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The Role Of Gender And Culture In Economic History

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Abstract:

Gender gaps in various outcomes (competitiveness, labor force participation, and performance in mathematics, amongst many others) show remarkable differences across countries and tend to persist over time. The economics literature initially explained these differences by looking at standard economic variables such as the level of development, women's education, the expansion of the service sector, and discrimination. More recent literature has argued that gender differences in a variety of outcomes could reflect underlying cultural values and beliefs. This article reviews the literature on the relevance of culture in the determination of different forms of gender gap. How the differences in historical situations could have been relevant in generating gender differences and the conditions under which gender norms tend to be stable or to change over time, emphasizing the role of social learning.

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Introduction

Many scholars point to material resources, while others credit cultural determinants. We identify and test an important link between these factors: cultural lineage norms that structure entitlements to resources. Studying the relationship between culture and resources is challenging in societies where both disadvantage women. We analyze a unique setting: northeast India, where matrilineal tribes live alongside patrilineal communities. Patriarchal cultures and political institutions are shared, but lineage norms are distinct: patrilineal groups distribute inherited wealth through men, while matrilineal tribes do so via women. We conduct survey and behavioral experiments with representative samples of both communities, alongside extensive qualitative research, and find that the gender gap reverses across patrilineal and matrilineal groups. Our results indicate that lineage norms—which determine who gets to make decisions about wealth and how—are key determinants of the political economy gender gap. [1, 2]

- Gender is a fundamental yet hugely neglected component in the political economy of health in armed conflict.
- There is limited evidence on the role of gender in post-conflict health systems but not in active conflict and humanitarian crises.
- Employing a gendered lens to political economy of health analysis will advance gender equity and equality in conflict settings.
- Women's inclusion in the political economy of health in conflict has greater dividends for sustainable peace and more equitable social economic recovery in the post-conflict period.
- Women's meaningful participation in peace processes creates more legitimate representation of socio-economic and health concerns.

The larger the gender gap, defined as the differences in experiences and opportunities between men and women, the more likely a country is to be involved in violent conflict. Furthermore, higher levels of gender equality, sometimes measured by fertility rates and female-to-male primary school enrolment ratios, increases the likelihood of peaceful means of addressing population-level grievances. The ripple effects of protracted armed conflicts and humanitarian crises such as in Yemen, the Sahel region, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere include: extreme poverty, higher debt burdens, food insecurity, increasing number of female-headed households, deteriorating employment prospects, especially for women, increasing informal labour, and significant gender-specific barriers to accessing essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation [3,4]. It is estimated that 60 % of preventable maternal deaths take place in settings of conflict and displacement; women and children make up around 80 % of internally displaced populations; displaced women face unique challenges in accessing healthcare, which is linked to rising mortality rates from maternal complications of unplanned pregnancies and unattended childbirth in displacement settlements.

How male behavior affects female outcomes in promoting gender equality. It employs the family as the main unit of analysis as a large part of the gender interactions occurs within this institution. The survey first summarizes recent studies on the distribution of power within the family, and identifies several factors that have altered the bargaining position of men and women over the last decades. It then revises empirical work on the contribution of men, as fathers and husbands, to the health and socioeconomic outcomes of women both in developed and developing countries. Finally, it discusses a set of economic policies that intentionally or unintentionally have affected men's attitudes and behaviors and their implications for women's well-being and gender equality. [5, 6]

When we talk about "culture" we often mean intellectual and creative products, including literature, music, drama, and painting. Another use of "culture" is to describe the beliefs and practices of another society, particularly where these are seen as closely linked with tradition or religion. But culture is more than that. Culture is part of the fabric of every society, including our own. It shapes "the way things are done" and our understanding of why this should be so. This more comprehensive approach is proposed in the definition of culture adopted at the World Conference on Cultural Policies and used in ongoing discussions on culture and development: "Culture... is... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations

between women and men – in other words, gender – are shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace. Gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female.[7,8] This is evident in the division of labour according to gender. In most societies there are clear patterns of “women’s work” and “men’s work,” both in the household and in the wider community – and cultural explanations of why this should be so. The patterns and the explanations differ among societies and change over time. While the specific nature of gender relations varies among societies, the general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. This pattern of disparity based on gender is both a human rights and a development issue

Discussion

Culture influences thinking, language and human behaviour. The social environment, in which individuals are born and live, shapes their attitudinal, emotional and behavioural reactions and the perceptions about what is happening around. The same applies in the case of assigned/assumed roles in society based on gender. Cultural dimensions that reflect differences in gender roles, but also elements related to the ethics of sexual difference were highlighted by many researchers.

Discusses how equality audits of local authorities reveal identifiable gender cultures, such as the “gentleman’s club”, the “locker room”, the “barrack yard”, the “gender-blind”, and the “smart macho”. Describes how women and men feel that they and their colleagues have been influenced by these cultures, and how they reinforce persistent stereotypes about “women and work”. Gender cultures affect both men and women’s decisions and behaviour at work. The prevailing gender culture in one department may be different from that in another department in the same authority but most authorities had pockets of all the cultures described. The women managers interviewed recognized the dilemmas and difficulties women face when breaking with traditional norms within a workplace with pre-ordained gender cultures. Reinforces the view that exclusive work culture is powerful in its negative influence over women’s development and promotion prospects, but that preconceptions and sexual stereotypes about men and women’s roles are still determining many women’s behaviour, their lives and reducing their opportunities.[9,10]

Is Gender and Development (GAD) an imposition of western ideas on other cultures? This accusation can obstruct efforts to tackle gender inequality. Yet ideas in development are disproportionately influenced by richer countries. In this paper from BRIDGE, this problem is addressed by looking at culture and where cultural norms come from. Awareness of power dynamics and willingness to tackle gender stereotypes can be effective in challenging cultural norms.

Cultures are products of history, place, politics and people. They change over time. Some aspects of culture are enabling for some and constraining for others. There are times when people go along with norms (thereby reinforcing them) and times when they resist. This process, combined with outside influences, changes cultures. There is no homogenous fixed northern or southern culture. With or without development interventions, north and south are interacting and influencing each other. Nevertheless, these interactions are structured by power imbalances.

- People form and are formed by culture. International dynamics interact with family, community and nation to provide the context for individual lives and identities. In turn, individuals form and change their cultural environments, through accepting or resisting norms. Gender constraints and inequalities pervade the lives of individuals.
- Development interventions also form and change cultures. Initiatives take action at a community and national level to change cultures of gender: for example by supporting women's voices, challenging traditions and combating prejudice. As these experiences are disseminated, they impact upon development thinking and practice internationally.
- Development thinking and practice (including GAD) are in themselves laden with cultural values. Cultures of colonialism still influence development. In research, ideology and practice the world is divided into 'south' and 'north' and assumptions made that the former should learn from the latter.
- Ideas in development are disproportionally influenced by richer countries, whether they be about gender relations, economies, governance or human rights. However, even efforts to increase gender equality which are guided by local priorities are often discredited as 'western' and treated as imposition from the outside.[11,12]

Accusations of western imposition may be accurate, may be a politically motivated attempt to obstruct gender equality, or may be both. Development will always impact on cultures and on gender. Ignoring gender in development is just as much as cultural assumption as putting it on the agenda.

- The cultural impact of development interventions needs to be conscious and considered; directed at challenging oppressive norms of gender, sex, sexuality and north-south dynamics.
- Culture and tradition can enable or obstruct. There is nothing sacred about culture; value judgements need to be made about which aspects to hold on to and which to let go. Who makes such judgements is important; 'outsiders' need to be cautious and make space for discussion by 'insiders'.
- Individuals and organisations need to challenge their own assumptions and power dynamics. This should include issues of north and south, race, sex, sexuality and gender.
- Enabling participation and leadership of previously excluded groups (e.g. women, black people or southern staff) can help change the culture of development organisations.

Results

Racial stereotypes are not the only issue facing consumers today: the use of gender stereotypes in marketing and advertising are also in need of elimination. The wrongful depiction of genders has manifested into systemic discrimination; prolific inequality and inequity; and profoundly negative effects on self-esteem and self-worth. Whether the marketing examples depict rape culture, hyper-sexualized girls, or toxic masculinity, gender stereotypes are shaping attitudes and informing judgements and behaviour. Gender, as we've come to understand it, is in fact merely a fabricated identity![13,14]

The terms sex and gender are frequently used interchangeably, though they have different meanings. In this context, sex refers to the biological category of male or female, as defined by physical differences in genetic composition and in reproductive anatomy and function. On the other hand, gender refers to the cultural, social, and psychological meanings that are associated with masculinity and femininity. We can think of "male" and "female" as distinct categories of sex (a person is typically born a male or

a female), but “masculine” and “feminine” as continuums associated with gender (everyone has a certain degree of masculine and feminine traits and qualities).

Beyond sex and gender, there are a number of related terms that are also often misunderstood. Gender roles are the behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits that are designated as either masculine or feminine in a given culture. It is common to think of gender roles in terms of gender stereotypes, or the beliefs and expectations people hold about the typical characteristics, preferences, and behaviors of men and women. A person’s gender identity refers to their psychological sense of being male or female. In contrast, a person’s sexual orientation is the direction of their emotional and erotic attraction toward members of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes.[15,16]

We now understand that cultures, not nature, create the gender ideologies that go along with being born male or female and the ideologies vary widely, cross-culturally. What is considered “man’s work” in some societies, such as carrying heavy loads, or farming, can be “woman’s work” in others. What is “masculine” and “feminine” varies: pink and blue, for example, are culturally invented gender-color linkages, and skirts and “make-up” can be worn by men, indeed by “warriors.”

Masculinity studies goes beyond men and their roles to explore the relational aspects of gender. One focus is the enculturation processes through which boys learn about and learn to perform “manhood.” Many U.S. studies (and several excellent videos, such as *Tough Guise* by Jackson Katz), have examined the role of popular culture in teaching boys our culture’s key concepts of masculinity, such as being “tough” and “strong,” and shown how this “tough guise” stance affects men’s relationships with women, with other men, and with societal institutions, reinforcing a culture of violent masculinity.[17]

Gender gaps in various outcomes (competitiveness, labor force participation, and performance in mathematics, amongst many others) show remarkable differences across countries and tend to persist over time. The economics literature initially explained these differences by looking at standard economic variables such as the level of development, women’s education, the expansion of the service sector, and discrimination. More recent literature has argued that gender differences in a variety of outcomes could reflect underlying cultural values and beliefs. This article reviews the literature on the relevance of culture in the determination of different forms of gender gap. I examine how differences in historical situations could have been relevant in generating gender differences and the conditions under which gender norms tend to be stable or to change over time, emphasizing the role of social learning. Finally, it is in review the role of different forms of cultural transmission in shaping gender differences, distinguishing between channels of vertical transmission (the role of the family), horizontal transmission (the role of peers), and oblique transmission (the role of teachers or role models).[18,19]

Conclusions

Cultural identities contain the histories of a people that include traditions, struggles, achievements, and triumphs. Cultures nourish pride, resilience, belonging, intersectional identities, and connection to community. But culture is used to justify gender violence and inequality by evoking traditional beliefs and practices about how women and girls should be treated. If culture defines the spaces within which power is expressed and gender roles are enshrined, then our movement is here to push back. After all,

some traditions and explanations do have an expiration date and cultural DNA, just like individual DNA, changes with every generation.

The culture of gender-based violence and misogyny devalues women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals; normalizes or minimizes abuse; claims GBV is accidental; ignores sexism; promotes aggressive or even toxic masculinity; and uses men's achievements to exonerate, excuse, and/or deny the impact of their behavior.[20,21]

The cultures of ethnic and identity-specific communities prescribe and maintain traditional, patriarchal gender norms and roles; define 'transgressions' from these norms; patrol the boundaries of what they deem is and is not culturally acceptable – enforcing compliance by violence, coercion, pressure, rejection, or, as one gay survivor put it, "death by a thousand paper cuts."

The cultures of systems can erect barriers to services and resources, where race and gender bias compromise access to justice.

Culture influences how gender violence is viewed: minimized by society as an accidental problem, used as a convenient explanation by communities, or linked to stereotyping by systems.

Third gender is a concept in which individuals are categorized, either by themselves or by society, as neither man nor woman. It is also a social category present in societies that recognize three or more genders. The term third is usually understood to mean "other", though some anthropologists and sociologists have described fourth and fifth genders.[22,23]

The state of personally identifying as, or being identified by society as, a man, a woman, or other, is usually also defined by the individual's gender identity and gender role in the particular culture in which they live.

Most cultures use a gender binary, having two genders (boys/men and girls/women). In cultures with a third or fourth gender, these genders may represent very different things. To Native Hawaiians and Tahitians, Māhū is an intermediate state between man and woman, or a "person of indeterminate gender". Some traditional Diné Native Americans of the Southwestern US acknowledge a spectrum of four genders: feminine woman, masculine woman, feminine man, and masculine man. The term "third gender" has also been used to describe the hijras of India who have gained legal identity, fa'afafine of Polynesia, and Balkan sworn virgins. A culture recognizing a third gender does not in itself mean that they were valued by that culture, and often is the result of explicit devaluation of women in that culture.

While found in a number of non-Western cultures, concepts of "third", "fourth", and "some" gender roles are still somewhat new to mainstream Western culture and conceptual thought. The concept is most likely to be embraced in the modern LGBT or queer subcultures. While mainstream Western scholars—notably anthropologists who have tried to write about the South Asian hijras or the Native American "gender variant" and two-spirit people—have often sought to understand the term "third gender" solely in the language of the modern LGBT community, other scholars—especially Indigenous scholars—stress that mainstream scholars' lack of cultural understanding and context has led to widespread misrepresentation of third gender people, as well as misrepresentations of the cultures in question, including whether or not this concept actually applies to these cultures at all.[24,25]

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