38</sup> Again and again, respondents underlined the importance of decision-making as a process where all familial members’ views are heard: “We...consult all members in the family and make a decision on majority’s suggestions.”<sup>39</sup> In particular, wealth management decisions are made jointly, as one man notes: “Both me and my wife take responsibility about [financial, budgetary] estimates and things needed by family. It can be related to daily life, education, medical and many others.”<sup>40</sup> Another man concurs, explaining: “For us if there [are] any important issues, we [are] use[d] to discuss[ing] together in the family and tak[ing] the [decision together].”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, another woman explains: “Issues which are important and which concern and involve huge expenditure or which are related to the welfare or future of anyone, then we sit and discuss them as a whole family.”<sup>42</sup>

## 5.6 Preferences about Household Decision-making

Finally, to understand the relationship between norms about intra-household wealth ownership, management and preferences, we designed an experimental question to probe how who owns wealth affects household decision-making processes. To the extent that norms about wealth management are relatively gender-egalitarian within a given culture, we would expect intra-household decision-making processes to adjust according to the gender of the family member who generates household wealth. Yet if wealth ownership and management norms are gender-inegalitarian within a given culture, we hypothesize that the dominant gender will be unwilling to renounce decision-making authority, irrespective of which family member generates the household’s wealth. Our survey probed respondents with the following question, with experimental conditions in brackets:<sup>43</sup>

Imagine a typical husband and wife in your community. [*Both the wife and the husband earn money/ The husband stays at home while the wife earns money*].  
Let’s assume the two of them disagree over a costly household purchase.  
Should the man be the person to make the final decision?

Individuals’ responses are coded as zero if they answer “no” and one if they answer “yes.” The treatment effect is the result of moving from an economic arrangement in which both the husband and wife earn income, to an arrangement in which the wife is the main breadwinner in the household. Thus, the treatment effect isolates the role of women’s control over economic resources on intra-household decision-making. We hypothesize that gender egalitarian wealth ownership and management norms in matrilineal

---

<sup>38</sup>Interview #30, Female, July 14, 2014.

<sup>39</sup>Interview #54, Female, August 11, 2014.

<sup>40</sup>Interview #1, Male, March 27, 2014.

<sup>41</sup>Interview #42, Male, July 4, 2014.

<sup>42</sup>Interview #45, Female, July 13, 2014.

<sup>43</sup>Given that we are analyzing cultures firmly grounded in patriarchal structures of authority, we use the patriarchal decision-making structure (where men have greater decision-making power) as our baseline.

cultures will lead both men and women to have a significant, negative response to the treatment. That is, both genders will be less likely to give husbands decision-making power when the wife is the household’s breadwinner. Yet, we expect men in patrilineal cultures to remain insensitive to the treatment because they might not want to concede decision-making power even when women become the household’s main wealth generator.

Table 9 presents the results of our analysis. As predicted, both matrilineal women and men are significantly less likely to consider men as the appropriate group to make the final decision about intra-household wealth management when women are the dominant wealth-providers. For the patrilineal group, our results diverge. The treatment does not make men more likely to concede decision-making power over intra-household wealth management. In contrast, patrilineal women are responsive to the treatment, downplaying the husband’s role as the decision-maker when the husband is not the breadwinner.

[Table 9]

To summarize, we documented stark variation between how matrilineal cultures allocate wealth ownership (via women) and management responsibilities (via women and men), and how patrilineal cultures channel wealth ownership and management exclusively through men. Our findings—based on a series of experimental tests, behavioral games, and qualitative evidence—indicate that this variation is the decisive factor explaining the reversal of the gender gap in political engagement and political economy preferences across the patrilineal and matrilineal societies in our study.

## 6 Discussion

The research design that we employ in our study—in particular, probing attitudes among roughly equal samples of men and women in neighboring matrilineal and patrilineal communities—allows us to more carefully adjudicate between the roles of culture, capital, political institutions, and gender in driving the political economy gender gap. All groups in our study are subject to similar political and institutional structures, which allows us to rule out formal political institutions as the determinant of the gender gap variation that we uncover. Similarly, the fact that we observe men and women articulate different modes of political engagement and preferences in each culture suggests that biological factors associated with particular genders are also not responsible for the gender gap. The main driver of variation between our matrilineal and patrilineal samples is culturally specified norms governing wealth ownership and management. We argue that these cultural norms regarding wealth are key drivers of the gender gap.

### 6.1 Alternate Explanations

Nonetheless, we consider several alternate explanations that might reasonably be expected to explain our findings.

**Non-Material Social Norms** First, one might ask whether cultural norms associated with unrelated social practices, rather than cultural norms about wealth ownership, drive our findings. This could be a concern if matrilineal groups adopt other social practices that in turn lead them to formulate different political economy preferences compared to patrilineal groups. We consider several sets of social practices. One set of practices concerns norms regarding parental co-residence. Parents are more likely to reside with adult daughters than sons in matrilineal societies, but more likely to reside with adult sons in patrilineal societies. Co-resident parents could influence children’s political economy preferences if parents provide children with either greater responsibilities (in turn, potentially diminishing children’s time available to engage in politics) or more voice (in turn, encouraging political engagement). However, we find no evidence that variation in co-residence drives the gender gap; the results in all of our analyses are robust to the inclusion of controls for co-residence (Appendixes A5-A9).

Norms about religion could also inform the gender gap, particularly if religious traditions support varied social roles for women. Religious background does vary across cultural groups, with matrilineal groups much more likely to practice Christianity than patrilineal groups. Yet, our main results remain robust to the inclusion of a control variable for religious backgrounds (Tables 5-6 and 7-8) as well as to the including levels of religiosity as a control (Appendixes A5-A9). Another set of social practices concern norms surrounding marriage. The social emphasis of marriage tends to be less stringent in matrilineal communities, such that fewer members of patrilineal (42%) versus matrilineal (57%) groups are single.<sup>44</sup> If marriage alters patterns of political engagement and political economy preferences, then our analyses should account for this possibility. To begin, note that women are significantly less likely than men to be single in both patrilineal ( $p=0.001$ ) and matrilineal ( $p=0.020$ ) groups, suggesting a gender-based hierarchy still prevails in social pressure to marry. Additionally, our main specifications’ findings are robust to controlling for marital status (Appendixes A5-A9). Overall, therefore, we cannot find evidence that alternative social practices beyond norms regarding wealth control and management predict the gender gap reversal in Meghalaya’s matrilineal cultures.

**Political Institutions** Second, it is possible that formal or informal political institutions differ across each cultural group, in turn influencing how men and women in each group choose to interact with the state. As discussed earlier, however, both patrilineal and matrilineal groups in our study follow patriarchal political practices. Men, rather than women, are significantly more likely to hold formal positions of political power in both cultural groups. Qualitative evidence reveal widespread consensus that matrilineal women are excluded from formal positions of power, despite being very active politically in Meghalaya. In the words of one Khasi woman, “only men are fit to be in the Dorbar.”<sup>45</sup> The *dorbars* work, another respondent specifies, is “to manage the locality.” This, she

---

<sup>44</sup>We define a person as ‘single’ if they describe their marital status as either ‘single’, ‘separated’, ‘divorced’ or ‘widowed.’ Alternately, we define a person as ‘married’ if they explain their marital status as ‘married’ or ‘remarried.’

<sup>45</sup>Interview #85, Female, August 19, 2015.

notes is a task “elder male members” are the only “one[s] who know how” to achieve.<sup>46</sup> Male respondents confirm this sentiment. One man notes: “it is our duty to attend.”<sup>47</sup> Another man explains his *Dorbar* attendance by saying: “I feel that I may contribute something towards the development of the locality by attending the *Dorbar*.”<sup>48</sup> A third male participant points out: “Mainly the headman lead[s] the *dorbar* and discuss[es] different agenda[s] along with the executive members.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, political office remains a male domain in Meghalaya, suggesting that political institutions cannot explain why matrilineal women have preferences and behaviors that are akin to patrilineal men.

**Risk Aversion** Third, it is possible that men and women in matrilineal and patrilineal groups varied along other behavioral dimensions such as their tolerance for risk aversion, which in turn might explain the gender gap (Croson and Gneezy, 2009, 249-54). Anticipating this possibility, we embedded an experiment in our study to gauge levels of risk aversion. We asked participants which of two options they would prefer: a risky but high-gain bet based on a coin toss, versus a secure but low-gain option. The treatment lowered the value of the secure option.<sup>50</sup> We find that the treatment has a significant effect on all groups, suggesting that each group is risk-averse enough to change their preferences for risk alongside changes in the monetary cost of risk (Appendix A10). Additionally, our results indicate that both matrilineal and patrilineal women are significantly more likely to choose the secure option than men in both communities. In other words, when evaluating gender-specific tolerance for risk, we observe traditional gender-related differences between men and women, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds.

## 6.2 Implications for Other Societies

The site of our study allows us to isolate how the culturally sanctioned ownership of economic resources and the authority over their management can drive when and how preferences and political behaviors diverge between genders. Yet, do the findings from our matrilineal and patrilineal cultures have implications for other societies in the world? We argue there are several ways in which these results explain meaningful variation across other societies.

To start, our results in Figure 1 and Table 1 suggest that Meghalaya’s patrilineal tribes have a comparable gender gap in political engagement and political economy preferences, and similar attitudes toward intra-household bargaining to patrilineal groups not only in mainland India but also around the world. Our study thus speaks to pervasive inequities in gender-based political goals and behavior in a broad cross-section of societies. Because we find that cultural norms about women’s wealth ownership and management play a

---

<sup>46</sup>Interview #72, Female, August 12, 2015.

<sup>47</sup>Interview #26, Male, June 16, 2014.

<sup>48</sup>Interview #56, Male, August 12, 2014.

<sup>49</sup>Interview #83, Male, August 17, 2015.

<sup>50</sup>The text of this experiment reads: “Which of the following would you choose? Option one: receive Rs 10,000 [Treatment: Rs. 2,000] for sure or option two: throw a coin and receive Rs 20,000 if you get heads and nothing if you get tails?”

significant role in their political empowerment, we speculate that changes in such norms have the potential to diminish the gender gap in political participation and engagement in many other countries. To assess the validity of this argument, we next consider evidence about changing social norms' impact on women's political preferences and action in other settings.

We can observe the influence of changing norms in historical cases where cultural norms prohibiting women's control over wealth weakened or disappeared entirely. In particular, when changes in social norms have allowed women to access opportunities for paid labor, their political preferences and behavior shifted dramatically. Consider Cambodia, where between 1975 and 1979 many women's husbands were killed in the genocide and immediately became the primary breadwinners for their families (Jacobsen, 2008). Indeed, Soudis et al. (2016: 115) estimate that genocide resulted in the loss of 50 to 70% of Cambodian men in their forties, whom they characterize as "likely the productive cornerstone of society." Subsequently, women's political engagement rose dramatically, in part due to women-led organizations such as Women in Prosperity. These groups mobilized women's political engagement by "helping women [enter] in[to] political positions to develop skills and gain the courage to take the candidacy and become members of the parliament and the senate" (Jacobsen, 2008; 155). Thus, Cambodia illustrates the decisive improvement in women's political engagement that can follow a drop in the strength of norms prohibiting women's access to and control over wealth.

Similarly, conflict in African countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Mozambique disrupted previous social norms that limited women's wealth ownership by pushing women into new economic arenas. In many cases women "ran businesses and sought new sources of livelihood, took over household finances and supported the household, [playing] active roles in communities in new ways" (Tripp et al., 2011; 350). These newly acquired economic roles enabled women to enter the public political domain post conflict. In post-conflict Mozambique, for example, women's organizations and female ex-combatants were instrumental not only in providing conflict-resolution services but also in dramatically increasing women's political participation via organizing peace rallies in Maputo, arranging elections, and facilitating women's political engagement via voting (Tripp et al., 2011).<sup>51</sup> Thus, where social norms shift from constraining to enabling women's economic participation, women quickly translate their economic agency to own and manage wealth into political agency to express, advocate, and implement policies responsive to their personal political preferences.

Where norms shift to encourage women's labor force participation, this has ramifications not only for increasing women's public presence in workplaces, but also for

---

<sup>51</sup>In a similar vein, the history of women's economic and political participation in countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark demonstrates the link between increases in women's socially-accepted control over wealth on the one hand and political participation on the other. In Denmark, for example, in the 1970s and 80s, women become more politically active through high participation rate in trade unions, grassroots activities, and elected office soon after their workforce employment rates increased (Togeby, 1994).

changing women’s attitudes about the appropriateness of their participation in politics. The surge in women’s employment in Britain—amidst the demand for new productive capacity fueled by the First World War—liberated women from traditional, patriarchal economic norms and made them economically independent (Gavin, 2006). The shift in norms supporting women’s rising employment was an important precursor to British women’s ability to mobilize politically and collectively demand and gain the right to vote in 1918, despite women’s decreasing post-war employment opportunities (Woollacott, 1998). Across these cases, when exogenous factors such as conflict alter cultural norms regarding women’s ownership of, and control over wealth, this leads women to become more politically engaged and articulate about their political preferences—as distinct from men’s political preferences. These trends lend credence to our argument that culture influences the political economy gender gap via its ability to facilitate gender-specific access to, and control over, material resources.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper leverages a clear source of variation in cultural practices that influences how men and women own and control wealth. We study neighboring matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Meghalaya, in northeast India. Wealth is transferred from mother to daughter in our matrilineal tribes and from father to son in our patrilineal communities, yet both groups maintain common, male-dominated political institutions. We find that culturally-specific norms about wealth ownership and management predict consistent, significant variation in individuals’ preferences about the welfare state and private giving. These norms also explain the relationship between political economy preferences and patterns of political participation.

Our evidence suggests that intrinsic factors pertaining to any one particular gender cannot explain the political economy gender gap. The gender that owns wealth is more likely to participate in the political domain. In particular, both patrilineal men and matrilineal women are much more confident of their ability to hold political agents accountable than are patrilineal women and matrilineal men, respectively. Similar results obtain on a wide range of political engagement measures. These findings bolster the argument that culturally governed differences in wealth ownership explain which gender is more likely to engage politically with the state. Importantly, the reversal of the gender gap in matrilineal societies cannot be attributed to formal political institutions. Because both matrilineal and patrilineal groups in our study are subject to similar institutional structures, we are able to attribute the reversal in the gender gap solely to cultural norms regarding wealth ownership.

Additionally, norms about wealth ownership and management explain individuals’ political economy preferences. Matrilineal men, matrilineal women and patrilineal men respond similarly to the personal cost of providing public goods. These groups also behave in a congruent manner when it comes to private giving, contributing funds anonymously

to charities in equal measure. By contrast, women in the patrilineal group consistently support redistributive policies and remain insensitive to the personal costs associated with taxation. They are also significantly less likely than men to contribute household funds to charities. We attribute the closing of the gender gap in preferences about public and private giving in matrilineal societies to the fact that women and men have equal control over resource management. In patrilineal groups, by contrast, where women have neither rights to own or manage wealth, the traditional gender gap persists.

To the extent that our findings pertain to a broader set of social norms regarding women’s ability to access and accrue wealth, our results provide considerable insight into the relationship between culture, wealth, and the gender gap in the contemporary world. Our work focuses on the causal link between social norms regarding inheritance and wealth ownership on the one hand and political economy preferences and behavior on the other. But our findings also speak to the importance of other types of social norms. For example, norms regarding labor market participation, household work, and care-giving responsibilities, to name just a few, can reasonably be expected to structure women’s preferences about the welfare state and modes of political participation in a similar fashion (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006, 2010; Beaman et al., 2009; Fernández, 2013, 2014; Clots-Figueras, 2011). Indeed, recent research suggests that social norms may play a significant role in restricting women’s participation in labor markets, with significant costs for women’s local and national representation, both in India and elsewhere (Barry, 2016; Goldin, 2014).

Our research opens the door for further work on the relationship between social norms, economic institutions, and individual preferences about the public and private provision of scarce resources. In particular, research in three related directions will be particularly fruitful. First, further work to identify the impact of social norms about wealth ownership, management, and property rights on political economy preferences for other disadvantaged population groups. Second, studies of the gender gap in political economy preferences about who “deserves” access to public goods in cases of extreme scarcity—such as in the presence of high-volume refugee or economic migrant inflows. Third, broader macro-historical studies of changes in gendered norms about the control of wealth, and how such dynamics are connected to states’ initial form and function around the world. Each of these analytic agendas can help us understand how asymmetries in cultural norms about wealth ownership and management can have a decisive impact on gender discrepancies in the political arena.

## References

- Agarwal, Bina. 1994. *A Field of One's Own: Gender and land rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Akerlof, George A and Rachel E Kranton. 2000. "Economics and identity." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115(3):715–753.
- Akerlof, George A and Rachel E Kranton. 2010. *Identity economics: how our identities shape our work, wages, and well-being*. Princeton University Press.
- Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano and Nathan 2013 Nunn. 2013. "On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough." *The Qua* 128(2):469.
- Alvarez, R Michael and Edward J McCaffery. 2000. "Is There a Gender Gap in Fiscal Political Preferences?" *USC Law School, Olin Research Paper No. 00-5* .
- Andreoni, James. 1990. "Impure altruism and donations to public goods: A theory of warm-glow giving." *The economic journal* 100(401):464–477.
- Andreoni, James. 2006. *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*. 2 ed. Elsevier chapter Chapter 18 Philanthropy.  
**URL:** <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1574071406020185>
- Angus, Campbell, Philip E Converse, Warren Miller and Donald E Stokes. 1960. "The American Voter." *Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press* .
- Aries, Elizabeth. 1998. *Gender differences in interaction: A reexamination*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Baron-Cohen, Simon. 2003. *The Essential Difference: Men, Women, and the Extreme Male Brain*. Allen Lane, London.
- Barres, Ben A. 2006. "Does gender matter?" *Nature* 442(7099):133–136.
- Barry, Ellen. 2016. "In India, a Small Band of Women Risk It All for a Chance to Work." *New York Times* .  
**URL:** [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/world/asia/indian-women-labor-work-force.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/world/asia/indian-women-labor-work-force.html?_r=0)
- Beaman, Lori, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande and Petia Topalova. 2009. "Powerful Women: Female Leadership and Gender Bias." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(4):1497–1540.
- Becker, Gary. 1974. "A theory of social interactions."
- Bhavnani, Rikhil R. 2009. "Do Electoral Quotas Work After They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India." *American Political Science Review* 103(1):23–35.

- Bohn, Simone R. 2011. "Social policy and vote in Brazil: Bolsa Família and the shifts in Lula's electoral base." *Latin American Research Review* 46(1):54–79.
- Boris, Eileen and Peter Bardaglio. 1983. "The transformation of patriarchy: The historic role of the state." *Families, politics, and public policy* pp. 70–93.
- Boserup, Ester. 1970. "Women in Economic Development." *London: Earthscan* .
- Brady, Henry E, Sidney Verba and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation." *American Political Science Review* 89(02):271–294.
- Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba. 1997. "The Public Consequences of Private Inequality: Family Life and Citizen Participation." *American Political Science Review* 91(2):373–389.
- Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba. 2001. *The private roots of public action*. Harvard University Press.
- Buss, David M. 1989. "Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypotheses tested in 37 cultures." *Behavioral and brain sciences* 12(01):1–14.
- Campbell, Jacquelyn C. 2002. "Health consequences of intimate partner violence." *The Lancet* 359(9314):1331–1336.
- Cantlie, Keith. 1974. *Notes on Khasi Law*. Ri Khasi Press.
- Chacko, Pariyaram Mathew. 1998. *Matriliny in Meghalaya: Tradition and Change*. Regency Publications New Delhi.
- Chakraborty, Tanika and Sukkoo Kim. 2010. "Kinship institutions and sex ratios in India." *Demography* 47(4):989–1012.
- Chaney, Carole Kennedy, R Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler. 1998. "Explaining the gender gap in US presidential elections, 1980-1992." *Political Research Quarterly* 51(2):311–339.
- Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube and Bilal Siddiqi. 2015. "The White-Man Effect: How Foreigner Presence Affects Behavior in Experiments." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 118:397–414.
- Clots-Figueras, Irma. 2011. "Women in politics: Evidence from the Indian States." *Journal of Public Economics* 95(7):664–690.
- Coffe, Hilde and Catherine Bolzendahl. 2010. "Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation." *Sex Roles* 62(5-6):318–333.
- Colarelli, Stephen M, Jennifer L Spranger, Ma Hechanova et al. 2006. "Women, power, and sex composition in small groups: An evolutionary perspective." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 27(2):163–184.

- Conover, Pamela Johnston. 1988. "Feminists and the gender gap." *The Journal of Politics* 50(4):985–1010.
- Croson, Rachel and Uri Gneezy. 2009. "Gender differences in preferences." *Journal of Economic literature* 47(2):448–474.
- Crowder-Meyer, Melody. 2007. Gender differences in policy preferences and priorities. In *Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago*.
- Deere, Carmen Diana and Cheryl R Doss. 2006. "The gender asset gap: What do we know and why does it matter?" *Feminist Economics* 12(1-2):1–50.
- Doepke, Matthias, Michele Tertilt and Alessandra Voena. 2012. "The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights." *Annual Review of Economics* 4(1).
- Doss, Cheryl R, Carmen Diana Deere, Abena D Oduro, Hema Swaminathan, JY Sutchitra, Rahul Lahoti, William Baah-Boateng, Louis Boakye-Yiadom, Jackeline Contreras, Jennifer Twyman et al. 2011. *The gender asset and wealth gaps: Evidence from Ecuador, Ghana, and Karnataka, India*.
- Duverger, Maurice. 1955. *The political role of women*. UNESCO.
- Eckel, Catherine C and Philip J Grossman. 1996. "Altruism in Anonymous Dictator Games." *Games and Economic Behavior* 16(2):181–91.
- Edlund, Lena and Rohini Pande. 2002. "Why have women become left-wing? The political gender gap and the decline in marriage." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* pp. 917–961.
- Engels, Friedrich. 1884. "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, trans." *Alec West, rev. and ed. EB Leacock (New York, 1972)* p. 129.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1951. *Social Anthropology*. London: Cohen & West.
- Fehr, Ernst and Urs Fischbacher. 2003. "The nature of human altruism." *Nature* 425(6960):785–791.
- Fels, Anna. 2004. "Do women lack ambition?" *Harvard Business Review* 82(4):50–60.
- Ferguson, Niall. 1999. *The pity of war*. Basic Books New York.
- Fernández, Raquel. 2013. "Cultural Change as Learning: The Evolution of Female Labor Force Participation over a Century." *American Economic Review* 103(1):472–500.
- Fernández, Raquel. 2014. "Women's rights and development." *Journal of Economic Growth* 19(1):37–80.
- Folbre, Nancy. N.d. *Greed, lust & gender: a history of economic ideas*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Fox, Richard L and Jennifer L Lawless. 2011. "Gaining and losing interest in running for public office: The concept of dynamic political ambition." *The Journal of Politics* 73(2):443–462.
- Fox, Richard L and Jennifer L Lawless. 2014. "Uncovering the origins of the gender gap in political ambition." *American Political Science Review* 108(3):499–519.
- Gillion, Daniel Q, Jonathan M Ladd and Marc Meredith. 2014. Education, party polarization and the origins of the partisan gender gap. Technical report Working paper.
- Gneezy, Uri, Muriel Niederle, Aldo Rustichini et al. 2003. "Performance in competitive environments: Gender differences." *Quarterly Journal of Economics, Cambridge Massachusetts* 118(3):1049–1074.
- Goldin, Claudia. 1990. *The gender gap: An economic history of American women*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldin, Claudia. 2014. "A grand gender convergence: Its last chapter." *The American Economic Review* 104(4):1091–1119.
- Gottlieb, Jessica, Guy Grossman and Amanda Lea Robinson. 2015. "Do Men and Women Have Different Policy Preferences, and If so, Why?" *Afrobarometer WP153* .
- Haokip, Thongkholal and Soubhagya Ranjan Padhi. 2013. "The Kuki Tribes of Meghalaya: A Study of Their Socio-Political Problems." *Current Tribal Situation: Strategies for Planning, Welfare and Sustainable Development* pp. 85–93.
- Huddy, Leonie, Erin Cassese and Mary-Kate Lizotte. 2008. "Gender, Public Opinion, and Political Reasoning." *Political Women and American Democracy* pp. 31–49.
- Hutchings, Vincent L, Nicholas A Valentino, Tasha S Philpot and Ismail K White. 2004. "The Compassion Strategy: Race And the Gender Gap in Campaign 2000." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68(4):512–541.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2000. "The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective." *International Political Science Review* 21(4):441–463.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2003. *Rising Tide: Gender Equality And Cultural Change Around the World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Iversen, Torben and David Soskice. 2001. "An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review* 95(4):875–894.
- Iversen, Torben and Frances McCall Rosenbluth. 2010. *Women, work, and politics: The political economy of gender inequality*. Yale University Press.
- Iversen, Torben and Frances Rosenbluth. 2006. "The Political Economy of Gender: Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Gender Division of Labor and the Gender Voting Gap." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(1):1–19.

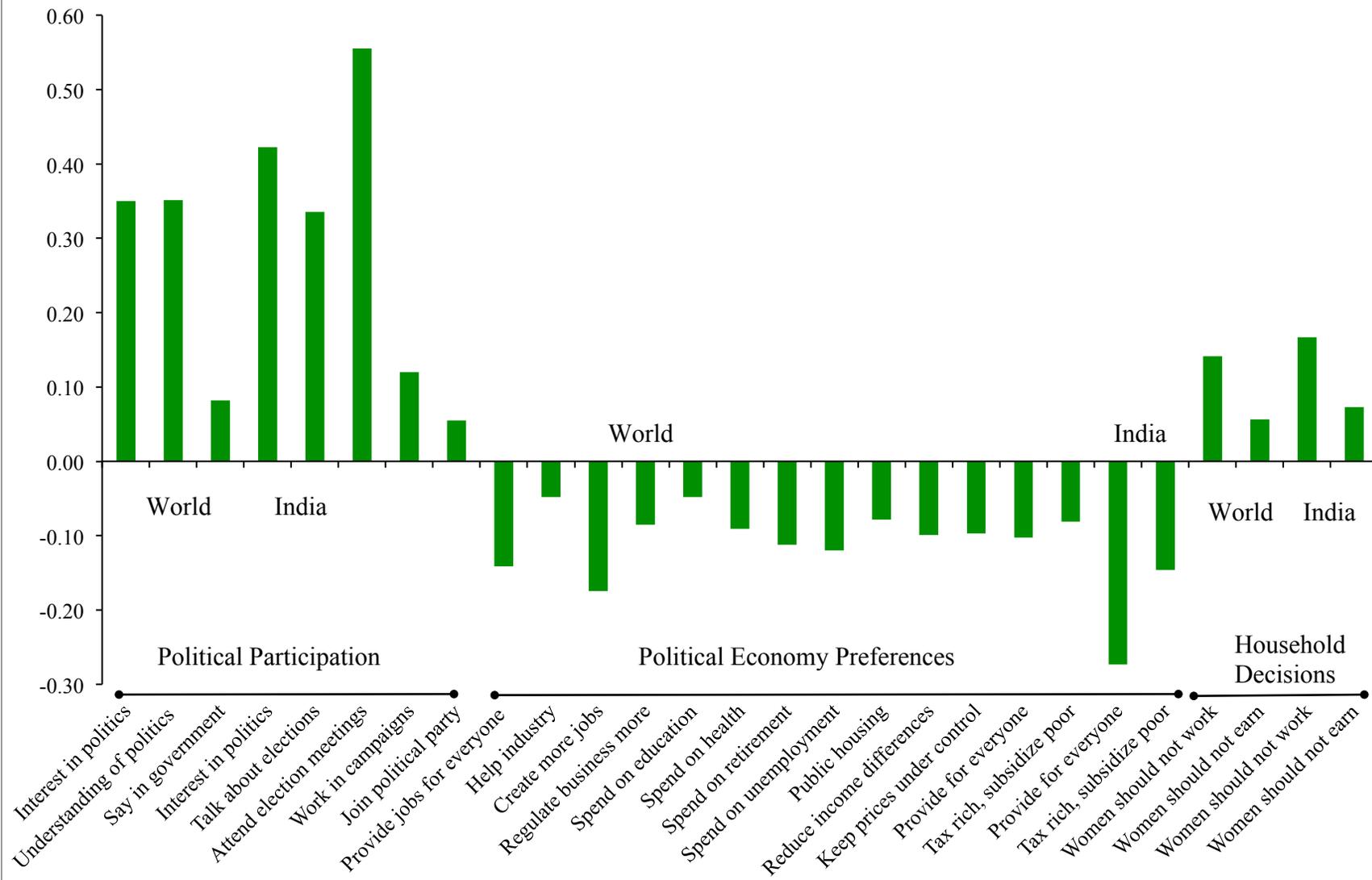
- Kama, MN, LS Gasa and CJ Thomas. 1998. "Power to People in Meghalaya."
- Kane, Emily W and Laura J Macaulay. 1993. "Interviewer Gender and Gender Attitudes." *Public opinion quarterly* 57(1):1–28.
- Kanthak, Kristin and George A Krause. 2010. "Valuing Diversity In Political Organizations: Gender and Token Minorities in the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(4):839–854.
- Kanthak, Kristin and Jonathan Woon. 2015. "Women Don't Run? Election Aversion And Candidate Entry." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3):595–612.
- Karna, M.N. 2005. Meghalaya. Insitute of Developing Economics Tokyo.
- Kathlene, Lyn. 1994. "Power and Influence in State Legislative Policymaking: The Interaction of Gender and Position in Committee Hearing Debates." *American Political Science Review* 88(03):560–576.
- Kathlene, Lyn. 1995. "Alternative views of crime: Legislative policymaking in gendered terms." *the Journal of Politics* 57(3):696–723.
- Kaufmann, Karen M and John R Petrocik. 1999. "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 864–887.
- Kelly, Nathan J and Peter K Enns. 2010. "Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(4):855–870.
- Kingma, Bruce Robert. 1989. "An Accurate Measurement of the Crowd-out Effect, Income Effect, and Price Effect for Charitable Contributions." *The journal of political economy* pp. 1197–1207.
- Kunovich, Sheri L, Pamela Paxton and Melanie M Hughes. 2007. "Gender in Politics." *The Annual Review of Sociology* .
- Kunreuther, Laura. 2009. "Between love and property: Voice, sentiment, and subjectivity in the reform of daughter's inheritance in Nepal." *American Ethnologist* 36(3):545–562.
- Lawrence, Peter A. 2006. "Men, women, and ghosts in science." *PLoS Biol* 4(1):e19.
- Leiman, B. 1978. Affective empathy and subsequent altruism in kindergarteners and first graders. In *annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto*.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 2008. *Structural Anthropology*. The Penguin Press London: Allen Lane.
- Lewis, Paul H. 2004. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 36(04):719–742.

- Lizzeri, Alessandro and Nicola Persico. 2004. "Why did the Elites Extend the Suffrage? Democracy and the Scope of Government, with an Application to Britain's" Age of Reform". *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* pp. 707–765.
- Lundberg, Shelly and Robert A Pollak. 1993. "Separate Spheres Bargaining And the Marriage Market." *Journal of Political Economy* 101(6):988–1010.
- Lundberg, Shelly and Robert A Pollak. 1994. "Noncooperative Bargaining Models of Marriage." *The American Economic Review* 84(2):132–137.
- Mahapatra, Padmalaya. 2008. "Status of Mizo Women Some Reflections." *Mirzoram, Dimensions and Perspectives: Society, Economy, and Polity* p. 379.
- Mansfield, Harvey Claffin. 2006. *Manliness*. Yale University Press.
- Marcus, Robert F, Edward J Roke and Carol Bruner. 1985. "Verbal and nonverbal empathy and prediction of social behavior of young children." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 60(1):299–309.
- Margalit, Yotam. 2013. "Explaining Social Policy Preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession." *American Political Science Review* 107(1):80–103.
- Meltzer, Allan H and Scott F Richard. 1981. "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government." *The Journal of Political Economy* pp. 914–927.
- Mendelberg, Tali, Christopher F Karpowitz and J Baxter Oliphant. 2014. "Gender Inequality In Deliberation: Unpacking the Black Box of Interaction." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(01):18–44.
- Mendelberg, Tali, Christopher F Karpowitz and Nicholas Goedert. 2014. "Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women's Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2):291–306.
- Mendez, Jeanette Morehouse and Tracy Osborn. 2010. "Gender and the Perception of Knowledge in Political Discussion." *Political Research Quarterly* 63(2):269–279.
- Miller, Grant. 2008. "Women's suffrage, political responsiveness, and child survival in American history." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(3):1287.
- Newman, Benjamin J. 2015. "Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Local Gender-Based Earnings Inequality and Women's Belief in the American Dream." *American Journal of Political Science* .
- Nongbri, Tiplut. 2000. "Khasi Women and Matriliney: Transformations in Gender Relations." *Gender, Technology and Development* 4(3):359–395.
- Nongkinrih, Aurelius Kyrham. 2002. *Khasi Society of Meghalaya: a Sociological Understanding*. Indus Publishing.

- Norrander, Barbara and Clyde Wilcox. 2008. "The Gender Gap in Ideology." *Political Behavior* 30(4):503–523.
- Nunthara, C. 1996. *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. Indus Publishing.
- Pakem, P. 1994. Introduction. In *The Khasis and Their Matrilineal System*, ed. Pynshai Bor Syiemlieh. The Author Shillong.
- Parry, Geraint and George Moyser. 1990. "A Map of Political Participation in Britain." *Government and Opposition* 25(2):147–169.
- Parry, Geraint, George Moyser and Neil Day. 1992. *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain*. Cambridge University Press.
- Platteau, Jean-Philippe and Robert Peccoud. 2010. *Culture, Institutions, and Development: New Insights into an Old Debate*. Routledge New York.
- Population by Religious Communities*. 2001. Census 2001.
- Press, Imphal Free. 2012. "Reflections on Hmar Women Social Deprivation with Special Reference to Inheritance - an Analysis." Kangla Online.  
**URL:** <http://kanglaonline.com/2012/12/reflections-on-hmar-women-social-deprivation-with-special-reference-to-inheritance-an-analysis/>
- Quisumbing, Agnes R, ed. 2003. *Household Decisions, Gender, and Development: A synthesis of Recent Research*. International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Rao, Nitya. 2012. *Development and Change* 43(5):1025–1048.
- Reece, William S and Kimberly D Zieschang. 1985. "Consistent Estimation of the Impact of Tax Deductibility on the Level of Charitable Contributions." *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* pp. 271–293.
- Registrar General, Office. 2011a. Census 2001.
- Registrar General, Office. 2011b. "State Primary Census Abstract."
- Rehm, Philipp. 2011. "Social Policy by Popular Demand." *World Politics* 63(2):271–299.
- Reingold, Beth and Adrienne R Smith. 2012. "Welfare Policymaking and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in US State Legislatures." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1):131–147.
- Rosenstone, Steven and John M Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, participation and democracy in America*. MacMillan Publishing New York.
- Ryntathiang, Drias and Wisterwell Nongkhlaw. 2015. "Interview of Drias Ryntathiang & Wisterwell Nongkhlaw." Interview by Clarissa Lehne. Translated by Antony Syiemlieh.

- Schervish, Paul G and John J Havens. 1998. "Money and Magnanimity: New Findings on the Distribution of Income, Wealth, and Philanthropy." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 8(4):421–434.
- Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Nancy Burns and Sidney Verba. 1994. "Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources." *The Journal of Politics* 56(4):963–990.
- Schneider, David Murray. 1984. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. University of Michigan Press.
- Schneider, David Murray and Kathleen Gough. 1962. *Matrilineal Kinship*. University of California Press Berkeley.
- Schulte-Rüther, Martin, Hans J Markowitsch, N Jon Shah, Gereon R Fink and Martina Piefke. 2008. "Gender differences in brain networks supporting empathy." *Neuroimage* 42(1):393–403.
- Schwab, Klaus, Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, Saadia Zahidi, Espen Barth Eide, Paulina Padilla Ugarte, Camus Jessica and Pearl Massoudi Samandari. 2014. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*. Technical report World Economic Forum Geneva.
- Sen, Amartya. 1990. "More than 100 Million Women are Missing." *The New York Review of Books* .
- Sen, Sipra. 1992. *Tribes and Castes of Manipur: Description and Select Bibliography*. Mittal Publications.
- Shillong City Census*. 2011. Census 2011.  
**URL:** <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/187-shillong.html>
- Singh, Kumar Suresh. 1998. *People of India: Rajasthan*. Vol. 1 Popular Prakashan.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1992. "Protecting mothers and soldiers: The political origins of social policy in the United States." *Cambridge: Belknap Harvard* .
- Stevenson, Betsey and Justin Wolfers. 2006. "Bargaining In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce Laws and Family Distress." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121(1):267–288.
- Stevens, Maila. 1996. *Matriliney and Modernity: Sexual Politics and Social Change in Rural Malaysia*. Allen & Unwin.
- Subba, Tanka Bahadur, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel. 2009. *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*. Concept Publishing Company.
- Verba, Sidney, Nancy Burns and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1997. "Knowing and Caring about Politics: Gender and Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 59(4).
- Welch, Susan and John Hibbing. 1992. "Financial Conditions, Gender, and Voting in American National Elections." *The Journal of Politics* 54(1):197–213.

**Figure 1. Political Economy Gender Gap: Male - Female Attitudes**



**Table 1. Political Economy Gender Gap around the World**

	<b>Men - Women</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Political Participation</b>				
Interest in politics	0.35	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Good understanding of political issues	0.35	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
People like me don't have any say about what the government does	-0.08	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Interest in politics	0.42	(0.05)***	India	NES
How much do you talk about the election	0.34	(0.04)***	India	NES
Attend election meetings	0.56	(0.06)***	India	NES
Did you work in the campaign	0.12	(0.02)***	India	NES
Would join a party	0.05	(0.02)***	India	NES
<b>Political Economy Preferences</b>				
<i>Government should:</i>				
Provide a job for everyone who wants one	-0.14	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Provide industry with the help it needs to grow	-0.05	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Reduce the working week to create more jobs	-0.17	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Regulate business less	0.08	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Spend money on education	-0.05	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Spend money on health	-0.09	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Spend money on retirement	-0.11	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Spend money on unemployment benefits	-0.12	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Provide decent housing for those who can't afford it	-0.08	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Reduce income differences between the rich and the poor	-0.10	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Keep prices under control	-0.10	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
Take more responsibility to ensure everyone is provided for	-0.10	(0.02)***	World	WVS
Tax the rich and subsidize the poor	-0.27	(0.08)***	India	WVS
	-0.08	(0.02)***	World	WVS
	-0.15	(0.09)*	India	WVS
<b>Household Decision Making</b>				
Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income	-0.14	(0.01)***	World	ISSP
	-0.17	(0.06)***	India	ISSP
If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems	0.06	(0.01)***	World	WVS
	0.07	(0.02)***	India	WVS

*Notes:* Data drawn from International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) Role of Government (2006) and Family and Changing Gender Roles (2012) surveys; World Values Survey's (WVS) Wave 6 (2010--2014) survey; and Indian National Election Study's (NES) survey (1985). Differences in means (men minus women) reported for each survey question. Standard errors for two-tailed t-tests in parentheses: \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 2. Ancestral Breakdown of Main Groups Sampled**

	<b>Matrilineal Tribes: Khasi &amp; Jaintia</b>	<b>Patrilineal tribes: Mizo &amp; Hmar</b>	<b>Patrilineal Non-tribal</b>
<b>Place of Origin</b>	Meghalaya: East & West Khasi Hills, East & West Jaintia Hills	Meghalaya: East Khasi Hills, East & West Jaintia Hills North East India: Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Tripura	Mainland India: Bihar, Rajasthan, West Bengal
<b>Traditional Inheritor</b>	Daughters	Sons	Sons
<b>Traditional politics</b>	Male-only village councils	Male-only village councils	Male-only village councils

**Table 3. Summary Statistics**

Variable	Matrilineal		Patrilineal		Difference		
	mean	N	mean	N	mean	SE	p-value
<b>Men</b>							
Number of siblings	4.52	854	4.39	868	-0.13	0.10	0.22
Age	33.56	854	36.08	868	2.53	0.69	0.00
Marriage year	1996	345	1995	463	-0.70	0.94	0.46
Number of daughters	0.61	854	0.66	868	0.05	0.05	0.37
Number of children	1.18	854	1.34	868	0.16	0.09	0.07
Any education	1.00	854	1.00	868	0.00	0.00	.
Education beyond primary	0.94	854	0.89	868	-0.05	0.01	0.00
High wages (2 if > average)	1.06	854	1.07	868	0.01	0.03	0.75
Wealth index (Assets, 0-6)	2.44	854	2.44	868	0.00	0.06	0.94
Land title	0.07	854	0.14	868	0.07	0.01	0.00
<b>Women</b>							
Number of siblings	4.71	850	4.71	838	0.00	0.11	0.99
Age	35.88	850	35.99	838	0.11	0.68	0.87
Marriage year	1994	505	1994	607	0.14	0.84	0.86
Number of daughters	0.91	850	0.93	838	0.02	0.06	0.73
Number of children	1.79	850	1.90	838	0.10	0.10	0.28
Any education	1.00	850	1.00	838	0.00	0.00	.
Education beyond primary	0.88	850	0.72	838	-0.16	0.02	0.00
High wages (2 if > average)	0.64	850	0.64	838	-0.01	0.03	0.84
Wealth index (Assets, 0-6)	2.43	850	1.75	838	-0.68	0.07	0.00
Land title	0.27	850	0.06	838	-0.21	0.02	0.00

*Notes:* Wealth index is coded as the summation of 6 binary measures of asset ownership, where a person receives a "1" for owning at least one of each asset and a "0" otherwise. The six asset categories are: car, two-wheeler/motorbike, refrigerator, mobile phone with internet connection, land title, and house.

**Table 4a. Mean Voter Turnout, Legislative Assembly Elections**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>	<b>Matrilineal</b>
<b>Men</b>	0.63	0.83
<i>Observations</i>	868	854
<b>Women</b>	0.52	0.92
<i>Observations</i>	838	850
<b>Men - Women</b>	0.11 (0.02)***	-0.09 (0.02)***

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Did you vote in Meghalaya's most recent MLA election?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 4b. Mean Perceptions of Local Officials' Accountability**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>	<b>Matrilineal</b>
<b>Men</b>	0.66	0.51
<i>Observations</i>	868	854
<b>Women</b>	0.39	0.63
<i>Observations</i>	838	850
<b>Men - Women</b>	0.27 (0.02)***	-0.12 (0.02)***

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Is it possible for you to hold local politicians accountable for the functions they are supposed to be performing?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 4c. Mean Trust in Local Legislators**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>	<b>Matrilineal</b>
<b>Men</b>	0.56	0.75
<i>Observations</i>	868	854
<b>Women</b>	0.47	0.83
<i>Observations</i>	838	850
<b>Men - Women</b>	0.09 (0.02)***	-0.08 (0.02)***

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Do you trust local legislators to do the right thing for people in Shillong?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Dependent variable takes either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 4d. Mean Trust in Local Political Parties**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>	<b>Matrilineal</b>
	(1)	(2)
<b>Men</b>	0.48	0.45
<i>Observations</i>	868	854
<b>Women</b>	0.41	0.58
<i>Observations</i>	838	849
<b>Men - Women</b>	0.07 (0.02)***	-0.13 (0.02)***

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Do you trust political parties to do the right thing for people in Shillong?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Dependent variable takes either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 5. Effect of Personal Cost Treatment on Policy Preferences**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>		<b>Matrilineal</b>	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)
Constant (control)	0.98	0.94	0.93	0.99
<i>Observations</i>	868	868	854	854
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
Constant (control)	0.99	1.02	0.99	0.97
<i>Observations</i>	838	838	850	850
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Dependent variable takes 1 (support increase in government funding for essential services for the poor) or 0 (don't support increase in funding). Respondents answered the question: "In Meghalaya, many people lack access to essential services like water and electricity. Do you support an increase in the funding of government programs that provide essential services for the poor [even if this means that the government must raise money from people like you?]." Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 6. Effect of Postcard Treatment on Policy Preferences**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>		<b>Matrilineal</b>	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.12** (0.05)	-0.12** (0.06)	-0.09 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.12)
Constant (control)	0.98	1.04	0.88	1.06
<i>Observations</i>	101	101	50	50
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.04)
Constant (control)	1.00	1.03	1.00	0.9
<i>Observations</i>	112	112	147	147
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Note:* Dependent variable takes 1 (support increase in government funding for essential services for the poor) or 0 (don't support increase in funding). Respondents were told: "You have the chance to raise your voice about an issue that matters in Shillong. Your response will help us to understand what really matters to people in Shillong. Please choose whether you support or do not support the following. The card is already stamped and addressed to the survey company. All you need to do is post it. If you wish to post this card, please do so within the next month." Postcards contained the text: "Dear Sir/Madam, I \_\_\_\_\_ support [check box] / I oppose [check box] raising the level of funding for government programmes that help the poor and the unemployed with training, employment, and social services, [even if this means that the government must raise money from people like me]." We report results for all postcards received. Additional analysis (including use of a Heckman selection model) is available upon request. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Results are comparable for inclusion of distance to the nearest post office, logged distance to nearest post office, and for inclusion of a binary indicator of post office presence in one's ward (neighborhood). Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 7. Mean Red Cross Donations**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>	<b>Matrilineal</b>
<b>Men</b>	71.67	73.36
<i>Observations</i>	868	854
<b>Women</b>	66.63	72.84
<i>Observations</i>	838	850
<b>Men - Women</b>	5.04 (1.43)***	0.53 (1.27)

*Notes:* Dependent variable is the mean amount of donations to the Red Cross, which can take a value at 10 Rupee increments between 0-100. Standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 8. Personal Cost Treatment Effect on Public Goods Distribution Preferences**

	<b>Patrilineal</b>		<b>Matrilineal</b>	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.07*	-0.07*	-0.09**	-0.08**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant (control)	0.34	0.54	0.48	0.48
<i>Observations</i>	578	578	568	568
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.06	-0.06	-0.16***	-0.16***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant (control)	0.50	0.81	0.61	0.24
<i>Observations</i>	556	556	560	560
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Note:* This question asks respondents to choose between two policies, one where the government will give Rs. 1,000 per month in cash to household heads of poor families to improve their welfare, and one where the government will spend Rs. 1,000 per month (the baseline) or Rs. 700 per month (the cost treatment) on programs to improve the welfare of poor families. Dependent variable takes 0 (preference for first policy) or 1 (preference for second policy). Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

**Table 8. Preferences about Decision-making**

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
<b>Men</b>				
Costly government distribution	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)
Constant (control)	0.63	0.56	0.55	0.55
<i>Observations</i>	575	575	566	566
<b>Women</b>				
Costly government distribution	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.03* (0.02)	-0.03* (0.02)
Constant (control)	0.51	0.55	0.22	0.17
<i>Observations</i>	556	556	566	566
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Note:* This question asks respondents to imagine a typical husband and wife in their community. The baseline scenario is: "Both the wife and the husband earn money." The treatment is: "The husband stays at home while the wife earns money." For both treatment and control, the same question follows: "Let's assume the two of them disagree over a costly household purchase. Should the man be the person to make the final decision?" Dependent variable takes 1 (yes) or 0 (no). Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## **Appendix A1: Text of Altruism Dictator Game**

**Read the following text to the respondent:** In order to understand how people make real life decisions in Shillong, we are going to ask you a question that researchers have asked in over 20 countries around the world. This involves asking you to accept a small amount of money and decide what to do with it. For the purpose of this research, your decision needs to be taken in private.

In this question, I will give you a closed envelope containing 10 ten-rupee bills. I will then leave the room while you open the envelope.

The money in the envelope is yours to keep and spend however you wish. You may take all of it out of the envelope and everything that you choose to take is yours. Whatever you leave will be given to the charity, the Indian Red Cross. The Indian Red Cross is a voluntary humanitarian organization that provides relief in times of disasters or emergencies and promotes health and care of vulnerable people and communities. Note that no one will know your personal decision.

When you are ready to return your envelope, please seal it and push the envelope through the slot into the locked box. Then call me back to the room. Please note that only the head of the survey team has a key to this box. They will open the sealed envelopes, and send a money order for the total amount to the Indian Red Cross.

To confirm that this is taking place, you can call the head of the survey company at this phone number: 9863069167, you can call the Indian Red Cross at 361 266 5114 or visit its office in Laban, Shillong.

Please remember, you decide how much to keep and how much to send to the Indian Red Cross, and that no one will know your decision.

I will now ask you two things to make sure I explained this question clearly.

Who gets whatever money you leave in the envelope?

1. Indian Red Cross
2. Other recipient

How can you confirm that the Indian Red Cross receives this money?

1. By visiting or calling the Shillong headquarters of the Indian Red Cross or calling the head of the survey company
2. Other response

**Please leave the room and let the respondent make their choice. Once the respondent asks you to return, thank them and proceed.**

## Appendix A2. Sampling Methodology

To obtain an exhaustive list of local inhabitants, we first requested permission from the ward and block headmen (*Rangbah Shnongs* and *Rangbah Dongs*) to gather this information and conduct the survey in their jurisdiction. In those localities where we gained permission, we next confirmed and improved this information via visits with local Anganwadis<sup>1</sup> and ASHA workers,<sup>2</sup> who had detailed, up to date information on each local inhabitant thanks to biannual home visits to every local household. Our enumerators digitized this information and estimated each individual's ethnic background according to their last name. We then coded bins of groups adhering to similar social norms using the following categories: matrilineal societies, northeast Indian patrilineal societies, and patrilineal societies from other parts of India. Stratified random sampling procedures are explained in the main text.

Following experience from a pilot survey conducted in January of 2015, we factored in a high refusal and absentee rate of 50%. In consequence, enumerators received lists of potential respondents containing twice the number of names required from the relevant locality.<sup>3</sup> We subsequently fine-tuned the balance between our groups of interest by identifying, via fieldwork, those PSUs containing high concentrations of our four low-frequency types: poor, elderly, matrilineal men and wealthy, patrilineal men and women.

---

<sup>1</sup> Community-based voluntary workers of the Integrated Child Development Service Programme, which began in 1975. Anganwadi workers monitor children's growth, organize supplementary feeding and immunization sessions, treat minor ailments and refers cases to medical facilities (Chattopadhyay 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) established through the Government of India's community health worker (CHW) program. These women function as service extenders in the existing mainstream health system (similar tasks to those of Anganwadi workers; see prior footnote) and act as 'cultural mediators' between the existing health system and local people (Scott and Shanker 2010).

<sup>3</sup> If the individual listed was not at home at the time of the enumerator's visit and was not easily available by appointment, enumerators were allowed to interview one of the present household members, in compliance with strict specifications. The chosen member had to be of the same sex as the originally selected individual and either closest in age and older or closest in age and younger than him or her. Enumerators sequentially alternated between the two permutations of this last rule to ensure a balanced age distribution.

### Appendix A3. Effect of Personal Cost Treatment on Policy Preferences

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
	High Wealth (Assets)	Low Wealth (No Assets)	High Wealth (Assets)	Low Wealth (No Assets)
<b>Men</b>				
Treatment	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.06** (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Constant (control)	0.98	0.99	0.93	0.92
<i>Observations</i>	350	518	420	434
<b>Women</b>				
Treatment	-0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03* (0.02)
Constant (control)	1.00	0.98	1.00	0.98
<i>Observations</i>	192	646	465	385

*Notes:* Dependent variable takes 1 (support increase in government funding for essential services for the poor) or 0 (don't support increase in funding). Respondents answered the question: "In Meghalaya, many people lack access to essential services like water and electricity. Do you support an increase in the funding of government programs that provide essential services for the poor [even if this means that the government must raise money from people like you?]." High wealth is measured as owning at least one of the following valuable assets: land titled in one's name, house titled in one's name, or car. Low wealth is measured as owning none of these asset types. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Appendix A4. Mean Red Cross Donations

	Patrilineal			Matrilineal		
	High Wealth (Assets)	Low Wealth (No Assets)	High - Low	High Wealth (Assets)	Low Wealth (No Assets)	High - Low
<b>Men</b>						
Mean	74.26	69.92	-4.33** (2.06)	79.43	67.49	-11.94*** (1.72)
<i>Observations</i>	350	518		420	434	
<b>Women</b>						
Mean	67.66	66.33	-1.32 (2.39)	77.33	67.40	-9.93*** (1.80)
<i>Observations</i>	192	646		465	385	

*Notes:* Dependent variable is the mean amount of donations to the Red Cross, which can take a value at 10 Rupee increments between 0 and 100. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Appendix A5. Personal Cost Treatment Effect on Policy Preferences, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)
Constant (control)	0.94	0.95	0.99	1.01
<i>Observations</i>	868	868	854	854
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)
Constant (control)	1.02	1.03	0.97	0.77
<i>Observations</i>	838	828	850	850
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Dependent variable takes 1 (support increase in government funding for essential services for the poor) or 0 (don't support increase in funding). Respondents answered the question: "In Meghalaya, many people lack access to essential services like water and electricity. Do you support an increase in the funding of government programs that provide essential services for the poor [even if this means that the government must raise money from people like you?]." Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Appendix A6. Effect of Postcard Treatment on Policy Preferences, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.12** (0.06)	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.11 (0.12)	-0.13 (0.13)
Constant (control)	1.04	1.41	1.06	0.96
<i>Observations</i>	101	101	50	50
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.04)	-0.15*** (0.04)
Constant (control)	1.03	1.16	0.90	0.55
<i>Observations</i>	112	112	147	147
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Dependent variable takes 1 (support increase in government funding for essential services for the poor) or 0 (don't support increase in funding). Respondents were told: "You have the chance to raise your voice about an issue that matters in Shillong. Your response will help us to understand what really matters to people in Shillong. Please choose whether you support or do not support the following. The card is already stamped and addressed to the survey company. All you need to do is post it. If you wish to post this card, please do so within the next month." Postcards contained the text: "Dear Sir/Madam, I \_\_\_\_\_ support [check box] / I oppose [check box] raising the level of funding for government programmes that help the poor and the unemployed with training, employment, and social services, [even if this means that the government must raise money from people like me]." We report results for all postcards received. Additional analysis (including use of a Heckman selection model) is available upon request. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Results are comparable for inclusion of distance to the nearest post office, logged distance to nearest post office, and for inclusion of a binary indicator of post office presence in one's ward (neighborhood). Robust standard errors in parentheses: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## Appendix A7. Effect of Personal Cost Treatment on Public Goods Distribution Preferences, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
<b>Men</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.07* (0.04)	-0.07** (0.04)	-0.08** (0.04)	-0.09** (0.04)
Constant (control)	0.54	0.78	0.48	0.24
<i>Observations</i>	578	578	568	568
<b>Women</b>				
Explicit cost to policy	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.04)
Constant (control)	0.81	0.11	0.24	-0.05
<i>Observations</i>	556	549	560	560
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* This question asks respondents to choose between two policies, one where the government will give Rs. 1,000 per month in cash to household heads of poor families to improve their welfare, and one where the government will spend Rs. 1,000 per month (the baseline) or Rs. 700 per month (the cost treatment) on programs to improve the welfare of poor families. Dependent variable takes 0 (preference for first policy) or 1 (preference for second policy). Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

### Appendix A8a. Mean Voter Turnout, Legislative Assembly Elections, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
Male	0.09*** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.09*** (0.02)
Constant (control)	1.80	1.69	1.51	1.20
<i>Observations</i>	1706	1696	1704	1704
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Did you vote in Meghalaya's most recent MLA election?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

### Appendix A8b. Mean Perceptions of Local Officials' Accountability, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
Male	0.28*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.03)	-0.11*** (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.02)
Constant (control)	1.23	0.55	1.80	1.43
<i>Observations</i>	1706	1696	1704	1704
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Is it possible for you to hold local politicians accountable for the functions they are supposed to be performing?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

### Appendix A8c. Mean Trust in Local Legislators, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
Male	0.10*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)
Constant (control)	1.51	1.06	1.67	1.39
<i>Observations</i>	1706	1696	1704	1704
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Do you trust local legislators to do the right thing for people in Shillong?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

### Appendix A8d. Mean Trust in Local Political Parties, with Social Controls

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
Male	0.08*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.03)	-0.14*** (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.02)
Constant (control)	1.56	1.27	1.87	1.61
<i>Observations</i>	1706	1696	1703	1703
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Responses to the question: "Do you trust political parties to do the right thing for people in Shillong?" The dependent variable takes a value of either 0 or 1, where 0 indicates no and 1, yes. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Appendix A9. Mean Red Cross Donations, with Social Controls

	<b>Patrilineal</b>		<b>Matrilineal</b>	
Female	-4.61*** (1.51)	-4.91*** (1.58)	-0.66 (1.25)	-0.55 (1.29)
Constant (control)	65.29	66.52	55.93	59.32
<i>Observations</i>	1706	1696	1704	1704
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Dependent variable is the mean amount of donations to the Red Cross, which can take a value at 10 Rupee increments between 0 and 100. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Social controls include marital status, co-residence with an elder parent, religiosity, and whether the respondent has held position in local government. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Appendix A10. Risk Aversion

	Patrilineal		Matrilineal	
<b>Men</b>				
Treatment	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Constant (control)	0.92	0.73	0.87	0.69
<i>Observations</i>	868	868	854	854
<b>Women</b>				
Treatment	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.03** (0.02)	-0.03* (0.02)
Constant (control)	0.93	0.69	0.95	0.64
<i>Observations</i>	838	838	850	850
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* The question asks respondents to choose between a coin toss and a sure bet. The baseline scenario is: "Option one: receive Rs 10,000 for sure or option two: throw a coin and receive Rs 20,000 if you get heads and nothing if you get tails?" The treatment is: "Option one: receive Rs 2,000 for sure or option two: throw a coin and receive Rs 20,000 if you get heads and nothing if you get tails?" Dependent variable takes 1 (choose coin toss) or 0 (choose sure bet). Demographic controls include: age, educational level, wealth index, and religion. Robust standard errors in parentheses: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01.