

WILL YOU SEND YOUR DAUGHTER TO SCHOOL? NORMS, VIOLENCE, AND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN URUZGAN, AFGHANISTAN¹

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Access to education for all children around the world is supported by international human rights conventions. Despite this broad endorsement, some international actors wonder whether promoting access to education for girls may conflict with dominant local attitudes, values, or customs. Using stratified survey data and complementary qualitative interview data, this study explores why parents in Uruzgan, Afghanistan, choose to send their boys and girls to school, what prevents them from doing so, and what kinds of normative tensions emerge during this process. First, our data show that placing value on their boys' education is not enough to prompt parents to enroll them in school; parents also must perceive that educating their boys will have future returns, thus prioritizing pragmatic assessments over normative value. However, those who send both boys and girls to school are more likely to prioritize the value of education. Second, our data show that parents who report experiencing or having personal knowledge of a higher number of attacks against education are less likely to send their children to school. Finally, our data show that normative struggles over girls' education take place primarily within the local community and society, rather than between foreign organizations and the local population. Regardless of education level, both men and women cite tenets of Islam as a key motivation for educating both girls and

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boys. Although some describe education as a human right, they say that Islam is the source of these rights, not Western organizations or institutions. The greater challenge for aid workers, therefore, is pragmatic (to ensure security) rather than normative (to promote beliefs about the appropriateness of education).

INTRODUCTION

International human rights conventions support access to education for all children around the world, including those in conflict-affected countries and those who have been displaced. Accordingly, international organizations that promote development and provide humanitarian aid in countries affected by conflict often include support for education in their work. These initiatives are further defined by conflict-sensitive approaches to aid. Indeed, in April 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Conflict Sensitive Approach to education as one of its guiding principles.² Other organizations have followed suit, and many international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) now include these principles in their work on education in conflict-affected countries. Despite this broad endorsement, promoting universal rights may conflict with dominant local attitudes, values, or customs. For example, international initiatives to defend and promote women's rights—including access to education—have encountered resistance in many parts of the world, often from local community leaders (see, e.g., Human Rights Watch 2015, 2016; Right to Education Project n.d.).

These tensions raise particularly challenging choices for international organizations working in conflict-affected environments. An NGO's mission requires them to base their program plans and designs on the expressed desires of potential beneficiaries, particularly those who are the most marginalized in their communities. This often means helping women and girls to access education, including in Afghanistan. However, leaders in these communities, typically men, may resist outsider interventions. Male community leaders may object to initiatives that they perceive as violating local traditions or cultural codes, such as those that help women and girls increase their independence or travel outside

² INEE is an international network of members from NGOs, UN agencies, funding agencies, governments, and educational institutions that focuses on advocating for and supporting education for people living in countries and regions affected by crisis and conflict. See <http://www.ineesite.org/en/>. A "Conflict Sensitive Approach" to education calls for understanding conflict dynamics among communities that receive foreign/outsider support for education so that this support does not interact negatively with conflict dynamics. See <http://www.ineesite.org/en/conflict-sensitive-education#What>. Specific strategies include encouraging coordination and participation from diverse groups, including those with opposing positions or viewpoints.

their homes or villages. Because these male leaders are often the same people who either incite or defuse a communal conflict, international humanitarian organizations have an interest in avoiding a direct confrontation with them.

Thus, international organizations face an apparent dilemma: if they honor the local norms often held by male community leaders, they may be complicit in denying rights to the very people they intend to serve. At the same time, many aid workers wonder if working to increase access to education and other services for women and girls may aggravate the underlying conditions of conflict that these programs, at a minimum, do not want to aggravate (i.e., following the “do no harm” approach to humanitarian aid; Save the Children International 2013). Do these principles in fact conflict?

This study explores questions of educational access in the midst of violence in order to increase understanding of the normative tensions outside actors may encounter in a conflict-affected society. Our research seeks first to understand communities’ attitudes toward education: What prevents parents from sending their children to school? If parents do send their children to school, why do they do so? Under what circumstances do men and women in conflict settings support their children having access to education? We are specifically interested in understanding the tensions surrounding girls’ education in Uruzgan, Afghanistan, one of the most challenging places to promote girls’ education. We next examine how the local context informs parents’ decisions: What are the perceived security risks in this province? How is education related to these risks? Finally, we explore how international organizations’ efforts to support education can enhance girls’ access to education while also being sensitive to conflict triggers: What normative tensions emerge in this process? What does this reveal about current assumptions of global norm diffusion (i.e., shaping an increasingly globalized culture by taking up and institutionalizing new norms; see below).

Our findings challenge important assumptions about the value Afghan parents place on education and norm diffusion, and reveal the weakness in attributing normative change to outside actors, as is often assumed in the literature on norm diffusion (e.g., Carpenter 2007; Keck and Sikkink 1998). One finding is that, while parents’ education and income level are significantly associated with whether they send their children to school, parents who value girls’ education are significantly more likely to enroll both boys and girls in school. Interestingly, however, valuing education does not fully explain why parents send only boys to school, although parents’ perception of future returns from education is significantly associated with sending boys to school. Our findings also revealed a statistically

significant relationship between violence against education and enrollment, in that parents who report having witnessed more education-related violence are significantly less likely to send their children to school. Finally, although conventional wisdom says local norms in Afghanistan resist educating girls and by extension are contrary to international norms (personal communication with Afghan government and NGO officials 2014, 2016), we found that local norms in Afghanistan are often supportive of girls' education—just not always for reasons common in the West. In Uruzgan Province, women and many men support girls' education for both pragmatic and moral (in this case, religious) reasons. Tensions surrounding education are caught up in much larger struggles within Islam, between Islam and Pashtunwali (the Pashtun social code), and between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Moreover, “universal” norms are not always rooted in Western concepts (e.g., Sen 1998; Wahl 2014); what outsiders perceive as local norms are much more complex, and in fact may not be shared by the majority of local actors.

Thus, although some local norms compete with girls' right to education, the largest challenge arises for pragmatic rather than normative reasons. In other words, the decision to keep girls home from school to protect them from danger is typically a pragmatic choice made in the face of serious security concerns, rather than a normative decision. Because girls are generally more vulnerable than boys to kidnapping and sex crimes, their mobility is typically more sensitive to social unrest (Burde et al. 2016). The challenge for aid workers, therefore, is pragmatic (ensuring security) rather than normative (diffusing beliefs about the appropriateness of education). Given both the demand for and local challenges to education, particularly for girls, foreign NGOs that support education services are unlikely to aggravate the existing conflict, provided their support is sensitive to local dynamics and evenly distributed among those who request it.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section discusses normative issues that frame our investigation. The third presents our methods—sampling, measures, and limitations. The fourth describes our findings and presents two sets of analysis: the first reviews what characteristics predict parents' decisions to enroll their children in school in general; the second analysis refines the first by separating parents' decisions to enroll only their boys, both boys and girls, or neither. The fifth section presents the qualitative interview data that complements and deepens our understanding of the quantitative results, and the final section highlights our key conclusions.

NORM DIFFUSION, NORMATIVE TENSION, AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTORS

Whether promoted by international or local actors, norms create standards that determine appropriate goals and behavior, and that elicit social sanctioning of rule-breakers (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Katzenstein 1996; Ruggie 1998; Wendt 1995). A social norm may be perceived as good because “a shared moral assessment is attached to its observance or nonobservance” (Fearon 1997, 25, fn 18, cited in Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 892).

In the context of international humanitarian aid and human rights work, norms considered appropriate (e.g., eliminating torture, promoting universal access to education) are thought to emerge via moral or norm entrepreneurs—social activists and visionaries who operate from an organizational base.³ These entrepreneurs, who often work within international organizations, may identify a social issue and call attention to it through the use of “framing” or “grafting” (see Carpenter 2007 for a discussion of issue emergence; on framing, see, for example, Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 897; Keck 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Price 1998; Snow et al. 1986). Framing recasts an issue in a new light, either to underscore the way it violates acceptable behavior (the current norm) or to create a new norm that defines appropriate behavior and challenges the existing norm. When a new frame resonates with the broader public, committed actors respond by drawing attention to norm violations and pressing for behavioral change (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Some argue that, as new norms are taken up and institutionalized, they shape an increasingly globalized culture (Meyer et al. 1992). This process is typically referred to as norm diffusion.

Critiques of studies of norm diffusion focus on their overemphasis on the role moral values play as compared to pragmatic goals, and on their juxtaposing international values with local or regional notions of appropriate behavior. Scholars question these moral arguments’ description of norms as “universal,” as they are promoted by “transnational actors” who are more concerned with convergence than contestation (Acharya 2004, 242–43; Nadelmann 1990, 481). Moreover, privileging international actors as promoters of change fails to account for normative shifts that originate with local actors. By “assigning causal primacy to ‘international prescriptions’” (Acharya 2004, 242), the moral argument ignores crucial norms rooted in other social entities—that is, local, regional, and national groups (Legro 1997, 32).

³ The idea of particular individuals or organizations functioning as social catalysts to alter behavior around them is a common notion across norm analysis (Burgerman 2001; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 898; Sunstein 1996, 909).

This critique stresses the importance of “congruence” between international norms and domestic norms, and among the local actors who are instrumental in guiding and promoting this process. Congruence refers to the ways international and local norms are similar in meaning and function, which differs from convergence, which implies that entities come together from different positions. Local political, organizational, and cultural issues and actors play important roles in identifying key similarities and in creating the congruent new norm through “localization” (Acharya 2004, 243). Localization is the active process through which local actors adopt, revise, and modify foreign ideas to make them congruent with local beliefs and practices (245).

Scholars of comparative and international education have devoted significant attention to the similar ways local communities adapt, appropriate, or resist global norms that relate to teachers, schools, classrooms, and non-formal education programs (e.g., Anderson-Levitt 2004; Monkman 2011; Pizmony-Levy 2011; Steiner-Khamsi 2014; Wahl 2016). This literature has typically focused on the introduction of outsider ideas to local communities, to some degree assuming a hegemonic Western presence that contributes to convergence. Some argue that the very act of focusing so many organizational and national resources on promoting girls’ schooling privileges the pursuit of simple outcomes (increased enrollments, improved quality) over fully understanding the complex local conditions and attitudes that keep girls out of school in the first place (Oppenheim and Stambach 2014). In this study, we question the outsider’s role in this process and emphasize the greater possibilities generated by norm congruence.

Thus, we address the complex local conditions and attitudes that effect normative change and interact with outside actors who support a goal over which there has been significant contention: girls’ education—or, more specifically, sending girls to school. The importance of educating girls has been an article of faith among international organizations for many years, based on robust evidence showing the broad and deep effects of doing so. For example, educated women delay childbirth and have fewer children, and those they have are healthier and better nourished (Pradhan 2015). Similarly, in the service of promoting girls’ education and diffusing the right to education for all, international organizations have identified local norms or traditions that oppose it. As they work to promote girls’ education, the professionals who guide transnational service delivery organizations (e.g., NGOs like Save the Children) use congruence to effect normative change and proliferation. By matching their goals to existing local norms and maintaining a low profile, and by backing community members who support education in general and girls’ education in particular, they attempt to

bolster congruent norms without directly challenging underlying attitudes that keep girls out of school.

Our study examines both conventional assumptions regarding normative diffusion and local responses to these initiatives. This includes assessing attitudes among parents who choose to send their children to school and among those who do not. We show that tensions are mainly rooted in local normative or pragmatic struggles, and thus unrelated to outsiders. Having a better understanding of the local norms that either support or challenge access to education can help international humanitarian actors learn how to improve educational outcomes through norm congruence, and at the same time illuminate the local conditions and pragmatic responses that inhibit access to education.

BACKGROUND AND METHODS

Save the Children International (SCI), a major international NGO, launched a health and education program in Uruzgan in May 2011.⁴ The program's primary objective was to enhance the access, quality, and use of basic health and education services for children and their families living in the province. The program provided services to an estimated 300,000 beneficiaries, with a particular focus on women and girls, ethnic minorities, and those in remote and under-served communities. This study focuses on the program's education work.

Uruzgan is an ideal province in which to explore possible tensions between "local values" and international norms by assessing whether and how Afghan parents value education, and the ways the conservative local society and conflict-affected context influence their perception of education for girls and boys. Although large gains have been made in education enrollment across the country, increasing from just under one million under Taliban rule to roughly eight million in 2011 (FHI360 2011), children's school enrollment remains low in rural areas, and particularly so in conflict-affected provinces (Samuel Hall Consulting 2013). Cycles of violence regularly affect Uruzgan Province.

Uruzgan's population is 92 percent Pashtun and has some of the lowest education indicators in the country.⁵ Only 7 percent of men and .5 percent of women in the province are considered literate, and although 39 percent of school-age children

⁴ The program lasted approximately five years and was funded by the Australian government aid agency, AusAID.

⁵ Pashtuns are typically considered the most conservative of the three largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara), particularly with regard to social norms that affect women and girls.

are in school, only 7 percent of school-age girls attend—an enrollment rate for girls that is well below the national average of 44 percent (Central Statistics Organization 2014). Anecdotal reports state that parents from these regions do not value education, as evidenced by low enrollment and parents' expressed concerns. These reports argue that many Afghan parents choose not to send their children to school, especially girls, because of the power of a particular interpretation of cultural codes or because they simply do not see the importance of literacy (Burde 2014; personal communication with government officials 2014; 2016).

To assess our key outcome indicators—what predicts parents' decisions about enrolling girls and boys in school—we collected quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data simultaneously. We use the interview data to deepen our understanding of the quantitative findings and to help illuminate mechanisms for further research.

SAMPLE

This mixed-methods design includes surveys, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data analysis (e.g., reports). For the surveys, the study used stratified random sampling to select 480 parents from 24 schools (12 CBE schools and 12 government schools),⁶ and their catchment areas in five districts of Uruzgan Province: Charchino, Chora, Dehrawod, Gizab, and Tarin Kot. The parents were identified through their in-school and out-of-school children. Each of the women (41 percent of respondents) and men (59 percent of respondents) in the survey sample represents a different household. We describe the sample and sampling procedures in detail below.⁷ Access to districts beyond Tarin Kot, the provincial capital, is possible only by land, and travel to districts such as Chora, Gizab, and Charchino is challenging, due to poor road conditions and a lack of security. Our sample was based on these districts and communities.

SUBSAMPLE 1: PARENTS OF IN-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND SCHOOL SELECTION

SCI managed 100 community-based education (CBE) schools, in addition to working with 30 government schools, 12 of which were primary schools. For the

6 Instead of constructing a building for CBE schools or classes, education providers (often NGOs) recruit and train a teacher who leads a class of students in a space donated by the community. The community, in cooperation with the education provider, monitors and oversees that class. An NGO provides government textbooks and additional monitoring.

7 Surveys and interview protocol forms are available on request.

purpose of the study, 120 parents were selected from 12 randomly selected CBE schools, and 120 parents were selected from the 12 government primary schools.

To select the sample of CBE schools, we created two strata: one for schools that had more boys enrolled and one for schools that had more girls enrolled. The average number of students per CBE school was 28. Six schools were randomly selected from each stratum, yielding 12 CBE schools.

Since only 12 of the 30 government schools SCI worked with were primary schools, all 12 were included in the study. Like the CBE schools, the 12 government primary schools were divided into two strata—one with low enrollment of girls (seven schools) and the other with high enrollment of girls (five schools)—so this characteristic could be used in the subsequent data analysis. While all CBE schools offered co-education, girls attended only four of the 12 government primary schools, one of which was exclusively for girls.⁸

Ten students were randomly selected from each of the 24 CBE and government schools, 50 percent of which were girls where possible. In schools where fewer than five girls were present on the day of selection, all girls present were selected. The parents of each student were contacted about participating in the surveys, and one parent was selected from each household; we did our best to ensure that half of these parents were mothers, who ultimately represented 41 percent of the total parents surveyed. From the 24 schools, 240 parents were randomly selected through their children who attend school. Selecting schools with low enrollment of girls ensured the representation of communities where schools are available but parents choose not to enroll their daughters.⁹

SUBSAMPLE 2: PARENTS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

From each catchment area of the 24 schools, 10 parents whose children did not attend school (including girls) were randomly selected for the survey through random identification of their households. The enumerators first identified households that did not send children to school. Thereafter, from the point of entry to the village, enumerators selected every second household that was identified as having out-of-school children, until they reached 10 respondents. This yielded 240 parents whose children did not attend school. For parents' distribution by school type and by whether they send their children to school, see Table 1.

8 The girls-only school was categorized as high enrollment.

9 The survey response rate was approximately 95 percent.

Table 1: Survey Sample

| Sample Schools and Parents | Stratum I | Stratum II | Total |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| | High Girls Enrollment | Low Girls Enrollment | |
| CBE Schools | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| CBE Parents | 60 | 60 | 120 |
| Parents in CBE Catchment Area (Unenrolled Children) | 60 | 60 | 120 |
| Government Schools | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Government School Parents | 50 | 70 | 120 |
| Parents in Government School Catchment Area (Unenrolled Children) | 50 | 70 | 120 |
| Total Number of Schools | | | 24 |
| Total Number of Parents of Enrolled Children | | | 240 |
| Total Number Parents of Unenrolled Children | | | 240 |
| Total Survey Sample | | | 480 |

SAMPLING FOR QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

To complement these data and provide detailed and nuanced information about why parents choose to send their children to school, or do not, we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 24 parents, of whom half were men and half women. The sample included four types of parents: those living in areas with a high enrollment of girls (1) who send their children to school and (2) who do not; and those living in areas with a low enrollment of girls (3) who send their children to school and (4) who do not. For the majority (20 parents), both parents from one household were selected, but the men and women were interviewed separately. We further subdivided this qualitative sample into parents who send their boys and their girls (seven parents) to school; those who send only their boys (five parents); and those who send neither their boys nor their girls (12 parents).

MEASURES

The following section describes the data-collection instruments.¹⁰

SECONDARY DATA

We collected and reviewed secondary data from government and online resources, NGO program documents, and reports, and met with education program staff to discuss the educational context; to assess girls' participation, particularly in primary schooling; and to assess social, structural, and security-related challenges to education in Uruzgan.

Parent Survey

The parent survey was designed to measure parents' perceptions of key factors (e.g., social values such as social and economic well-being, personal growth, financial benefits, and the collective good) that they may or may not associate with education. This included examining parents' reasons for not sending their children to school, even when school is accessible (e.g., placing low value on education, fear/risk). The survey also explored the role of parents' socioeconomic status, parents' and children's gender, the kind of value (social, economic) parents place on education for their girls and boys, and the kind of returns (economic status, social status) parents associate with girls' and boys' education.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Because of the varied and serious security risks to the interviewers in this volatile region, we kept our qualitative protocol brief. We asked about the interviewee's educational background and their own experiences with education, problems facing education in Afghanistan and locally in Uruzgan, and reasons people do or do not send their boys and girls to school. If the interviewer felt comfortable, we encouraged her/him to ask about attacks on education.¹¹ All interviews were recorded and translated into English.

¹⁰ The survey and interview protocols were translated into Pashto. Survey and interview questions were pre-tested for reliability and validity in advance of the full-scale implementation. Data collection started in mid-February 2014 and finished in early April 2014.

¹¹ Approximately 70 percent of the women who were approached for qualitative interviews declined to participate. Only about 10 percent of the men who were approached declined.

VARIABLES

Dependent Variables

In this paper we present two sets of analysis: the dependent variable in the first analysis is enrollment-1, a dichotomous variable coded as 1=parents whose children attend school; 0=parents whose children do not attend school. In the second analysis, the outcome variable enrollment-2 has three categories: 0=none (parents who do not send children to school); 1=only boys (parents who send only boys to school); 2=both (parents who send both girls and boys to school).

Independent Variables

The explanatory variables of interest in both sets of analysis are parents' education, employment, income, value of girls' and boys' education, children's future with an education, and violence against education. Other variables include ethnicity (Pashtun), age, and number of children. We measure parents' education in years, and we account for employment by simply noting whether or not parents are employed (1=employed; 0=unemployed). Parents who reported being government or private employees or self-employed are considered employed. The ordinal variable "income" measures the household income range, from earning less than AFN 6,000 to a range of AFN 18,500-22,000.¹² To make the data intuitively interpretable, we code each range at its mid-point: 4.25 for the range 2,500-6,000 (or less than 6,000), 8.25 for earning between 6,500 to 10,000, and so on. Table 2 presents the distribution of variables used in our analysis

We constructed a six-item scale to measure how much value parents place on education for their daughters. These items include the civic, religious, and social dimensions of the value parents put on girls' education, as well as parents' perceptions of how educated women fare as wives and mothers. Each item is assessed on a four-point ordinal measure, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate a greater value on education, which is consistent with norms advocated by international aid workers. Similarly, the second scale, value of boys' education, is a six-item scale measuring exactly the same dimensions as those in the scale measuring the value for girls' education. All six items were standardized before testing to ensure internal consistency. The internal consistency estimate of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the value of girls' education scale is .80, and .81 for the value of boys' education. Once a scale was constructed, it was standardized again, yielding a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

12 The Afghani: at the time of the study, the conversion rate of AFN to U.S. dollar was US\$ 1 to AFN 56.9.

We included two additional scales to assess how parents perceive the future of boys and girls who have an education, as compared to the future of boys and girls without an education. Each scale contains six items that measure whether parents perceive that, as compared to boys and girls without an education, boys and girls with an education have better jobs in the future, marry better, are better socialized, are better Muslims, are better citizens, and contribute more to their households. All items are three-point ordinal measures coded 0=no, .5=maybe, 1=yes.

Finally, to explore the relationship between violence against education and enrollment, we add a four-item scale, attack on education. The items measure whether a school was ever attacked in respondents' village/neighborhood, whether parents were harmed because their daughters or sons attended school, and whether children in their village were harmed because they attended school. The scale is a three-point ordinal measure coded 0=no, .5=maybe, and 1=yes, where 1 is an emphatic yes, 0 is an emphatic no, and .5 covers responses from parents who thought that a school had been attacked but were not sure, or were not sure which school was affected. The items (of all scales) were standardized before testing for internal consistency. All scales created are statistically reliable. See Table 2 for reliability estimates of each scale.

LIMITATIONS

Security restrictions were so tight that all non-local SCI and research staff, including the Pashto speakers from other provinces in Afghanistan, were restricted to the compound 24 hours a day. In part because of these logistical challenges to conducting research in Uruzgan, we implemented a research design that deliberately selected parents who send their children (boys only or both boys and girls) to school, as well as those who do not. Therefore, although we can describe differences among these groups, we cannot generalize because this sample is not statistically representative of parents in Uruzgan.

Finally, selection effects or social desirability bias may influence our findings. First, it is possible that families that are more likely to send children to school are also more likely to allow enumerators to survey the women in the household, thereby biasing our sample toward women who are more likely to show support for education. Second, with regard to social desirability bias, although it could be present, it is unclear in which direction this would influence respondents. Given that some strong men in these communities oppose girls' education, respondents may feel more comfortable espousing the men's views. Yet given

that the enumerators may be assumed to support education, it is possible that respondents want to please the interviewer.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we use two sets of analysis to compare parents' perceptions of education and examine normative factors that influence parents' decisions to send their children, particularly girls, to school. First, we use our survey data to review what characteristics predict parents' general decision to send their children to school, both boys and girls. This important analysis helps us understand the overall differences between parents who send their children to school regardless of gender and those who do not. Our second analysis refines the first by separating out parents' decisions to enroll only their boys, both boys and girls, or neither. We strengthen and deepen this analysis with parents' detailed responses to questions posed during in-depth interviews. Our findings suggest greater normative compatibility between international humanitarian workers and locals than is commonly assumed, thus challenging conventional wisdom.

SUMMARY OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR FIRST SET OF ANALYSES

Table 2 presents the combined summary statistics for the variables used in our two analyses. This analysis is based on 474 respondents—six cases were removed due to missing data, and/or because they did not fit within the parent categories. Of the total respondents, 251 (53 percent) are parents whose children (at least one child) attend school. Mothers constitute 41 percent of the total parents across the sample. For the first analysis, parents who send their children to school have significantly more children than parents whose children are not enrolled. On average, parents who do not send their children to school are significantly less educated than parents who do. With regard to employment and income, the number of employed parents whose children attend school tends to be significantly higher, and they earn significantly more than the parents whose children do not attend school. It is important to note that a total of 179 parents report being unemployed, of whom 80 percent are women (not shown here). It is not surprising that the majority of the unemployed are women; in many parts of Afghanistan, men are expected to provide for the household while women are expected to stay home to manage domestic affairs.

Similarly, the proportions of respondents valuing both girls' and boys' education, and expecting a better future for boys and girls with an education, is greater for

parents whose children attend school than for parents whose children do not. Finally, the proportion of parents with no children in school reporting violence against education is greater than for those whose children attend school.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Variables from Parents Survey Used in the Analyses

| Variables | Description | Mean/ Proportion | SD | Analysis One | | Analysis Two | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|--------|---------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------|
| | | | | Do Not Attend | Attend | None | Boys Only | Both |
| Enrollment-1 (Analysis One) | Whether respondent's children attend school (1=attend; 0=do not attend) | .53 | .500 | | | | | |
| | Proportion of parents with no children enrolled | .47 | .500 | | | | | |
| Enrollment-2 (Analysis Two) | Proportion of parents who send only boys to school | .27 | .447 | | | | | |
| | Proportion of parents who send both boys and girls to school | .26 | .436 | | | | | |
| Male | Respondent's gender (1=male; 0=female) | .59 | .492 | .57 | .61 | .57 | .62 | .60 |
| Pashtun | Respondent's ethnicity (1=Pashtun; 0=Hazara) | .98 | .156 | .99 | .96 | .99 | .99 | .96 |
| Age | Respondent's age in years | 41.00 | 11.600 | 40.00 | 42.00 | 40.00 | 41.00 | 43.00 |
| Number of Children | Number of children he/she has | 6.50 | 2.718 | 6.14 | 6.81 | 6.07 | 6.10 | 6.97 |
| Years of Schooling | Respondent's years of education | 2.50 | 4.212 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Employed | Whether the respondent is employed—govt., pvt., or self (1=employed; 0=else) | .64 | .481 | .57 | .70 | .57 | .72 | .69 |
| | Respondent's household monthly income (4.25= 2.5k-6k; 8.25=6.5k-10k; 12.25=10.5k-14k; 16.25=14.5k-18k; 20.25=18.5k-22k or more) | 8.73 | 4.975 | 7.98 | 9.41 | 7.65 | 8.90 | 10.00 |
| District | | | | | | | | |
| Tarin Kot | Proportion of parents from Tarin Kot | .42 | .493 | .42 | .41 | | | |
| Chora | Proportion of parents from Chora | .12 | .331 | .13 | .12 | | | |
| Charchino | Proportion of parents from Charchino | .12 | .331 | .13 | .12 | | | |
| Dehrawod | Proportion of parents from Dehrawod | .17 | .373 | .20 | .14 | | | |
| Gizab | Proportion of parents from Gizab | .17 | .373 | .12 | .21 | | | |

WILL YOU SEND YOUR DAUGHTER TO SCHOOL?

(Table 2 cont.)

| Variables | Description | Mean/ Proportion | SD | Analysis One | | Analysis Two | | |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------|-------|------------------|--------|--------------|--------------|------|
| | | | | Do Not Attend | Attend | None | Boys Only | Both |
| Value of Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | Six-item standardized scale measuring how much parents value girls' education. Alpha .81 | .000 | 1.000 | -.40 | .40 | -.40 | .12 | .60 |
| Boys | Six-item standardized scale measuring how much parents value boys' education. Alpha .80 | .000 | 1.000 | -.40 | .30 | -.40 | .30 | .40 |
| Future with an Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | Six-item standardized scale of girls' future with an education (as compared to girls without an education). Alpha .86 | .000 | 1.000 | -.40 | .30 | -.50 | .40 | .50 |
| Boys | Six-item standardized scale of boys' future with an education (as compared to boys without an education). Alpha .86 | .000 | 1.000 | -.50 | .40 | -.40 | .13 | .60 |
| Variables | Description | Mean/ Proportion | SD | Analysis One | | Analysis Two | | |
| | | | | Do not Attend | Attend | None | Boys Only | Both |
| Violence Against Education | | | | | | | | |
| Attack on Education | Four-item standardized scale of violence against school, parents, and children. Alpha .80 | .000 | 1.000 | .14 | -.12 | .14 | -.26 | .02 |
| N | | 474 | | 223 | 251 | 223 | 130 | 121 |

WHAT PREDICTS PARENTS' DECISIONS TO ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL?

The first set of analyses uses logistic regression to explore the role of our explanatory variables (see definition above) in examining the odds of parents' deciding to enroll or not enroll their children. The first model includes only socio-demographic variables and geographic indicators. The ethnicity variable (Pashtun) is excluded from the analyses due to a lack of variation, as 98 percent of the respondents are Pashtun. The second model adds to the first by including a measure of the value parents put on boys' and girls' education. We use these data to discuss whether promoting access to education for boys and girls is a locally held norm. The third model adds the measures about the future of girls and boys who have an education. These data enable us to show the extent to

which pragmatic socioeconomic interests are associated with parents' decisions about sending their children to school. The fourth model explores the additional contribution of the violence against education measure, which enables us to characterize how pragmatic considerations relate to decisions about education. See the results in Table 3.

In Model 1, the gender coefficients present different intercepts for women and men, and should not necessarily be interpreted as differences in support for enrolling children. Marginally, we see no association because we measure enrollment objectively—i.e., actual enrollment. In addition, the difference is likely due to the fact that men are overrepresented as compared to women who do not send their children to school in our sample. We also ran separate models (not shown here) for men and women to examine whether results differ by gender of respondent; we find the results do not appear substantively different.

Model 1 indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between having a large number of children and enrollment.¹³ After holding other variables constant, educated parents are significantly more likely to send their children to school than those who are uneducated. Employment is also positively and significantly associated with enrollment, net of background variables in the model; parents who are employed are more likely to send their children to school than parents who are not employed. Similarly, parents who earn more are significantly more likely to enroll their children in school than their peers whose children do not attend school.

In Model 2, we highlight the relationship between how much parents value girls' and boys' education and the chances they will enroll their children in school. The model indicates that the odds of children being enrolled significantly increases when their parents have a normative preference for inherently valuing girls' and boys' education. The predictive power of the other variables in the analysis remain roughly the same, except that parents in Chora district are significantly less likely to enroll their children than parents in Tarin Kot district.

13 We cannot say whether they are likely to enroll all of their children or just some.

Table 3: Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regression Models Predicting Parents Will Enroll Their Children in School (Analysis One)

| | Enrolling Children Relative to Not Enrolling Them | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
| Male | 0.526** (0.146) | 0.327*** (0.102) | 0.232*** (0.0807) | 0.166*** (0.0635) |
| Age | 0.996 (0.0106) | 0.990 (0.0116) | 0.988 (0.0118) | 0.990 (0.0120) |
| Number of Children | 1.125*** (0.0505) | 1.215*** (0.0629) | 1.252*** (0.0697) | 1.251*** (0.0706) |
| Years of Schooling | 1.196*** (0.0388) | 1.184*** (0.0415) | 1.150*** (0.0419) | 1.164*** (0.0433) |
| Employed | 2.021*** (0.527) | 1.856** (0.530) | 2.182** (0.679) | 2.488*** (0.797) |
| Income (2.5k–22k or more) | 1.062*** (0.0226) | 1.091*** (0.0268) | 1.118*** (0.0304) | 1.128*** (0.0314) |
| District (Ref. category=Tarin Kot) | | | | |
| Chora | 1.024 (0.332) | 0.480* (0.181) | 0.287*** (0.115) | 0.270*** (0.110) |
| Charchino | 0.849 (0.281) | 0.531* (0.197) | 0.457** (0.182) | 0.544 (0.221) |
| Dehrawod | 0.726 (0.211) | 0.591 (0.190) | 0.341*** (0.119) | 0.330*** (0.116) |
| Gizab | 2.196*** (0.669) | 2.031** (0.687) | 2.079* (0.782) | 1.706 (0.661) |
| Value of Education | | | | |
| Girls | | 2.194*** (0.323) | 1.594*** (0.279) | 1.601*** (0.282) |
| Boys | | 1.697*** (0.262) | 1.027 (0.189) | 1.015 (0.185) |
| Future with an Education | | | | |
| Girls | | | 1.196 (0.207) | 1.218 (0.214) |
| Boys | | | 3.731*** (0.853) | 3.612*** (0.826) |
| Violence Against Education | | | | |
| Attack on Education | | | | 0.805** (0.0723) |
| Constant | 0.218*** (0.101) | 0.235*** (0.122) | 0.214*** (0.118) | 0.201*** (0.112) |
| N | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 |
| Pseudo R ² | .21 | .40 | .48 | .51 |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Model 3 includes two additional scales in our analyses to explore the factors that reflect parents' perceptions of the social and economic returns to education for boys and for girls. Model 3 indicates that, for the parents in our sample, the perception that girls have a better future if they have an education than those without an education is not significantly associated with sending children to school. However, the perception that boys have a better future if they are educated strongly and significantly increases the odds of enrollment, net of other factors.

In addition, after controlling for parents' expectations of future returns for boys with an education, the association between enrolling a child in school and putting value on boys' education loses significance. This suggests that it is not the value parents place on boys' education that is important, but that parents' expectation of better future returns associated with an education for boys significantly increases the chances of sending children to school. The associations with other variables—number of children, employment, and income—remain significant.

Model 4 includes another scale—attack on education—to assess the relationship between violence against education and enrollment. We include this scale to explore if either enrollment choice parents make is a function of factors related to their children's safety. The model shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between violence against education and enrollment. In other words, parents who report more education-related violence are significantly less likely to send their children to school. The value of girls' education and parents' expectations of a better future for boys with an education stay significant in Model 4. As in the other steps above, the associations with the number of children, education, employment, and income also remain significant.

Thus, the demographic factors associated with higher odds that children in general will be enrolled (both boys and girls) include parents having more education, employment, a greater number of children, and higher income. Meanwhile, attitudinal factors associated with higher odds of enrollment include putting greater value on girls' education and expecting better future returns for boys with an education. These findings are echoed in our qualitative interviews, described below. (For marginal effects for Analysis One, please see Annex A.)

SUMMARY OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR SECOND SET OF ANALYSES

Table 2 also displays the summary statistics for all the independent variables used in the second analysis, and the total number of respondents in each category of the dependent variable: none (n=223), boys only (n=130), and both (n=121).

The table indicates that the average number of children, years of education, and income are significantly higher for parents who send their boys or both their boys and girls to school than for those who do not send their children to school at all. Of the 130 parents who send only boys to school, 70 percent have at least one primary school-age daughter (5-12 years old). Similarly, 57 percent of those who do not send their children to school at all have at least one school-age daughter (5-12 years old; not shown here). Continuing to confirm findings from the first set of analyses, Table 2 also shows that the proportion of employed parents with no children in school is significantly lower than those whose boys or both boys and girls attend school. Similarly, the proportion of parents who report violence against education is greater for those with no children in school and whose boys and girls both attend school than for those who only send their boys to school.

WHAT PREDICTS PARENTS' DECISIONS TO EDUCATE ONLY THEIR BOYS, BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS, OR NEITHER?

In our second set of analyses, we break down our main outcome of interest (enrollment) into three categories: parents who send only their boys to school (only boys), parents who send both their boys and their girls to school (both), and parents who send neither (none). These three categories are mutually exclusive. This analysis enables us to disentangle the local norm of valuing girls' education from other factors, and also shows the extent to which local norms clash with international efforts to promote girls' education. The explanatory variables of interest and control variables are the same as those in the first analysis.¹⁴

To examine what predicts the enrollment of boys in school and of both boys and girls relative to not enrolling children in school at all, we employ multinomial logistic regression, which is appropriate to use with polytomous dependent variables (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Table 4 presents the results. The first model explores the relationship of background variables—including education, employment, and income—to enrollment. As in the first set of analyses above, Model 1 in Table 4 indicates that education has a positive association with the enrollment of boys only and of both girls and boys after holding other variables constant. Parents who are employed are significantly more likely to enroll their boys ($p < .05$) or both boys and girls ($p < .10$) than their unemployed peers. As in the first analysis above, income has a strong positive relationship with the enrollment of boys only and of both boys and girls, indicating that parents who

¹⁴ We omitted parents' location from the background variables in the second set of analyses, since we were left with a small number of cases in some districts after dividing the main variable into these three categories. However, the removal of the district does not significantly influence the effects of other variables on enrollment.

earn more are significantly more likely to educate only their boys, and their boys and girls. Having a higher number of children increases the odds that parents will send both boys and girls to school relative to not sending any.

Model 2 in Table 4 examines the relationship between the value parents place on boys' and girls' education and their enrollment. Here, the additional scales value of girls' education and value of boys' education have a positive and statistically significant relationship with enrollment. This indicates that, after keeping other variables constant, parents who value educating boys and girls are significantly more likely to enroll boys and both boys and girls than are parents who do not value educating children

Table 4: Odds Ratio from Multinomial Logistic Regression Models Predicting Parents Will Enroll Their Male Children Only or Both Male and Female Children in School, Relative to Not Enrolling them at All (Analysis Two)

| | Sending Only Boys or Both Boys and Girls to School, Relative to Not Enrolling Them | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
| | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both |
| Male | 0.535** (0.169) | 0.464** (0.157) | 0.404*** (0.135) | 0.250*** (0.0953) | 0.336*** (0.120) | 0.209*** (0.0844) | 0.211*** (0.0821) | 0.164*** (0.0714) |
| Age | 0.997 (0.0119) | 1.000 (0.0123) | 0.993 (0.0125) | 0.993 (0.0135) | 0.992 (0.0125) | 0.991 (0.0137) | 0.994 (0.0128) | 0.993 (0.0138) |
| Number of Children | 1.045 (0.0531) | 1.186*** (0.0603) | 1.116** (0.0614) | 1.326*** (0.0803) | 1.133** (0.0651) | 1.349*** (0.0856) | 1.134** (0.0665) | 1.353*** (0.0867) |
| Years of Schooling | 1.187*** (0.0417) | 1.214*** (0.0442) | 1.179*** (0.0429) | 1.203*** (0.0475) | 1.152*** (0.0431) | 1.174*** (0.0472) | 1.173*** (0.0449) | 1.185*** (0.0481) |
| Employed | 2.085** (0.626) | 1.869* (0.597) | 1.814* (0.564) | 1.524 (0.541) | 1.929** (0.637) | 1.770 (0.670) | 2.308** (0.794) | 1.925* (0.747) |
| Income (2.5k–22k or more) | 1.042* (0.0249) | 1.065*** (0.0257) | 1.061** (0.0271) | 1.095*** (0.0308) | 1.083*** (0.0296) | 1.122*** (0.0337) | 1.102*** (0.0313) | 1.135*** (0.0350) |

WILL YOU SEND YOUR DAUGHTER TO SCHOOL?

| (Table 4 cont.) | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Boys Only | Both |
| Value of Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | | | 1.426** | 4.138*** | 1.210 | 2.661*** | 1.241 | 2.690*** |
| | | | (0.218) | (0.912) | (0.215) | (0.637) | (0.223) | (0.643) |
| Boys | | | 1.667*** | 1.489* | 1.019 | 0.996 | 0.997 | 0.988 |
| | | | (0.272) | (0.318) | (0.196) | (0.235) | (0.194) | (0.230) |
| Future with an Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | | | | | 0.933 | 1.843** | 0.952 | 1.876** |
| | | | | | (0.164) | (0.455) | (0.170) | (0.466) |
| Boys | | | | | 3.002*** | 2.640*** | 2.857*** | 2.612*** |
| | | | | | (0.683) | (0.877) | (0.655) | (0.869) |
| Violence Against Education | | | | | | | | |
| Attack on Education | | | | | | | 0.685*** | 0.856* |
| | | | | | | | (0.0700) | (0.0808) |
| Constant | 0.223*** | 0.0688*** | 0.207*** | 0.0413*** | 0.173*** | 0.0279*** | 0.145*** | 0.0257*** |
| | (0.111) | (0.0364) | (0.109) | (0.0249) | (0.0942) | (0.0180) | (0.0807) | (0.0167) |
| N | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 |
| Pseudo R ² | .18 | .18 | .38 | .38 | .46 | .46 | .49 | .49 |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

The associations between enrollment and number of children, years of education, and income remain positive and significant in Model 2. Once the value of girls' and boys' education is accounted for here, the association with employment loses significance. However, disaggregating the outcome variable in three categories shows that the value of girls' education measure is far more strongly associated with enrolling both boys and girls than with enrolling boys only.

Model 3 includes an examination of the relationship between enrollment and parents' expectations of future returns from education. Parents' expectations of better future returns for boys with education is important for predicting enrollment across the board. However, expectations of better future returns for girls with education is only a statistically significant predictor for enrolling both boys and girls (not boys alone). Interestingly, and as in the first analysis above, the effect of the value parents place on boys' education loses significance after controlling for expectations of boys' and girls' future returns with an education. This again suggests that placing value on boys' education is not enough to prompt parents to enroll their boys in school, and that it is critical that parents also perceive better future returns for boys with education. Once again, however, placing value on girls' education remains important when parents are deciding to enroll children of both genders. The associations with other variables—number of children, employment, and income—remain significant. Thus, those who normatively value education are more likely to send both boys and girls to school; those who prioritize the pragmatic assessment of future returns from education are more likely to send only their boys.

The final model in Table 5 explores the extent to which violence against education may be associated with boys' and girls' enrollment. Importantly, the association between reporting violence against education—attacks on schools and/or parents, and children being harmed for attending school—and enrollment is significant in the multinomial analysis. Estimates suggest that parents who report more education-related violence are less likely to send their children to school. (For marginal effects, please see Annex A.) Interestingly, the net effects on enrollment of placing value on girls' education and an expectation of better future returns for girls with education remain significant when the violence-related scale is added to the model. In our qualitative analysis, we examine some cases in which normative attitudes toward education trump the fear of attacks on students, schools, or parents. As was the case in the first analysis, having more children, a higher level of education, and greater earnings are associated with an increased likelihood of sending children to school.¹⁵

15 We conducted a separate analysis (not shown here) to assess differences between the coefficients of the categories of boys only and both for all four models. Their differences are not significant, except for income.

This second set of analyses provides critical insights into our research questions. In sum, these findings indicate that education, family size, and income are strong predictors of boys' and girls' school enrollment. They further suggest that parents' perception of the value of education for girls and associating better future social and economic returns with girls' education significantly increase the likelihood that parents will send girls to school. In short, both valuing education and expecting better future returns matter for girls' education in this set of analyses. Unlike girls' enrollment, the normative value of boys' education is not associated with an increased likelihood of sending boys to school, once parents' perception of future returns are included in the model. What is critical for boys' enrollment is parents' perception of the link between education and better future outcomes. This could indicate that parents perceive an economic sacrifice in sending boys to school that some are willing and able to give up only when they believe the later rewards will mitigate the current sacrifice. This is consistent with our qualitative findings, below, that also highlight the relationship between violence against education and enrollment.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Our qualitative interviews support many of the findings described above, adding nuance that helps us understand them better. Indeed, in these interviews, the most common reasons parents offer to explain why they or others do not send their children to school include a lack of security (attacks on schools and students), illiteracy, poverty, the lack of facilities (school buildings and teachers), and negative social perceptions, particularly in relation to educating girls, which will be addressed in more detail in the next section.¹⁶ Here we present the key findings from the qualitative interviews.

WHAT URUZGAN PARENTS SAY ABOUT EDUCATION

Our quantitative data show that security is a serious issue for many parents, particularly as relates to attacks on schools and the children who attend. The qualitative data further support this notion. Poor security, specifically attacks on schools and children being harmed on the way to school, is a common response across all of the qualitative interviews to questions of why parents do not send their children to school. Interviewees describe how conflict ricochets through the education system, noting that that the Taliban and "anti-government elements"

¹⁶ It is important to keep in mind that, although these interviews add depth to our quantitative results, we cannot generalize from such a small sample of parents.

attack schools, teachers, and children on their way to school. One father, who is not literate himself but sends both his sons and daughters to school, sums up the tension in this way: “Well, the main problem is that there are two powers in the country, one builds schools, the other destroys and burns them. That is why most people are out of school in Afghanistan” (PMB4, p. 2).¹⁷

Interviewees note repeatedly that the Taliban prohibit children from attending school. Another father, who is not literate and does not send his children to school, is also concerned about direct attacks, noting, “We fear the Taliban. We fear that they might kill our children if they know that they are going to school” (MN2, p. 2). Many in these communities have experienced or witnessed violence against education, which solidifies the connection they make between danger and school attendance. They list the dangers: children may step on a landmine on their way to school; they may be wounded in a suicide attack; they may be kidnapped or killed. One mother describes seeing “explosions and suicide attacks” carried out in front of a school and nearby madrassa, in which a child lost both his legs and hands, but she and her husband continue to send their sons to school (FOB3, p. 8). Interviewees describe the chilling effect that attacking schools has on education—when schools are bombed, children are reluctant to return and parents are reluctant to send them back.

Yet, as noted in the survey data, even in the face of profound violence, many parents express a deep desire for their children to receive an education and the benefits they perceive it will bring, and some continue to send their sons to school, if not their daughters, despite these obstacles. For example, a mother who sends both her boys and girls to school notes:

A few days ago there was an attack carried out on the school in our area. After the attack my husband asked our children not to go to school because of the danger to their lives. But a few days later, I requested him to please let them go to school so that they can learn something and he let them go. They are scared while going to school but I encourage them a lot to go and learn something. I tell them, “Look at me, I could not go to school and study so now I am an illiterate person, that’s why you have to study to have a bright future.” (FB1, p. 2)

Thus, some families are resilient and continue to send their children to school because they believe in the value of education, even when the dangers are great.

¹⁷ Interviewees are coded according to whether they are: (1) male or female (M/F) and (2) send neither (N), only boys (OB), or both (B) to school.

Interestingly, this particular mother reports that she motivates change in her household. Her comment also illustrates the acute sense of loss and frustration that many parents feel about their own lack of literacy, which in turn drives them to educate their children. Many parents in our interviews describe the importance of education for their children, particularly in contrast to their own illiteracy. One father says, “Everyone knows illiteracy is the biggest problem in the world. And we know it better because we are illiterate and we realize how many problems we have because of it . . . People don’t want this for their children. They want them to get education and become literate” (MB4, p. 3).

Although many parents report that their own illiteracy is a driving force behind their desire to send their children to school, illiteracy also emerges as a characteristic, along with poverty, that parents believe prevents people from sending their children to school and undermines progress in the country as a whole. For example, one mother whose children do not go to school says that parents who know the “value of knowledge” and the “benefits of education” are able and willing to send their children to school. But she also says, “My parents were illiterates and so am I. None of my ancestors went to school and I did not go to school, and my children won’t go to school either. This is what my husband says. People just follow what the previous generations did” (FN1, p. 3). Nevertheless, many believe that illiteracy is the source of many problems for individuals and that it contributes to larger social ills, including conflict.

While security barriers affect all families, the poor and illiterate may be less likely to overcome them in order to send their children to school. All of the fathers and most of the mothers we interviewed who do not send their children to school identify poverty as one of the main reasons, and they say that only the wealthy and socially well-positioned are able to send their children. Farmers describe their difficulty in making ends meet and the need to rely on their children—especially their sons—to work with them in the fields. One notes, “People who have lands, wealth, and other kinds of businesses can send their children to school, but those facing hardship cannot.” Later he adds, “When a person learns in school how to read and write and get educated, and when they get a job they are comfortable and work in their offices, and a person like me will have to run errands for them” (MN3, p. 5). Mothers echo these sentiments, noting that poor people need their sons to work in the fields and their daughters to work at home, sewing/doing needlework or weaving carpets. One says, “Those who are literate, of course, they earn more money and work comfortably, but those who are illiterate are just suffering a worse life and earning with lots of difficulty” (FN1, p. 3). These interviewees show parents’ awareness of the importance of returns to

education, as well as the tradeoffs involved in choosing whether to send a son to school or to the fields.

Finally, although some interviewees are satisfied with the quality of education their children receive, many parents across all interviews note problems with the schools and the education system that deter them from sending their children to school. They describe schools that lack books, desks, and other materials, as well as the faculty's poor teaching practices, arrogant teachers, and teachers who are absent or who show up late. For example, a mother who sends her sons to school but is illiterate says that the fact that "there are no teachers at schools" compounds the problems of security and negative attitudes toward education (FOB3, p. 2), which prevents some people from sending their children to school. One parent who sends both his daughters and sons to school and has an eighth-grade education himself describes the contrast between the education he received and the quality of education currently offered in schools: "The teaching quality was really good then, unlike now when a student of grade eight becomes a teacher of grade 12 and a student of grade two is the teacher of class four . . . The teaching staff is not qualified enough . . . Books are not distributed on time" (MB2, p. 6). Another father who sends all of his children to school but is not educated himself expresses a similar level of dissatisfaction, adding that most teachers have not been paid for the past seven months (MB4, p. 2).

Assumptions about the poor quality of education could be another reason why poorer, less educated parents choose not to send their children to school, given the future returns they would expect from a poor quality education. However, it is not possible to generalize from these qualitative data, and our surveys did not ask explicitly about teaching practices or material conditions in schools. These interviews suggest nonetheless that some of the material issues facing schools in Uruzgan warrant further exploration.

As our surveys reflect, our interviews also revealed that, far from being normatively opposed to education, many parents in Afghanistan strongly want their children to have an education. They recognize that education provides important opportunities they wish they had had for themselves. However, some parents remain reluctant to enroll their children because they fear for their physical safety, or because the poor quality of the available education negates the perceived future returns to education.

WHY PARENTS CAN'T OR WON'T SEND THEIR DAUGHTERS TO SCHOOL

Although the fathers we interviewed generally support sending their children to school, our qualitative data suggest that they may be more resigned than mothers to keeping children out of school to work, to ensure their safety, or to protect the family's reputation. There have been many attacks on schools in the areas where our participants live and, as noted in the survey data, these attacks affect both boys' and girls' enrollment and attendance, although girls appear more likely to be taken out of school permanently. For example, an illiterate mother who sends her sons to school but can no longer send her daughter describes the problem: "You might have heard that the schools were targeted several times. Schools were burned down and turned into ashes. My girl was attending school before when a bomb exploded near their school, so her father stopped her. He said that our girl should no longer attend any school" (FOB1, p. 2). In our interviews, mothers describe their efforts to get their girls back into school and their anguish when they are unable to do so. These anecdotal examples offer plausible mechanisms for supporting girls' education and are worth exploring more systematically.

Insecurity, distance to school, an insufficient number of schools, and a lack of female teachers affect girls more severely than boys. The same mother speaks about distance to school and insecurity since the explosion:

My husband told me that I could only send my sons to school and my girl is not allowed. If a school is built near our house or the village, I would manage this problem and I would take her every day to and from school . . . My daughter tells me that she loved to go to school. She cries and asks me why her father doesn't let her go to school. (FOB1, p. 3)

In addition to violence, many parents cite not just the lack of teachers but the specific lack of female teachers as a barrier to sending their daughters to school. A father who sends both his sons and daughters to school says, "In Uruzgan, people cannot send their girls to school because there are no female teachers and [so] male teachers teach them, and the teaching staff are not qualified enough" (MB2, p. 6). This father notes that, although he is willing to send his daughters to school to study with the male teachers currently available, he will not be able to send the girls to school after they reach puberty if there are no female teachers.

Beyond these material conditions, girls' education is affected by normative tensions in the community. As one woman quoted above notes, some families

describe violence and threats as the biggest reasons for keeping their girls out of school. Others talk at length about the social tensions that surround the decision to send girls to school. These tensions manifest themselves, first, in “people saying bad things” about both the girls who go to school and the families who send them. Turbawali, a subcategory of Pashtunwali, refers to the required conformity in relatives’ behavior. Our data show that some parents are deeply concerned about what people say, and some say social pressure from relatives makes it difficult for them to send their children—especially their girls—to school.

A subgroup of our interviewees attribute the local prohibition on sending children to school, particularly girls, to Islam, or express these views themselves.¹⁸ When an interviewer asks why people talk badly about girls going to school, the mother quoted above notes:

Our people are illiterate and uneducated, and often repeat what others tell them . . . Females are marginalized and do not enjoy equal rights compared to their male partners. If you tell someone to send your daughter or sister to school, they become nervous. They don’t know that God has created women and He has given certain rights for them. Women are humans and must be treated as human beings. They have the right as parents to send girls to school. (FOB1, p. 4)

This interviewee believes that illiteracy and a lack of education make people more susceptible to pressure not to send their girls to school. She describes their ignorance, specifically noting that these people are unaware that women’s rights—the source of this norm—come from God, and that as a result parents have the right to send their girls to school. The interviewee locates the source of local women’s rights with God, rather than with international organizations, foreign norms, or treaties. Her description calls into question the assumption, common among foreigners and foreign organizations, that Afghans often perceive rights to have emerged from outside their communities and to be a foreign imposition, rather than a norm that is integral to their local beliefs and values, as indicated here. It is important to note, however, that the data presented here do not allow us to judge whether these local norms are affected more by evolving local interpretations of Islam or by the subtle influence of increasing access to outside culture (e.g., national and international television programs, and phones, even in rural districts). Future research should examine this question. Nonetheless,

¹⁸ It is important to note that a large majority scholars of Islam describe the Qur’an and hadiths as supporting education for all, including girls and women.

there are important implications of locals representing rights in this way, which we discuss further below.

As both locals and outsiders note, there are some who argue that Islam does not support sending girls to school, particularly in remote, conflict-affected areas of Afghanistan, and some who believe that Westerners are using schools to promote anti-Islamic ideology. As one interviewee notes, “Yes, some people say, why you are sending your girls to school, this school belongs to infidels [*kafirs*]. We did not learn and they are learning ABCs now. People in the village talk like this” (MB1, pp. 11-12). A mother who does not send either her boys or her girls to school argues that

Islam orders us to learn religious lessons and Holy Qur’an. There is nothing in Islam to send your girls to school where Americans are waiting to teach you, supervise you, and touch you. This is not what we want. It must be in the Qur’an to send children to madrassa. Some of our husbands know Qur’an, and if it’s said in Qur’an to send your children to school, they would have sent them to school. The school is not mentioned in Qur’an so they don’t send them. Please don’t ask me about Islamic issues. I don’t have enough information about Islam. I’m an illiterate woman, and I haven’t studied any part of the Qur’an. I can’t read or recite the Holy Qur’an. (FN3, pp. 4-5)

Nevertheless, many respondents provide vivid reasons for educating their daughters, and a number of them use Islam to justify sending their girls to school, rather than for keeping them out of school. We discuss these explanations below.

WHY PARENTS SEND THEIR DAUGHTERS TO SCHOOL

Parents cite three primary reasons for sending their daughters to school: Islam requires it, the girls learn proper behavior, and the community must have female teachers and doctors. First, Islam does, in fact, urge its adherents to “seek knowledge,” and as many of our interviewees note, this is a requirement for all Muslims—men and women. One woman notes, “Based on the saying of the prophet Mohammad, learning/education is the duty of every Muslim man and woman. So both men and women are responsible to learn something.” She describes the importance of girls learning proper behavior, Islamic principles, others’ rights, and “how to treat everyone” (FOB2, p. 4). Locating women’s rights and girls’ right to education with God and Islamic teachings indicates that

existing local norms support girls' education. When outside organizations do so, too, they do not clash with the values held by many in the community.

Adding to these reasons, many interviewees recognize the severe consequences caused by the lack of female doctors in their communities, and they offer this as one of the most important reasons to send girls to school. They note that women sometimes die because they cannot go to a male doctor, and they realize that enrolling girls in primary school is the first step toward addressing these issues. One father notes, "We do not have any lady doctors here and cannot take our women to male doctors—this is all because we lack female and qualified teachers" (MB2, p. 6). Women also describe suffering because of illiteracy, even if they are able to seek medical care. One describes getting lost and confused in a hospital because she was not able to read signs. These reasons could explain why future returns to girls' education matter for some parents, as our survey data above indicate.

These interviews also provide insights into generational change in Afghanistan, which indicates local normative change over time. While our survey collected the years of education each parent respondent has, our interviews collected parents' stories of their own education. Interviewees describe their own experiences with teachers and schools, if any, and express their attitudes toward education that were, in part, shaped by their own early experiences. Both mothers and fathers express a longing for literacy, and most transfer this longing to their children:

Illiteracy is a great problem for everyone. Though an illiterate person appears to be physically sound, he feels he/she is blind. I share my bad experience with you. When someone rings me, I don't know who called me; though the numbers are saved in my phone I'm not able to read them. I know my relatives from their voice. When I receive a call, I press the OK button on the phone and listen to the caller's voice, and if it matches the voice of one of my relatives I answer the call; otherwise, I cancel the call. I can't add credit balance to my phone/SIM and must seek the help of others to enter the scratch card number to my phone. All our problems are due to the fact that we are uneducated. Everyone cheats us, misuses us, and make us become enemies of one another. If we were educated, we would have never destroyed our country. Now, if we don't let our children go to school, their future will be the same as ours. (FOB1, p. 5)

Despite extreme volatility in the community and social pressure from powerful men and their female relatives in Uruzgan province, mothers show bravery and steadfastness in sending their girls to school. We conclude with a quote below from an illiterate mother that encapsulates this courage:

My neighbor was criticizing me for sending my daughter to school. I asked, "Have you seen my daughter not saying 'salaam' to you? Not treating you with respect? Does she curse or steal? Please tell me." My neighbor replied, "No, she doesn't do those things." I said, "I will move to another place, but I will not stop sending my daughter to school." (FB2 p. 3)

In short, according to our survey data and supported by our qualitative interviews, the most important factors determining whether parents send their girls to school include the importance of future returns and the (religious) value placed on education. Parents who send their girls to school are more aware of the local demand for female doctors, teachers, and other community leaders. Similarly, while some parents who do not send their girls to school cite the detrimental influence of the West, they are more likely to reference their own or their male relatives' interpretation of Islam. Although they may not have an active desire to emulate Western normative ideals now, this does not rule out the possibility that Western norms helped achieve normative acceptance in the past. Ultimately, parents make the decision to enroll girls in school based on their understanding of local customs and conditions, which are congruent with Western or international norms that support access to education.

CONCLUSION

As we have shown throughout our discussion, the most significant barriers parents face in sending their children to school are poverty, violence against education, and their own lack of education. Our qualitative interviews provide a more detailed picture of the strife that afflicts these communities, and of parents' efforts to support their children in the face of opposing normative pressures from stronger, more vocal members of the community and in the context of limited resources. Female respondents offer perhaps the most vivid and poignant insights into these challenges, detailing their efforts to negotiate with their husbands and neighbors to be able to send their children, including their girls, to school.

These findings reveal a society torn by conflict and social divisions, but not necessarily in the ways that international organizations suspect when they provide outside support for education. Violent conflict dictates that families respond pragmatically, and fathers are expected to protect their families, especially their daughters. The important point here is that this competing pragmatic decision does not oppose the right to education. It is, rather, determined by a highly specific context: because there is no security, a father cannot be sure that his children, particularly his daughters, will be safe on their way to school, giving rise to fears of both physical and reputational harm.

Furthermore, ideas attributed to foreigners serve as a backdrop to the more prevalent and prominent local normative struggles, which are characterized by tensions between Islam and Pashtunwali and competing interpretations of Islam. The normative reference here is broader Islam, which promotes women's rights and girls' education. Some who manage to break out of conformity seem able to do so in part because they point to the fact that Islam mandates education for all. According to the parents who brave violence and "bad words" from their neighbors to send their girls to school, these rights originate within Islam and are not messages from an international NGO, the United Nations, or from the U.S. government. Therefore, international actors should feel confident providing support to local actors who are committed to education, provided their support is not perceived as taking sides in the conflict.

The presence of the West, however, is evident in the fears some parents expressed that government schools are there to indoctrinate children, to teach them un-Islamic ideas, and to make them secular. These fears have existed in sections of Afghan society for most of the last 100 years, when educated Afghans returned home from modernizing countries like Turkey and Egypt and challenged local Islamic ideas, and local mullahs held a monopoly on education (Burde 2014). The Soviets' invasion of Afghanistan and their efforts to reduce the emphasis on religion in school prompted a recent iteration of these fears, and the foreign interventions of the 2000s have prolonged them.

The media today touches the lives of even the poorest and most marginalized, as demonstrated by the mother who describes the effect illiteracy has on her daily life by preventing her from adding credit to her phone without assistance. Mothers from our sample of parents who send only their boys or neither their boys nor girls to school overwhelmingly support girls' education. They do so for the most practical reasons—basic literacy, availability of doctors—as well as for divine reasons—being a good Muslim, having a happy afterlife. In calling

for girls' education, these women reference their own hardships, as well as the norms promoted by Islam. In other words, they root their call for girls' right to education in the value of education, which they see as having a better life and following the correct path of Islam. Although international norms do not feature in their arguments, it is plausible that their increased exposure to the outside world complements and strengthens their frame of reference, thus enabling them to subtly but inexorably request these rights.

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ANNEX A

Table 5: Marginal Effects (Analysis One)

| | Enrolling Children Relative to Not Enrolling Them | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
| Male | -0.135** (0.0571) | -0.192*** (0.0508) | -0.218*** (0.0483) | -0.263*** (0.0513) |
| Age | -0.000836 (0.00223) | -0.00178 (0.00199) | -0.00184 (0.00178) | -0.00143 (0.00177) |
| Number of Children | 0.0248*** (0.00918) | 0.0333*** (0.00839) | 0.0334*** (0.00776) | 0.0328*** (0.00777) |
| Years of Schooling | 0.0376*** (0.00604) | 0.0289*** (0.00550) | 0.0208*** (0.00511) | 0.0223*** (0.00510) |
| Employed | 0.148*** (0.0532) | 0.106** (0.0481) | 0.116** (0.0452) | 0.134*** (0.0454) |
| Income (2.5k–22k or more) | 0.0127*** (0.00433) | 0.0148*** (0.00402) | 0.0166*** (0.00378) | 0.0176*** (0.00379) |
| District (Ref. category=Tarin Kot) | | | | |
| Chora | 0.00503 (0.0696) | -0.127** (0.0639) | -0.190*** (0.0590) | -0.197*** (0.0588) |
| Charchino | -0.0351 (0.0708) | -0.110* (0.0632) | -0.117** (0.0595) | -0.0892 (0.0599) |
| Dehrawod | -0.0682 (0.0614) | -0.0913* (0.0554) | -0.163*** (0.0518) | -0.165*** (0.0513) |
| Gizab | 0.163*** (0.0606) | 0.117** (0.0543) | 0.0961** (0.0478) | 0.0707 (0.0502) |
| Value of Education | | | | |
| Girls | | 0.135*** (0.0224) | 0.0694*** (0.0254) | 0.0690*** (0.0251) |
| Boys | | 0.0905*** (0.0253) | 0.00396 (0.0274) | 0.00211 (0.0267) |
| Future with an Education | | | | |
| Girls | | | 0.0266 (0.0256) | 0.0289 (0.0256) |
| Boys | | | 0.196*** (0.0296) | 0.188*** (0.0294) |
| Violence Against Education | | | | |
| Attack on Education | | | | -0.0318** (0.0129) |
| N | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 6: Marginal Effects (Analysis Two)

| Sending Only Boys or Both Boys and Girls to School, Relative to Not Enrolling Them | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
| | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both | Boys Only | Both |
| Male | -0.0624 (0.0552) | -0.0870 (0.0541) | -0.0627 (0.0537) | -0.133*** (0.0476) | -0.0719 (0.0534) | -0.132*** (0.0469) | -0.128** (0.0548) | -0.130*** (0.0494) |
| Age | -0.000557 (0.00205) | 0.000157 (0.00192) | -0.000891 (0.00200) | -0.000383 (0.00168) | -0.000822 (0.00190) | -0.000539 (0.00163) | -0.000467 (0.00189) | -0.000564 (0.00164) |
| Number of Children | -0.00433 (0.00842) | 0.0265*** (0.00753) | -0.00103 (0.00827) | 0.0326*** (0.00683) | -0.00108 (0.00802) | 0.0318*** (0.00661) | -0.00153 (0.00790) | 0.0321*** (0.00661) |
| Years of Schooling | 0.0183*** (0.00494) | 0.0210*** (0.00466) | 0.0164*** (0.00489) | 0.0143*** (0.00415) | 0.0125*** (0.00482) | 0.0113*** (0.00401) | 0.0143*** (0.00475) | 0.0112*** (0.00402) |
| Employed | 0.0939* (0.0531) | 0.0539 (0.0515) | 0.0784 (0.0521) | 0.0160 (0.0468) | 0.0719 (0.0520) | 0.0283 (0.0469) | 0.0932* (0.0521) | 0.0264 (0.0476) |
| Income (2.5k–22k or more) | 0.00304 (0.00402) | 0.00798** (0.00367) | 0.00416 (0.00391) | 0.00868*** (0.00333) | 0.00519 (0.00383) | 0.0098*** (0.00325) | 0.00697* (0.00376) | 0.0100*** (0.00326) |
| Value of Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | | | -0.0419* (0.0245) | 0.179*** (0.0261) | -0.0419 (0.0277) | 0.121*** (0.0281) | -0.0387 (0.0273) | 0.120*** (0.0280) |
| Boys | | | 0.0645** (0.0295) | 0.0190 (0.0297) | 0.00357 (0.0309) | -0.00200 (0.0296) | 0.000362 (0.0311) | -0.00142 (0.0296) |
| Future with an Education | | | | | | | | |
| Girls | | | | | -0.0594** (0.0282) | 0.0900*** (0.0303) | -0.0566** (0.0278) | 0.0906*** (0.0303) |
| Boys | | | | | 0.119*** (0.0393) | 0.0496 (0.0435) | 0.106*** (0.0389) | 0.0522 (0.0435) |
| Violence against Education | | | | | | | | |
| Attack on Education | | | | | | | -0.0530*** (0.0150) | 0.00750 (0.0114) |
| N | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 | 474 |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$