



What are we measuring when we measure decisionmaking?

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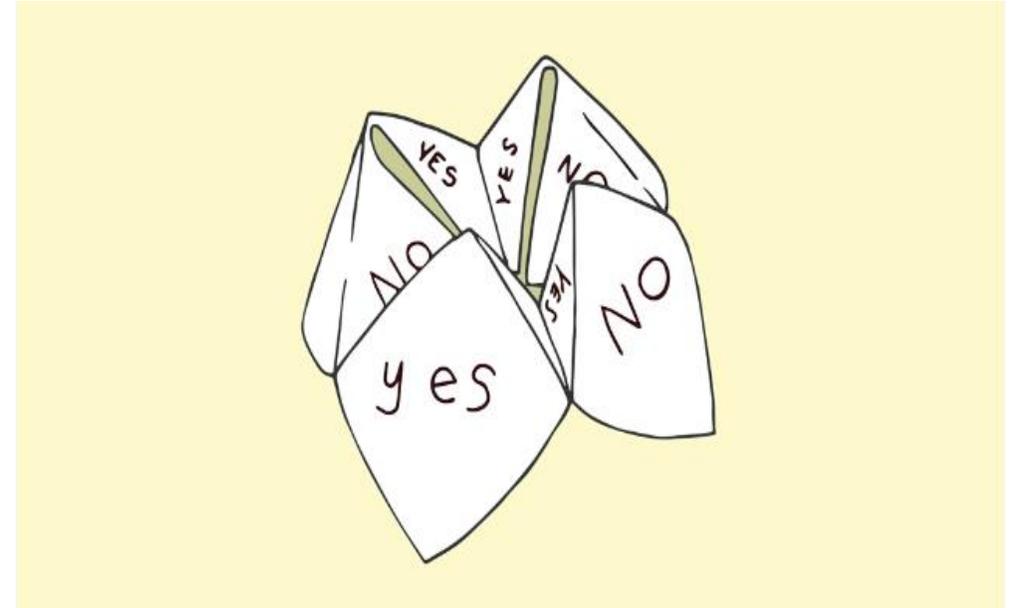
Most common measure of women's agency

Who usually makes decisions about...?

- Major household purchases
- How the money you earn will be used
- Visits to respondent's family or relatives
- Where and how to sell crops

Response options

- You
- Your spouse
- You and your spouse jointly



What have I learned?



Four insights:

1. Joint decisionmaking may be protective
2. There is an important signal in the husband's answers
3. Spouses can interpret decisionmaking differently
4. Process and preferences underlying decisionmaking are crucial

1) Joint decisionmaking may be protective



Using DHS data from 12 African countries:

Joint decisionmaking is associated with lower intimate partner violence

Why? Joint decisionmaking allows spouses to share responsibility and mitigate conflict if the decision is later regretted



2) There is an important signal in the spouse's answers

DHS data from 23 African countries:

Share of couples' responses (averaged across countries)

Who usually makes decisions about making major household purchases?		Wife's response:		
		Husband	Joint	Wife
Husband's response:	Wife	4.5%	5.1%	1.6%
	Joint	13.6%	26.4%	5.0%
	Husband	24.5%	15.8%	3.4%

- Well-being outcomes are often best when spouses agree that women make decisions
- Nearly half of couples across Africa disagree on who makes household decisions
- This disagreement has a direction and captures a distinct facet of women's power
- Women taking (vs. being given) power is associated with benefits, but also risks

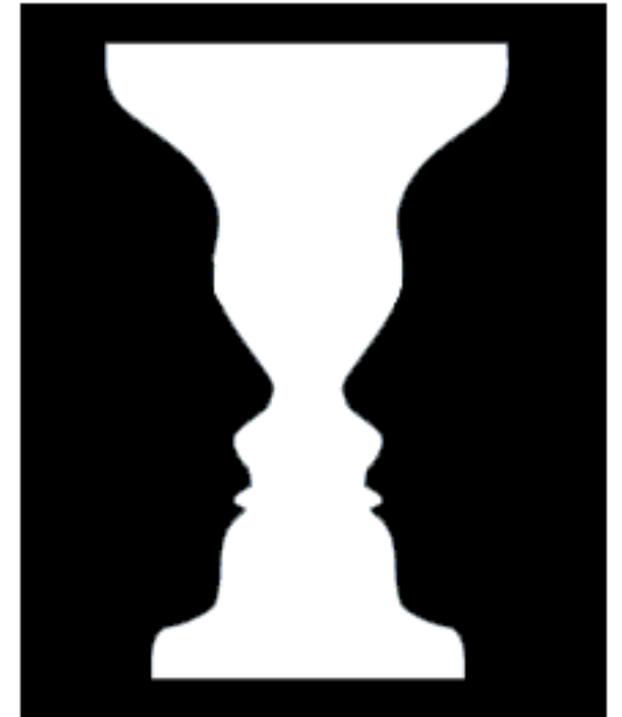
3) Spouses may interpret decisionmaking differently

Why do spouses give conflicting reports to decisionmaking questions?

“Who generally makes major decisions about what to do with this parcel, such as which crops to plant, which seeds to use, or whether to hire laborers?”

In Philippines:

- Different recollection of process ❌
- Different recollection of decisions made ❌
- Different enumerator effects by gender ✓
- Different interpretation of decisionmaking ✓ ✓ ✓



4) Process and preferences are crucial



Making decisions is not always empowering (and misses the process):

What to do?

- **Ask about process:** *“How much input would you say you have in decisions regarding...?”*
- **Consider preferences:** *“To what extent do you feel you could make your own personal decisions on...if you wanted to?”*

Early results from Philippines show that both are more related to motivational autonomy

Key take-aways



When measuring agency, include women's preferences and process beyond final outcomes

- New **Measures for Advancing Gender Equality (MAGNET)** initiative to broaden and deepen existing measurement tools

Initiatives to engage men in the process of expanding women's rights and encourage shared responsibility can result in a host of beneficial outcomes

- But women claiming their rights is fundamental