

# Essays on Conflict, Gender and Household-Decision Making

Evelina Bonnier



## Essays on Conflict, Gender and Household-Decision Making

This Ph.D. thesis in Economics consists of five self-contained chapters on various topics in Development and Behavioral Economics.

*Preparing for genocide: Quasi-experimental evidence from Rwanda* examines if a mandatory community program contributed to fostering acceptance and participation in the ethnic violence during the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

*Undressed for success? The effects of half-naked women on economic behavior* experimentally tests if exposure to images of half-naked women affect math performance, risk taking and willingness to compete.

*Gender differences in household-decision making: Evidence from Kenya and Measuring decision-making power within households* use data collected through a lab experiment with married couples to examine gender differences in household decision-making and compare how different measures of decision-making power relate to each other.

*The donor footprint and gender gaps* examines how individual- and household-level outcomes and attitudes related to women's rights and opportunities vary with the presence of aid-financed projects in the geographical neighborhood of the household.



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# Essays on Conflict, Gender, and Household Decision-Making

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*To Jonas*





# Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Department of Economics at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctoral thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present her research in the manner of her choosing as an expression of her own ideas.

SSE is grateful for the financial support provided by the Jan Wallander and Tom Hedelius Foundation which has made it possible to carry out the project.

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*Stockholm, April 15, 2018*

*Evelina Bonnier*



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# Introduction

This thesis consists of five self-contained chapters on different topics in applied microeconomics. The first chapter examines if a mandatory community program contributed to fostering acceptance and participation in the ethnic violence during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The second chapter examines if exposure to images of half-naked women affect math performance, risk taking and willingness to compete using data from a lab experiment conducted in Denmark and Spain with a total of 648 participants. The third and fourth chapters are based on a lab experiment conducted in Kenya with 100 married couples, and examine gender differences in household decision-making as well as compare how different measures of decision-making power relate to each other. The final chapter examines how individual- and household-level outcomes and attitudes related to women's rights and opportunities vary with the presence of aid-financed projects in the geographical neighborhood of the household.

A short summary of each chapter follows.

## **Preparing for genocide: Quasi-experimental evidence from Rwanda** (with J. Poulsen, T. Rogall and M. Stryjan)

How can state-controlled community meetings can facilitate large-scale mobilization to mass violence? This chapter analyzes a Rwandan mandatory community program that required citizens to participate in community work and political meetings every Saturday in the years before the 1994 genocide. We exploit cross-sectional variation in meeting intensity induced by exogenous weather fluctuations, and find that a one standard-deviation increase in the number of rainy Saturdays before the genocide resulted in a 17 percent lower civilian participation rate in genocide violence. The natural placebo test – rainfall on all other weekdays in the same period – yields no statistically significant results. The effect is driven by meetings in the last six months before the genocide, and we find supportive evidence of the effect working through coordination and

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diffusion of propaganda. Our robust findings shed light on the potentially detrimental role of government-ordered community meetings. Its importance derives, at the very least, from the resurgence of similar practices in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Undressed for success? The effects of half-naked women on economic behavior**

(with A. Dreber, K. Hederos and A. Sandberg)

Images of half-naked women are in many societies ubiquitous in advertising and popular culture. Yet relatively little is known about the potential impacts of such images on economic decision-making. In this study, we examine how exposure to images of half-naked women affect risk taking, willingness to compete and math performance. We perform a lab experiment with a total of 648 participants of both genders, randomly exposing participants to advertising images including either women in bikini or underwear, fully dressed women, or no women. Exposure to images of half-naked women could potentially have effects on economic preferences and performance through channels such as arousal, cognitive load and stereotyping. Following a pre-registered pre-analysis plan, we find no treatment effects on any of the outcome measures for female participants. For male participants, we also find no effect on willingness to compete or math performance, but suggestive evidence that men take more risk after exposure to images of half-naked women compared to images including no women. We thus do not find any strong support for the hypothesis that exposure to images of half-naked women impact economic preferences, but given the suggestive evidence for risk taking future studies should explore this further.

### **Gender differences in household-decision making: Experimental evidence from Kenya**

This chapter examines gender differences in household decision-making by inviting 100 married couples from low-income households in Kenya to a computer lab and relating spouses' individual choices to the couples' joint choices. We examine gender differences in relative influence on joint decisions, preferences for making joint decisions, and spouses' internalization of each other's preferences. Our findings suggest no average gender differences in either of these decision-making processes, but that both men and women influence joint choices and take each other's preferences into account when making individual decisions on

behalf of the couple. While we find a similar lack of gender difference using other alternative measures of decision-making power, we cannot rule out that these results may be driven by noise, sample selection, and/or the small sample size.

### **Measuring decision-making power within households**

Willingness to pay to gain control of a cash transfer (WTP) has recently been proposed as a measure of decision-making power within households. While it has been shown to be in line with theoretical predictions from standard household models, it has also been found to be negatively or insignificantly correlated with other more traditional measures of decision-making power within households. In this study, we use a sample of 100 married couples, living in an informal settlement in Kenya, to re-examine how the WTP measure correlates with other measures of decision-making power and whether the correlations are biased by confounding factors such as personality traits and a set of background characteristics. Being the first to collect the WTP measure for both spouses, we also examine how wives' WTP measures relate to their husbands'. Our results suggest no relationship between WTP and other measures of decision-making power, and no relationship between spouses' WTP measures.

### **The donor footprint and gender gaps**

(with M. Perrotta Berlin and A. Olofsgård)

This chapter analyzes the impact of foreign aid on female empowerment by matching geo-coded household surveys with the location of aid projects, thus measuring an average community effect of exposure to aid-financed projects. Given that women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept, we examine the impact on several indicators related to women's relative standing in the household. We find positive effects on women's participation in the labor force, participation in household decision-making, and attitudes toward domestic violence, as well as on household consumption and expenditures on children. These effects are generally stronger for gender-specific projects. At the same time, we find no or negative effects for other indicators, such as the division of household chores, and children's education. We argue that the variation in outcomes can best be understood by what change would be required from other family members and how this change matches the norms of the community.

