Women's Family Power and Gender Preference in Minya, Egypt

Kathryn M. Yount, Ph.D.
Departments of Global Health and Sociology
Emory University

The Emory Center for Myth and Ritual in American Life
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Abstract

Structural and ideational theories are adapted to explore the influence of women's resources and ideational exposures on their family power and gender preferences in Minya, Egypt. Data from a household survey of 2,226 married women aged 15 – 54 show that residence with marital kin decreases women's family power. Women in endogamous marriages have greater family power than women in nonendogamous marriages but still tend to prefer sons. Educated women report weaker son preference and greater influence in decisions, but still tend to prefer sons. The positive association of women's education, paid work, and urban residence with a variable measuring girl or equal preference *and* family power suggests that selected resources and ideational exposures may improve girls' well-being in Minya.

Introduction

In settings where parents rely on children for security in old age and where social, economic, and legal institutions are highly patriarchal, the real and perceived utility of having sons over daughters (Coombs, Coombs, & McClelland, 1975) becomes part of the normative environment that shapes decisions about care (Arnold, 1992; Goodkind, 1996; Kishor, 1993). Given such settings, scholars debate whether women's access to and control over resources will improve the well-being of girls. Some argue that more educated women will better implement their preferences for sons (Das Gupta, 1987). Others argue that women with more economic resources will allocate them more equitably to sons and daughters (Barbeau, 1987, in Kurtz & Johnson-Welch, 1997; Thomas, 1990). Still others do not assume that individual preferences are fixed and have modeled the effect of community-level institutions and individual resources on women's power and ideals about gender (Balk, 1997). At the crux of this debate are two questions: In patriarchal settings, which familial and extrafamilial resources and constraints influence a woman's power in decisions related to her children? And, do a woman's extrafamilial resources and ideational exposures influence her gender preferences in such settings?

Here, I integrate structural and ideational theories to address these questions in Minya, Egypt. I broaden Brinton's (1988) theory of the institutional and familial bases of gender stratification processes to include socioeconomic resources and constraints within and beyond the marital home. I argue that these resources and constraints affect a woman's influence in decisions pertaining to her children. I also adapt Thornton's (2001) theory of developmental idealism to explore whether a woman's extrafamilial exposures to ideals about gender are associated with her preferences for sons and daughters. Using population-based data from Minya, I test the simultaneous effects of women's resources and ideational exposures on their gender preferences and influence in domestic and life course decisions related to children.

Structural and Familial Bases of Gender Stratification Processes

Brinton (1988) argues that the educational system and labor market are critical to gender-stratification processes that differentiate and rank women relative to men because these institutions affect the timing of educational and other investments in people. Where the timing of such decisions is condensed, Brinton argues that there are fewer points in the life cycle at which

such investments can occur. In Egypt, among women aged 25 – 49 years, the median age at marriage is 19.5 (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001), and women rarely continue their education after marriage. Only 25% of ever-married women of reproductive age have ever worked for cash, with 8% working only before marriage and 17% working after marriage (El-Zanaty, Hussein, Shawky, Way, & Kishor, 1996). Thus, investments in women's education in Egypt occur largely before marriage, and paid work often remains secondary to women's familial duties.

Also important for gender-stratification processes is the pattern of intergenerational exchanges and family investments. Brinton (1988) argues that in settings where parents are motivated to invest in at least one child for old-age support, have resources to invest, and perceive that the labor market favors men, they likewise will favor investments in sons over daughters. Brinton's model is useful as a framework for understanding one way in which institutional opportunities and constraints may shape parental preferences for and investments in children. The model assumes, however, that fathers and mothers share similar gender preferences; thus, the types and distribution of family resources are not considered.

Theories about the association of resources and power outcomes in social context justify inclusion of such variables (McDonald, 1980). A *power outcome* refers to the person who has the final say or who exercises the greatest influence in a decision. *Resources* refer to the bases of power outcomes and consist of valued assets or qualities of one person that help another satisfy needs or attain goals (Blood & Wolf, 1960). Resource theory, as developed by Blood and Wolf (1960), posits that the distribution of marital power depends on the balance of valued resources among husbands and wives.

Applications of resource theory have focused on *overt power*, or instances of open conflict, strategy, and efforts at change (Komter, 1989). *Covert power* refers to the subordination of one person to another through fear or avoidance of conflict, and *invisible power* refers to a process that attains a subordinate's approval of dominant values (Komter, 1989). In addition to these dimensions, beliefs in the complementarity of women and men in Egypt reinforce a *separate-spheres* notion of decision making that distinguishes women's (relegated) authority in *daily domestic decisions* from men's authority in *life course* and major financial decisions, including those related to children (Hoodfar, 1997; Kishor, 1994; Yount & Agree, 2004).

Most applications of resource theory have tested the influence of familial and extrafamilial *economic resources* on overt power outcomes. Resources of this kind often have included education, employment, and wealth. In Egypt, girls have increasing access to education, but girls' enrollment rates remain 10 percentage points lower than boys', and proportionately more girls than boys never attend school (El-Tawila et al., 1999). Men still represent over two thirds of the documented labor force (World Bank Group, 2002), and Islamic laws pertaining to inheritance favor men, husbands, and sons over women, wives, and daughters (Yount, 1999). Although Muslim women have rights to inheritance and other sources of wealth, including the brideprice, gold, trousseau, and furnishings that they acquire in preparation for marriage, Muslim women in some settings may forfeit these rights to ensure support from kin (Moors, 1995).

One modification to resource theory stresses the conditioning effects of social context (McDonald, 1980). Rodman (1967, 1972) shows empirically that a husband's economic resources are irrelevant to marital power in *highly patriarchal settings* because ascribed attributes give husbands control over major decisions (Rodman, 1972). Still, Rodman (1972) and others observe a positive association between a woman's economic resources and her power in economic decisions in marriage across varied normative and institutional contexts (Burr, Ahern,

& Knowles, 1977; Cooney, Rogler, Hurrell, & Ortiz, 1982; Fox, 1973; Oropesa, 1997).

A second modification to resource theory stresses the influence of human and social resources within and beyond families (Astone, Nathanson, Schoen, & Kim, 1999; Kabeer, 1999). First, women's participation in religious voluntary organizations in Egypt has diversified their social networks and expanded their notions of choice (Yount, 2004). Second, having children (and especially sons) has been positively associated with women's familial power in patrilineal settings, where descent from male ancestors is traced only through males (e.g., Obermeyer, 1992). Third, endogamous marriage, or marriage to a blood relative, comprises one third of marriages in Egypt (El-Zanaty et al., 1996). Such marriages in practicing societies may enhance a woman's ability to negotiate with her marital family because the socioeconomic background of her spouse is known, spousal differences in age tend to be smaller, the socioeconomic resources of her natal kin are more accessible, and parents value daughters who are available to provide support (Bittles, 1994; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Hoodfar, 1997). (Endogamous marriage may be a social resource for men because related spouses "jointly owe their obligations" to the same male relatives (Rugh, 1984, p. 145). Notably, the practice is associated with an earlier age at marriage for women in some settings (Bittles, 1994).)

A third and related modification to resource theory stresses the influence of certain familial constraints on power outcomes. Warner, Lee, and Lee (1986) argue that the practices of patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, whereby a married son remains in his father's house but a married daughter moves out, may constrain a woman's investment decisions because ascribed attributes give marital kin authority over family decisions. In Egypt, familial solidarity is based on bonds connecting males of the same paternal lineage. Thus, older, married men often are family heads because of their age, gender, and marital position, and brothers share authority in family decisions. In 1995 in Egypt, 55% of ever-married women aged 15 – 49 lived with the husband's family at the start of marriage (El-Zanaty et al., 1996), and in Bangladesh, women living with parents-in-law have had less sway in family decisions (Balk, 1997).

This discussion motivates three hypotheses about the effects of a woman's familial and extrafamilial resources and constraints on her family power, especially daily domestic and life course decisions related to children. First, living with marital kin (e.g., parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, husband) should decrease a woman's say in both types of decisions, regardless of the economic resources at the marital household's disposal. (Absence of a husband may arise in Egypt based on migration for work.) Second, increases in a woman's access to familial (e.g., endogamous marriage) and extrafamilial (e.g., education, paid work, religious affiliation) resources, even in a highly patriarchal setting, should increase her say in both types of decisions (noting that responsibility for daily domestic decisions may be imposed on women). Third, because urban settings are characterized by smaller household sizes and more education and work experience among women (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2003), women in urban areas should have more say in both types of decisions.

Ideational Bases of Gender Stratification Processes

In contrast to scholars who emphasize the material and relational bases of family power dynamics in context, others underscore the role of *cultural values* in shaping one's ideals about family and women's place in it (Lesthaeghe, 1983; Thornton, 2001, forthcoming). Ideational

theories of family change thus provide an avenue to understand variation in gender preferences at the individual level, even in highly patriarchal societies. According to Thornton (2001), the origins of certain ideals date back to the work of scholars during the 1700s through the middle 1900s. These scholars used the *developmental paradigm* and cross-sectional variation in familial organization to infer that "less developed" nations and "more traditional" families eventually would become like their "more advanced" contemporaries. Although other scholars since have challenged many such assertions about the nature of familial and societal trajectories, Thornton (2001) contends that these earlier assertions produced the influential developmental ideals that "modern society" is good and attainable, the "modern family" is good and attainable, the modern family is a cause and an effect of modern society, and "modern individuals" are free and equal and social relations are based on consent. Modern societies are those that other scholars have called *developed* because they are characterized by high levels of industrialization, urbanization, education, wealth, and gender equality in public life. Modern families are those that other scholars have called *nontraditional* because they are characterized by individualism, nuclear living arrangements, consensual marriage preceded by courtship, youthful autonomy, and a high respect for women. Thornton posits that key actors have disseminated these ideals through various means, including but not limited to schools in non-Western societies; channels of communication, transportation, and mass media; and governmental and nongovernmental agencies promoting "community and human development."

Research from Western and non-Western societies shows that formal education is a major mechanism by which women, and to some extent men, have come to favor modern-family ideals such as gender equality and women's empowerment. In Canada, Australia, and Norway, men's and women's education have been positively associated with favoring gender equality in public and private life; these effects, however, were smaller among married women and men (Baxter & Kane, 1995). Data from a purposive sample of Taiwanese students have shown that women have had more egalitarian attitudes about gendered roles than men (Chia, Chong, & Cheng, 1986), and education has not been associated with favoring women's equality in the public sphere among male workers in India, Israel, and Bangladesh (Miller, 1984). Among teenage males in Kano, Nigeria, however, "Western" education was positively associated with favoring gender equality, and number of years of religious schooling was negatively associated with this value (Armer & Youtz, 1971). Here, the husband's education is considered an economic resource for women because it does not measure women's direct exposure to the educational system, and until the 1980s, vocational secondary graduates were guaranteed public-sector employment, a minimum monthly income, and other forms of social insurance (Assaad, El-Hamidi, & Ahmed, 2000; Hoodfar, 1997). Among women, secular education has been positively associated with approval of activities measuring women's autonomy in rural Bangladesh and Egypt (Balk, 1997; Kishor, 1994), and maternal schooling was associated with having higher professional aspirations for sons, and to some extent for daughters, in poor areas of Cuernavaca, Mexico (LeVine et al., 1991). In the U.S. and Sweden, women's education has been positively associated with favoring gender equality in public and private life (Baxter & Kane, 1995).

Other studies show that employment, exposure to media, and exposure to family planning programs also have been positively associated with modern-family ideals related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Among ever-married women in Egypt, working for cash was positively associated with supporting the idea that women have influence in decisions related to children, and hours watching television was positively associated with favoring the

idea that women have influence in other areas of family life (Kishor, 1994). In Indonesia, family planning has been marketed as a means to promote a *prosperous family* and to improve the lives of women by freeing them to participate in other activities. Some Indonesian women and men in Jakarta and Ujung Pandang have agreed that using contraception frees women to work, participate in community organizations, and attend social events (Amal, Novriaty, Hardee, Eggleston, & Hull, 1998). The distribution of family planning through outreach workers in Bangladesh reportedly has diffused the "thinkability" that women can control their reproductive lives (Mita & Simmons, 1995).

This discussion motivates three hypotheses regarding the effects on a woman's gender preferences of her direct exposure to extrafamilial sources of ideals about gender. First, because formal education and wage work may be conduits for more egalitarian ideals about gender, and because education and wage work in Egypt are positively associated with exposure to mass media (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001), women's educational attainment and work for cash should be associated with more egalitarian preferences for sons and daughters. Second, because Christian voluntary organizations in Minya such as the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services have long promoted the ideal of women's empowerment through community-based development (Sullivan, 1994; Tadros, 2000; Yount, 2004), Christian affiliation in Minya should be associated with more egalitarian preferences for sons and daughters. (See also Balk, 1997.) Finally, because women's exposure to mass media and family-planning messages tends to be higher in urban than rural Egypt (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001), urban residence should be associated with more egalitarian preferences for sons and daughters. Taken together, all hypotheses relate to the effects of either (1) women's familial and extrafamilial resources and constraints on her family power or (2) women's extrafamilial resources and ideational exposures on her family power and gender preferences. This grouping thus identifies the set of women's (primarily extrafamilial) resources and ideational exposures that may improve the well-being of girls in a highly patriarchal setting.

Method

Study Population and Data

Residents of Upper (Southern) Egypt tend to be poorer and more socially insular than those of Lower Egypt (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001). Comparing figures for the year 2000 reveals that 23% versus 28% of households owned land, 48% versus 55% of ever-married women of reproductive age had any formal education, and 11% versus 19% of these women were working for cash. The gender gap in education and paid work has a similar regional pattern: Girls' primary school enrollment is 83% versus 96% that of boys, and women's labor-force participation is 13% versus 19% that of men, respectively (UNDP, 2003). Also in 2000, total fertility rates were 4.2 versus 3.2, and 48% versus 33% of ever-married women were married to a blood relative, respectively (El-Zanaty & Way, 2001).

Access to mass media is less common in Upper Egypt compared to the nation as a whole, although having a radio or television at home is more common in urban than rural Upper Egypt (UNDP, 2003). Still, during 1999 – 2000, 73% of Upper Egyptian households had a radio, 84% had a television, and an estimated 61 per 1,000 people attended the cinema (UNDP, 2003). A higher percentage of residents in Upper than Lower Egypt are Coptic Christian, and religious

voluntary organizations have for decades been engaged in *women and development* initiatives in Upper Egypt (Sullivan, 1994). In sum, Upper Egypt is a setting where the educational system and labor market remain highly patriarchal, a majority of women rely for their security on their family's social and economic resources (El-Tawila et al., 1999), but ideational exposures are possible through education, paid work, urban residence, mass media, and religious organizations.

This analysis is based on data from a representative sample of households in Minya governorate. Minya is a poor, agrarian Upper Egyptian governorate located about 200 kilometers south of Cairo, where the risk of mortality among children aged less than five years remains higher for girls than boys, and where girls receive poorer care during illness (Yount, 1999, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). Questionnaires were implemented with the Two Governorate Linkages Survey, a five-round, longitudinal study of children's morbidity and women's reproductive experience undertaken in Qaliubia and Minya governorates during 1995 – 1997 (Langsten & Hill, 1996). Eligible participants from a representative sample of households in each governorate (N = 3,171 in Qaliubia; N = 3,125 in Minya) were interviewed every three months. (The sample in Minya excluded two districts for reasons of security.) A household listing permitted recording of age, gender, relationship to head, education, and main occupation for each member as well as births, inmigrants, and the survival status, marital status, and work status of each member for the round of first residence and for subsequent rounds. A household characteristics questionnaire included questions about the dwelling; access to electricity, water, and sanitary facilities; and ownership of consumer goods and durables. A woman's questionnaire included questions on age, marriage, education, work, pregnancies and fertility, health-related knowledge and practices, and use of contraception and was administered to all ever-married women aged 15 – 54 years or any primary caretaker of a child aged less than five years. The child's questionnaire focused on the health and nutritional status of resident children aged less than five years. A Women's Status Module was administered during round five of the survey in Minya and included questions on gender preferences, perceptions of child illness, marital history, mobility and decision making, work, and other domestic matters.

The total available sample includes 3,194 ever-married women aged 15 – 54 years; 295 of these women (9.2%) did not complete the Women's Status Module. In addition, the following women were excluded from the analysis: 236 (7.4%) unmarried women, 45 (1.4%) married women who had never had a live birth, 221 (6.9%) married women who did not have a child old enough to be making decisions about education or marriage, 137 (4.3%) women who did not answer questions on gender preference, and 34 (1.1%) women with missing data on covariates. Compared to women who answered questions on gender preference, women who did not respond were older, marginally less often had husbands with secondary or more education, and more often had at least two living daughters. Otherwise, observed characteristics of responders and nonresponders are similar (proximity of natal family, age difference between respondent and husband, respondent's education and work, household standard of living, religion, number of living sons, number of dead sons and daughters, urban vs. rural residence). This analysis thus is based on 2,226 married women who have ever had at least one school-aged child and who have complete information on variables of interest.

Measures for overt power in decisions that pertain to children are derived from questions about the person or people in the family who *have the final say* (0 = *someone else*, 1 = *joint with respondent*, 2 = *respondent alone*) about visits to friends or family members, budget of the household, a child's education, plans for a child's marriage, and type of provider for a sick child.

(See Table 1 for descriptions of decision-making items and other dependent and independent variables.) Maximum likelihood factor analysis is used to estimate standardized scores ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$) for two related factors, one measuring a woman's influence in daily domestic decisions and another measuring her influence in life course decisions.

Gender preference is measured using the Coombs gender preference scale (Coombs, Coombs, & McClelland, 1975), which is based on responses to a series of three questions, each of which asks the respondent to choose one of two combinations of boys and girls that she would like to have if she could begin childbearing over and achieve a completed family size of three. On the basis of her answers, the respondent is assigned a score from 1 (*extreme daughter preference*) to 7 (*extreme son preference*). For ease of interpretation and model checking, a 3-point version of this scale is used in the multivariate analysis (1 = *girl preference* (original score 1 – 3), 2 = *equal preference* (original score 4), and 3 = *boy preference* (original score 5 – 7)).

(Table 1)

Independent Variables

Indicators of women's familial resources and constraints include residence with parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, and the husband; whether the husband is a blood relative; difference in age between the respondent and her husband; and age group of the respondent. Although having living sons and daughters is a social (and economic) resource for parents and family, I include the number of living and dead sons and daughters as control variables for reasons described in the section on analysis. Measures of women's extrafamilial resources and potential ideational exposures include the respondent's education, whether the respondent ever worked for cash or kind, urban versus rural residence, and religious affiliation. Other measures of women's economic resources include respondent's wealth (owns/does not own gold), whether the husband completed secondary education, and marital household wealth. Marital household wealth is denoted by a score derived from estimated loadings for the first component of a principal components analysis that includes measures for source of water, type of toilet, rooms in the dwelling, access to electricity, and assets owned by the household (motorcycle, private car, transport equipment, agricultural land, other land, other residential building, shop/commercial building, farm equipment, poultry, and livestock) (See Filmer and Pritchett, 1999, for a description of the procedures used to derive this score).

Univariate and Multivariate Analysis

I examine univariate frequency distributions of outcomes and covariates. I estimate pairwise Pearson product-moment correlations between ordinal items for decision making and a series of factor analytic models for women's influence in these decisions (not shown; available upon request). Because the probably that the chi-squared (χ^2) test for residual differences between observed and expected covariance matrices increases with the size of the observed sample (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988), I estimate a one- and a two-factor model, compute the Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient ρ, and use theory and ρ to select the most parsimonious factor structure (Bohrnstedt, 1983), which in this case is two factors. I use the PROMAX oblique rotation procedure to improve the interpretability of factor loadings and compute standardized

scores for each factor. I compare mean and median scores for influence in daily domestic decisions, influence in life course decisions, and gender preference by levels of covariates. Estimates are adjusted for the multistage, cluster-sample design (Rogers, 1993; Williams, 2000).

Ordinal logistic regression is used to predict the cumulative probability of reporting son preference, as measured by the 3-point derivative of the Coombs scale. This model is based on the assumption of proportional odds, or that the ratio of the odds of the event is independent of the choice of response categories (McCullagh & Nelder, 1989). To assess the reasonableness of this assumption, the same outcome and covariates are used to fit a generalized ordinal logit model, which estimates an intercept and coefficients for each of the $m - 1$ points at which the dependent variable can be dichotomized (Fu, 1999). If a Wald test of any difference in coefficients across equations is insignificant, the assumption of proportional odds is met. In this case, the proportional odds model is given by:

$$\log\{(P_{im}/(1 - P_{im})\} = \theta_m - (S_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta + C_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta + E_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta + D_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta) \quad (1)$$

where i indexes the respondent, m indicates the category of gender preference, P_{im} denotes the cumulative probability of reporting a particular gender preference up to and including category m, S_i denotes familial resources and constraints, C_i denotes extrafamilial resources and/or exposures to developmental ideals, E_i denotes other economic resources, and D_i denotes demographic control variables. Because estimated scores for influence in life course decisions are not fully continuous, logistic regression and the same covariates are used to predict the probability that the respondent's score for degree of influence in life course (I_{ij}, where $j = 1$) and daily domestic (I_{ij}, where $j = 2$) decisions is greater than zero:

$$\mathrm{logit}(I_{ij}) = \beta_{0\mathrm{j}} + S_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta_j + C_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta_j + E_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta_j + D_i^{\mathrm{T}}\beta_j \quad (2)$$

The direction and significance of estimated coefficients in equations (1) and (2) provide tests for my hypotheses. To explore the resources and ideational exposures of women that are likely to improve the well-being of girls, I estimate the effects of S_i, C_i, E_i, and D_i on a combined indicator for having girl or equal gender preferences *and* having greater-than-zero scores for daily or life course decisions. In all multivariate analyses, robust standard errors are estimated for model coefficients to account for within-cluster correlation of responses arising from the multistage, cluster-sample design (Rogers, 1993; Williams, 2000).

Notably, items about decision making may not accurately measure overt family power and do not capture covert and invisible power (Komter, 1989). Higher percentages of women who report that they make these decisions jointly or alone, however, also believe that a husband is never justified in beating his wife. In the case of gender preference, some women may be suspicious of stating a preferred number of boys and girls, or women's reproductive histories may influence stated preferences. Some women also may state the normative response (son preference) to an interviewer in a highly patriarchal setting. To account for these biases, multivariate analyses include measures for the gender composition of living and dead children. Finally, although age is a common measure of social status in Middle Eastern and Asian settings (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Balk, 1997; Morsy, 1993), age group in an analysis of cross-sectional data may capture the exposure of different age cohorts to publicly disseminated ideals about gender, and so caution in the interpretation of age-related variables is warranted.

Results

Table 1 provides univariate statistics of women's scores for gender preference, influence in child-related decisions, and covariates. On average, married women in Minya prefer sons (*M* = 5.03), and 67% report at least some son preference (scores of 5 – 7 on the original Coombs scale, 7 = *extreme son preference*). Women do not often report having the final say about decisions related to children. Relative to other decisions, women report least often having the final say about life course decisions related to children's education and marriage (< 3%). A higher percentage of women report having the final say in decisions about type of provider for a sick child (18%). For all decisions, most women report that someone else has the final say.

Thirty-one percent of women live with at least one parent-in-law. Twenty percent live with at least one brother-in-law, and 92% live with their husband. Fifty-two percent are married to a blood relative, and 73% report that their husband is at least four years older. Levels of education remain low for women, with 65% reporting that they have no formal education. Among women who attended school, however, almost half have at least some secondary education. The employment rate among women in Minya is similar to the national average, with 16% having ever worked for cash or kind. Nineteen percent of women live in urban areas, and 23% are Coptic Christian. Regarding other economic resources and controls, only 25% of women report that they own gold, despite the high value placed on owning gold in this setting. Although slightly under half of respondents' husbands have no schooling, over one quarter of them completed high school. Over 25% of respondents report having had at least one son or at least one daughter that died. A majority of women report having two or more living sons and two or more living daughters, and the mean number of living sons is slightly higher than that of daughters (2.0 vs. 1.8).

Results of the factor analysis of women's reported influence in child-related decisions indicate that two factors explain 54% of the variance in decision-making items, and the first factor accounts for about 79% of the common variance (not shown; available on request). The factor structure after oblique rotation has a clear conceptual interpretation: Decisions about visits to family and friends, household budget, and type of provider for a sick child are more strongly associated with the second factor, and those about children's education and marriage are more strongly associated with the first factor. This factor structure clearly distinguishes daily domestic and life course decisions related to children, and the estimated association of these factors is 0.68. This factor structure is consistent with other analyses for Egypt, which support the existence of these decision-making spheres (Yount & Agree, 2004). Regarding overall fit of the two-factor model, sensitivity analyses conducted on a random subsample of observations suggest that the χ^2 test statistic is sensitive to sample size. The Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient, however, is close to 1 for the two-factor model, suggesting a reasonable fit to the data.

Table 2 shows mean and median scores for respondents' reported gender preference and influence in daily domestic and life course decisions by variables measuring a woman's familial resources and constraints, extrafamilial resources and exposures to developmental ideals, other economic resources, and demographic controls. For each variable, means and medians within a column and with different subscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$, and marginal differences are discussed in the text. Mean gender preference scores are marginally higher among women whose husbands are coresident (5.0 vs. 4.8), whereas scores for influence in both spheres of decision

making are higher when parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, and husbands are absent. Marriage to a blood relative is associated with a marginally higher mean gender preference score (5.1 vs. 5.0) but a marginally lower median score for influence in life course decisions. A greater spousal difference in age is associated with a stronger reported preference for sons (5.1 vs. 4.8) and a marginally greater say in daily domestic and life course decisions. Being older is associated with a stronger preference for sons and greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions.

(Table 2)

More educated women have a lower mean score for gender preference (4.5 among secondary-educated vs. 5.2 among uneducated), and higher mean scores for influence in daily (0.34 vs. - 0.08) and life course (0.53 vs. - 0.13) decisions. Although the mean gender preference score of secondary-educated women approaches equal preference for sons and daughters, a median score of 5.0 among these women suggests that at least 50% still prefer sons. A similar scenario is apparent for women who have ever worked for cash or kind: Having worked in this capacity is associated with more influence in daily and life course decisions and a weaker reported preference for sons, but women who have worked for cash or kind still prefer sons, on average. Being Christian is not associated with reported gender preferences but is at least marginally associated with reporting more influence in domestic and life course decisions. Compared to rural women, urban women report weaker son preference (4.6 vs. 5.1) and more say in domestic (0.37 vs. - 0.09) and life course (0.46 vs. - 0.11) decisions, on average.

Regarding other economic resources and demographic controls, women owning gold have higher scores for participation in life course decisions (0.12 vs. - 0.04) and lower mean gender preference scores (4.8 vs. 5.1), but women owning gold still prefer sons, on average. Similar associations are apparent for women with educated husbands and living in wealthier households; in addition, women with educated husbands and in wealthier households have more say in daily domestic decisions. Number of living sons is associated with stronger reported son preference, and number of living daughters is associated with marginally weaker reported son preference. Although the number of living daughters also is associated with influence in daily and life course decisions, the directions of these associations are not consistent. The prior deaths of two or more sons or daughters are associated with stronger reported son preference and less reported influence in daily and life course decisions.

Columns 1 – 3 of Table 3 show adjusted effects of the same sets of covariates on reported gender preference (1 = *girl*, 2 = *equal*, 3 = *son*) and dichotomous indicators for influence in daily domestic and life course decisions. The χ^2 test for the assumption of proportional odds in the ordinal model for gender preference suggests that this assumption is reasonable. Pearson χ^2 goodness-of-fit tests suggest that estimated logistic regression models for the decision-making variables provide reasonable fits to the data.

(Table 3)

Residence with marital kin is strongly negatively associated with women's influence in both spheres of decision making. Women who live with parents-in-law are 29% and 19% less likely than other women to report greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions, respectively. Women who live with brothers-in-law are 35% and 33% less likely than other

women to report greater influence in these decisions. Compared to women living without their husbands, women living with their husbands are 77% and 54% less likely to report greater influence in these decisions. Women's reported gender preferences do not vary by the residential status of marital kin, however. Women who are married to a blood relative are marginally more likely to report having greater influence only in life course decisions, and endogamous marriage is not associated with women's reported gender preferences. Women whose husbands are 1 – 3 years older are marginally more likely to report having greater influence in daily domestic decisions and are 34% more likely to report son preference versus equal or daughter preference. Women's absolute age is associated only with having more say in daily domestic decisions.

Regarding the adjusted effects of women's extrafamilial resources and/or ideational exposures, women with at least some preparatory education are 32% less likely than uneducated women to report son preference versus equal or daughter preference, and women with at least some secondary schooling are over 100% more likely than uneducated women to report greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions. Women who have ever worked for cash or kind are 39% and 57% more likely to report greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions, respectively, but women's work is not associated with reported gender preference. Surprisingly, Christian women are 32% more likely than Muslim women to report son preference versus other preferences, and are similarly likely to report having more say in domestic and life course decisions. Compared to women living in rural areas, those in urban areas are 36% less likely to report son preference versus other preferences and are 86% and 62% more likely to have a greater say in daily and life course decisions, respectively.

Regarding other economic resources and control variables, neither ownership of gold nor marital household wealth are associated with a woman's reported gender preferences or influence in decisions. Women married to husbands with completed secondary education are 26% more likely to report a greater say in life course decisions but report son preference versus other preferences with equal likelihood. With each additional living son, women are 35% more likely to report son preference versus other preferences, whereas with each additional living daughter, women are 12% less likely to report son preference versus other preferences. Neither measure for the gender composition of living children is associated with women's influence in daily or life course decisions, however, and having had any sons or daughters that died is not associated with either a woman's gender preferences or her say in daily or life course decisions.

Column 4 of Table 3 shows the effects of each set of covariates on reporting girl preference or equal gender preferences *and* having a greater-than-zero score for daily domestic or life course decisions. Residence with a brother-in-law and husband both are at least marginally associated with a lower likelihood of reporting girl/equal preferences and having greater influence in child-related decisions. Women with any education are 37% more likely than uneducated women to report girl/equal preferences and more say in child-related decisions. Women who have ever worked for cash and are living in an urban setting are 50% and 71% more likely to report girl/equal preferences and more say in child-related decisions, respectively. Women with living sons are 25% less likely to report girl/equal preference and more say in child-related decisions. Otherwise, only women with secondary-educated husbands are marginally more likely to report girl/equal preference and more say in child-related decisions.

Discussion

Findings here address two questions that are relevant for structural and ideational theories of gender-stratification processes: Which familial and extrafamilial resources and constraints determine a woman's power in decisions that affect her children? And, do a woman's extrafamilial resources and ideational exposures influence her gender preferences in such settings? Findings support initial expectations that residence with parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, and the husband decrease a woman's influence in daily domestic and life course decisions. Women living with any of these marital kin also are less likely both to express girl or equal preferences and to have more say in child-related decisions. Findings with regard to parents-in-law are consistent with previous research in Bangladesh (Balk, 1997), and findings with respect to brothers-in-law newly highlight the importance of a husband's fraternal relations for women's ability to act on their preferences in patrilineal settings. Also consistent with expectation, endogamous marriage is associated with marginally greater influence in life course decisions; endogamous marriage is not associated with gender preferences, however, after adjusting for other variables. In other words, women in endogamous and nonendogamous marriages both tend to prefer sons, but endogamously married women may be better able to implement their preferences in major life course decisions related to their children.

Regarding the anticipated effects of women's extrafamilial resources and ideational exposures, findings consistently show that, compared to uneducated women without experience in the paid workforce, educated women with such experience report weaker preferences for sons and greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions that pertain to children. More educated and working women still tend to prefer sons, however, which suggests that, in highly patriarchal settings, access to formal education and wage work may enable women to implement persistent (albeit milder) preferences for sons (Das Gupta, 1987). To shed light on these findings, national surveys in Egypt have shown that less than half of ever-married women of reproductive age agree that education should prepare women for work as well as family life (El-Zanaty et al., 1996). Thus, education in Egypt may be gendered in that its main purpose for women still is to inculcate "dominant cultural values" by preparing them for roles as housewives rather than as coworkers of men in the public sector (Boserup, 1990, p. 138). Moreover, *Azhar* religious schools are common in Minya (UNDP, 2003), and some scholars argue that the Islamic character of some Egyptian schools has negative implications for women's equal participation in public life (Shukrallah, 1994). Therefore, ideals about gender to which some women are exposed at school may not differ sufficiently from ideals present in families to encourage balanced preferences for sons and daughters. Despite these cautions, findings here do show that educated women with experience in paid work are more likely than uneducated women without such experience to express girl or equal preference *and* to report having a greater say in child-related decisions. Thus, nuances in the effects of women's education and work in Minya suggest that future studies should include efforts to measure the actual ideals to which educated and working women are exposed.

Also consistent with expectations are the effects of urban residence on women's gender preferences and influence in decisions pertaining to children. Women in urban areas have more equal gender preferences and greater influence in daily domestic and life course decisions than do women in rural areas. Women living in urban areas also are more likely to report simultaneously girl or equal preference and a greater say in decisions pertaining to children.

Possible structural explanations for these findings are that customary patriarchal kinship networks are weaker in urban areas, and urban female residents have more opportunities for paid employment outside of their natal and marital families. Indeed, data for Upper Egypt show that mean household size is smaller (5.1 vs. 6.4) and that the percentage of ever-married women of reproductive age working for cash is higher (18.2 vs. 5.8) in urban than rural areas (El-Zanaty et al., 1996). Ideational explanations for the effects of urban residence are that women living in urban areas have access to more diverse forms of mass media and thus are more likely to be exposed to the ideals of gender equality and women's empowerment (UNDP, 2003).

The effects of religious affiliation generally contradict prior expectations: After adjusting for other covariates, Christian affiliation is not associated with having more influence in either sphere of decision making, and Christian women are more likely than Muslim women to report son preference versus other gender preferences. Further analysis of these data reveals that Christian women report more often than Muslim women that they never listen to the radio and never watch television (not shown; available upon request). Previous research in Minya, however, shows that Muslim women are 95% more likely than Christian women to support practices such as female genital cutting (Yount, 2002). Muslim women also more often report that women who work should do so to provide hands-on or financial help to families, whereas Christian women more often report that women who work should do so for financial independence and personal satisfaction (not shown; available upon request). Finally, Christian women report more often than Muslim women that a husband is never justified in beating his wife (not shown; available upon request). One explanation for these contradictions is that the Islamist revivalist movement in Egypt has challenged the full political and economic participation of certain minority groups, including Christians (Shukrallah, 1994). Thus, although Christian women through their affiliation with religious organizations may encounter and accept ideals favoring a high respect for women, the more tenuous political and economic status of Christians may have fostered some Christian women to rely more on sons for old-age support.

The effects of other economic resources merit mention. Contrary to Rodman's (1972) expectations about the effects of husbands' resources in highly patriarchal settings, women whose husbands completed secondary school have a greater say in life course decisions about their children. One explanation for this finding is that more educated men are exposed to and accept more egalitarian ideals about gender, which leads them to devolve power to their wives (even if a husband's higher education does not alter his wife's gender preferences, as indicated in Table 3). Other scholars have shown, however, a widening gap in attitudes about gendered roles among educated Egyptian youth: Among those with secondary or more education, 69% of boys and 36% of girls believe that female genital cutting is necessary for a girl's marriage (El-Tawila et al., 1999). A second explanation is that the children of highly educated men may work for wages more often than in family production, and children who work for wages are shown elsewhere to have more say in life course decisions such as the selection of a spouse (Thornton & Fricke, 1987). If these children share their marital preferences more often with their mothers, the wives of educated men may by this mechanism have more influence in such life course decisions. Regarding other economic resources, a woman's ownership of gold is associated with neither her gender preferences nor her influence in daily domestic and life course decisions after adjusting for other factors. These results could indicate the real absence of an effect of women's customary economic resources in a highly patriarchal setting, or inadequate measurement of women's customary forms of wealth, including the amount of gold, size of the trousseau, and

quantity and quality of furnishings and appliances that women accumulate for marriage.

In light of these findings, it is notable that questions about power analyzed here focus on overt decisions rather than covert decisions or aspects of autonomy such as freedom of movement (e.g., Dyson & Moore, 1983; Komter, 1989; Niraula & Morgan, 1996). Thus, variables such as residence with marital kin could influence a woman's family power not only by limiting her influence in overt decisions but also by circumscribing her mobility, preventing action out of fear of conflict, or leading her to implement decisions in secret. Qualitative findings from Minya suggest that some women do find ways to act independently of the influence of coresident family members (e.g., by acquiring wealth without the husband's knowledge), and that other women express fear about the penalties of disobeying their husbands or senior marital relatives (Yount, 1999). Thus, efforts to measure the influence of marital household structure on women's mobility and covert power may be important in future studies (Kabeer, 1999; Komter, 1989). Also important will be efforts to measure women's family power and gender preferences in more and less patriarchal settings and to compare the effects of women's socioeconomic resources and ideational exposures in varied normative and institutional environments.

Findings here still provide clues about changes in the resources and ideational exposures of women that *may* improve the well-being of girls in Minya. First, a widespread shift in women's preferences for sons may require structural changes that give women more opportunities to enter male domains outside of the kinship group. Specific changes may include institutional and legal reforms that harmonize women's productive contributions to family and society and that give women more flexibility in the timing of education, marriage, and paid work. To the extent that some local actors continue to disseminate ideals of "modernity" that embrace patriarchal notions of women's proper place in family and society (Shukrallah, 1994), attention also might be given to the kinds of ideals about gender that are promoted through education, occupational and organizational networks, and media. Beyond these structural and ideational factors, Fargues (2003) argues that further declines in fertility would reduce the availability of brothers and thereby reduce the prospects for adhering to patriarchal forms of kinship. Thus, it may be further demographic change as much as structural and ideational change that enables and motivates women to improve the well-being of girls in Minya.

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