

## **Pakistani Couples: Different Productive and Reproductive Realities?**

ZEBA A. SATHAR and SHAHNAZ KAZI

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gender systems depict several dimensions of the relations between men and women across different social settings. Mason (1995) has described the complexity of gender systems that encompass concepts such as women's standing, empowerment, the sexual division of spheres and the rather widely used concept of women's status. Gender systems in Pakistan are posited to be unequal in favour of men, because of strong patriarchal systems, which ordain that men and older persons make all major decisions. As a result, women's status is argued to be low in most dimensions: poor educational attainment, few economic opportunities apart from family based employment which is largely unpaid and the virtual seclusion of women from the public spheres of life especially those involving financial transactions. Spheres of life are quite separate with men having the primary responsibility of breadwinning and women to be primarily responsible for within household routine chores such as those involving cleaning, cooking, animal care and child care.

Men control the major part of decision making and presumably act in their own interest which may not necessarily coincide with women [Folbre (1988)]. Especially in terms of productive decisions but also in reproductive decisions, women necessarily play a subsidiary role which relegates them to a lower position in terms of decision making and control of resources [Dwyer and Bruce (1988)]. This paper looks more closely at the two spheres of production and reproduction in rural Pakistan. It uses responses from matched husbands and wives to test whether in fact there is a difference between spouses in their perceptions, goals/orientation about production and reproduction.

The essence of this enquiry is directed at gender relations in Pakistan. Can we establish that there is inequality in gender constructs among men and women and are they perceived differently by men and women? Is this inequality of what is expected from men and women a social construct accepted by both genders? And in that connection, is there any evidence that men necessarily want to maintain the status

Zeba A. Sathar is Chief of Research at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, and also works for the Population Council in Islamabad. Shahnaz Kazi is Chief of Research at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, and also works for the World Bank in Islamabad.

quo and women to break away from it? There has been little research thus far on whether social realities are different for men and women. In all probability women and men are susceptible and constrained by the same social constructs, which confine them in certain roles and reinforce the status quo. The difficulties of disentangling these relationships, which are quite complicated, have been laid out comprehensively [Mason (1996)]. Pakistan with its strong patriarchal structures is an ideal setting to investigate whether in fact there are significant differences between the perceptions of men and women, whether one necessarily imposes their will over the other and above all whether any differences can be attributed to other factors such as different contexts, better communication, different stages of the life cycle, higher education etc.

The patriarchal system, which prevails in Pakistan, is associated with clearly defined male female role ascriptions where men are the breadwinners and women the producers and nurturers of children. The women's domain is the domestic sphere inside the home and the man's domain is the public space outside the home. The culturally defined gender roles have been considered as the main explanation of much of women's labour force behaviour and their restricted access to education. Seclusion of women from the labour force remains one of the most important symbols of high economic and social status in rural societies. It is the one most important demonstration of women being excluded from public spheres and restricted to domestic functions.

We take up this division between the public/outside and private/inside sphere and the cultural designation of women to the private sphere as the starting point of our analysis. The most important factor conditioning the gender division of labour is the context. This context varies in the rural areas of Punjab through the interaction of ecology, economic and ethnicity. Both employment opportunities and migration patterns are a critical influence on the gender division of labour. These differences influence family structures, educational attainment and employment patterns which in turn affect the multi-dimensions of autonomy of women. We assess the empirical evidence for this argument.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

Data were collected in 1993-94 with the specific purpose of investigating more comprehensively than before the relationship between women's status and fertility in five Asian countries. The project was lead by Karen Mason based in the East West Center. Communities amounting to 59 groupings eventually across the five countries were chosen with separate criterion for each country [Mason (1995)]. In Pakistan the ten communities chosen to select the sample were located in the most populous province of Punjab. They were selected to represent the full range of agro-

climatic, ethnic and linguistic zones. The villages were roughly of the same size and were purposively selected to be located at considerable distance from any major roads. One peri-urban community was also chosen for purposes of comparison.

About 100 currently married women between the ages of 15 and 40 were randomly selected for detailed interviews which lasted over an hour. About 50 percent of husbands were also interviewed. In addition focus group interviews were conducted with both men and women in all ten communities to establish gender related norms. The core of the data for this study come from the 1036 women's and 470 "matchable" men's questionnaires completed during the course of the survey. A major aim of this paper is to utilise the results of the husbands survey and focus group interviews with men and women.

The women's questionnaire comprises of a screening rooster which collected household information and was used also to establish the number of eligible currently married women in the household. Only one out of the eligible respondents was chosen per household using a Kish chart. The beginning of the interview schedule was a collection of background information; this was followed by sections on a full birth history, contraceptive knowledge and use section, employment section (including details of class of worker, seasonal and regular employment, paid and unpaid). Three special sections were included to cover all aspects of women status that we could conceive of: intra family relationships, marriage history and details of dowry, mobility and gender issues. The last sections collected information on husbands (mainly socio-economic characteristics) and household possessions.

The husband's questionnaire is more or a less a sub-set of the women's questionnaire, except it has additional details on household earnings and land and production. The husband's questionnaire has information on men's fertility, on preferences of future fertility and contraceptive use and knowledge but obviously does not include a birth history.

We concentrate on indices of what are considered some crucial aspects of gender system: mobility of women, their freedom to control income and purchase personal items, decision making inside and outside home spheres, access to resources and reproductive attitudes. These indices are compiled as dummy variables valued at one if the respondent/or wife (when reported by husband) can go somewhere alone or decide on something herself and zero otherwise.

### **Outside Sphere**

**Mobility:** Whether respondent can go alone to the market, to the field, to the next village, to the health centre.

**Decision-making and access to resources outside home:** Whether respondent can decide whether she works for an income, to make a major household purchase,

whether to buy animals, whether she has any say in household expenses, and whether she controls her own income.

### **Inside Sphere**

Decision making and control over resources inside home: Whether respondent makes decision about children's education, how many children to have, what to do when the child is sick, who children should marry, whether respondent is free to buy herself jewelry, free to buy a dress.

Reproductive orientation: Desire for more children, whether respondent and or husband desires more children.

The strategy used is to look at some basic determinants of women's autonomy as reported by women and men. Initially all relationships are seen through a series of bivariate tables, later the associations are tested through the use logistic regressions. Most explanatory variables are dummies except for education and age which are continuous variables. Age, family structure, education of respondent and husband, and regions (to assess the effect of context) are the major control variables. Dummies have been constructed to capture the four categories of female employment status, a dummy for family structure, and three dummies to capture the four regions. These regions were selected purposively and represent (1) Rain fed areas (2) Peri-urban site near the major city of Gujranwala (3) Central Zones which are irrigated and rice—wheat growing (4) Southern Punjab which is less developed cotton growing zone.

## **FINDINGS**

The major underlying hypothesis of this study is that the different regions of Punjab depict quite radically different employment and migration patterns which lay out very different employment structures for women and varying levels of interdependence which influence gender systems. The varying contexts across the ten sites, broken down into four regions, for ease of presentation and analysis, govern major differences in how much women space women have in the sphere outside the home. Individual characteristics are important also, especially the one of class, education and age of women. The precision of the divide between inside and outside boundaries and what is considered culturally acceptable behaviour varies by these individual characteristics. Contextual differences have been established as extremely integral to the study of women's autonomy [Balk (1994)], to patriarchy and female autonomy [Taj *et al.* (1995) and for empowerment [Niraula and Morgan (1994)].

In a set of questions which looked at gender related attitudes, the data on a series of issues pertaining to the division of spheres between males and females, it was interesting to note that 91 percent of women thought that the most important decisions regarding the household should be made by men while 83 percent thought that women

should not work outside the home (Table 1). In answer to “there is work that men should only do and work that women should only do”, older women were more conservative in their answers and educated women on the contrary are less conservative than uneducated women about whether the major household decisions should be taken by men. Husbands gave much more liberal answers particularly about the division of the spheres of work.

Table 1  
*Indicators of Perceived Gender Inequality*

	Proportion that agree that there is work that men only do and work that women only do		Proportion that agree that men should make the major decisions in the household		No. of Cases
	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	
<b>All</b>	83.2	69.6	91.5	85.1	470
<b>Employment Status of Woman</b>					
Not Economically Active	86.6	65.6	91.6	81.5	119
Unpaid Work	83.2	70.2	94.2	87.5	208
Paid Work Outside Home	75.0	75.0	85.4	89.6	48
Paid Work Inside Home	83.2	70.5	88.4	82.1	95
<b>Education Level of Woman</b>					
None	83.1	66.9	92.7	87.1	372
< Primary	79.4	79.4	94.1	85.3	34
Primary +	85.9	79.7	82.8	73.4	64
<b>Family Structure</b>					
Nuclear	85.6	69.3	91.2	83.7	215
Extended	81.1	69.8	91.8	86.3	255
<b>Age</b>					
< 25	77.4	66.1	90.3	87.1	124
25 < 35	82.9	70.4	90.7	83.8	216
35 or More	89.2	71.3	93.8	85.3	129
<b>Region</b>					
Barani	89.4	77.5	93.8	84.4	160
Peri-urban	84.0	64.0	92.0	76.0	50
Central	82.5	63.1	90.3	86.4	103
Southern	77.1	67.5	89.8	87.9	157

These responses are useful for interpretation in two ways. The first is a reaffirmation of the division of the spheres of men and women, and women are no different to men in reaffirming and redefining existing set of social relations. There are also significant variations in gender inequality by region with the Barani areas appearing as most rigid in adhering to perceptions of gender inequality where spheres are divided and responsibilities rest with men. The Peri-urban and Central Punjab areas appear slightly most liberal in this regard. But we know that there are significant deviations from this strict division of roles. It is interesting to note further that educated women (in the case of decision making) and younger women (in the case of division of spheres) are at least more ready to admit to breaking away from these otherwise publicly accepted norms.

### **The Extra-domestic, “Outside” Sphere**

Here we mainly examine the productive behaviour of men and women. The extent and nature of women’s involvement in domains outside the domestic sphere would be expected to have a significant impact on their autonomy defined as the ability to act independently. Participation in the labour force would be expected to show a positive association with autonomy particularly if it allows women to leave the confines of the household and acquire resources. How does participation in the labour market and nature of employment affect decision making and mobility of women? In particular are husband’s perceptions of women’s roles in the productive sphere concurrent with those of women. The data enable a comparison of men and women’s account of women’s work and of decision making and freedom of movement. In what contexts are the divergences in male female perceptions of autonomy most marked?

A major source of variation in the gender division of labour is closely linked to variations in rural context including differences in agro-ecological conditions, the nature of agriculture, proximity to cities, cultural norms regarding women’s seclusion, non-farm employment opportunities. There are strong linkages between women and men’s productive activities. The influence of contextual factors in decisions regarding labour deployment of males and females and the inter-linkages is most clearly illustrated in the differences in work patterns of the villages located in barani (rainfed) and irrigated regions [Sathar and Kazi (1996); Sathar and Desai (1996)]. In the rain fed regions (barani areas) landownership is broad based with a large majority of household own small parcels of land. Agriculture in the rain fed region is constrained by the uncertainty of water supply and is mainly geared to subsistence production. Since agriculture is not sufficient for economic survival of the households there has been a tradition of seeking employment outside farm sector and a large proportion of the male population are employed in the non-farm sector particularly in the army and police and nearby centers. Women are left with a larger burden/responsibility of managing the family farm, while the men diversify into the non-farm sector to supplement family income. In response to the specific circumstances of these village a livelihood system has emerged which provides relatively stable male wage employment in the formal sector combined with subsistence agricultural production managed by women.

There are marked gender differences in economic participation in the barani region as compared to the irrigated areas of Central and Southern Punjab. The share of paid work in female employment increases dramatically as we move from the Northern Barani villages to the irrigated sites of Central and Southern Punjab (Table 2). Agriculture, in the fertile irrigated regions, is market oriented and is a lucrative source of income and is a major source of employment for both men and women.

Table 2

*Employment Patterns of Women by Agro-ecological Regions of Punjab*

Regions	Not Working	Unpaid	Paid Work Outside	Paid Work Inside	No. of Cases
<i>Barani</i>	26.9	57.5	5.6	10.0	160
Peri-urban	50.0	20.0	—	20.0	50
Central	25.2	43.7	14.6	16.5	103
Southern	15.9	38.9	15.3	29.9	157

However wage employment in agriculture in the irrigated regions indicates marked differences by gender. Farm labour is the principal activity of a large proportion of economically active women while the participation of men is negligible. For instance in the Southern Punjab sites nearly 15.3 percent of the women were working outside the home for wages (presumably primarily as agricultural labour) as compared to only 5.6 percent in the barani areas. It is important to point out that wage labour in agriculture is among the poorest paid activity in the rural sector. Other sources of livelihood include sale of livestock products particularly important for women in Central Punjab while outwork is common in villages located near large urban centers such as the peri-urban site and one of the Southern Punjab village. Also the proximity to a large city provides a ready market for various items manufactured at home and is also convenient for the middlemen. As many as 30 percent of women in Southern Punjab were involved in such work. The regional context therefore becomes important in setting out some of the parameters of gender constructs through its dominant patterns of women's work.

The nature of women's work activity has varying connotations for the social status of the household. There is very clear division between work for own family and for others. For instance farm work for own family even when it is located in public space has an entirely different connotation to farm labour for others for cash. Working for income within the respectable confines of the home is more acceptable than engaging in remunerative work in public space. The prevalence of home-based work is partly due to the fact that it enables women to earn income with in a socially less demeaning manner. Social ranking of work is in the following order: (1) work on own farm; (2) inside income earning; (3) outside paid work.

The loss of social status associated with women's work is often cited as an explanation for the low reporting of women's labour force participation rates in Pakistan where data on women's work is collected by male enumerators from the male head of households. This view is strongly supported by a comparison of male and female responses to the question of whether the wife/respondent had worked for

income in the last year. Nearly 80 percent of the husbands whose wives were engaged in economic activity stated that their wives were not earning (Table 3). Within employment categories, husbands of women who were undertaking paid work especially outside the home were more likely to admit to their wives work as compared to those whose wives were contributing unpaid family labour. In addition to the reluctance to admitting to women working because it may be associated with a loss of status, husbands may simply not be aware of their wives employment or did not consider it as productive activity.

Table 3

*Husbands' Reported and Wives' Reported Participation in the Labour Force*

Wives Reported Work Status	Proportion of husbands who admit to their wives participation in economic activity	
	No. of Cases	
Not Participating in the Labour Force	8.4	119
Unpaid Work	8.7	208
Paid Work Outside Home	33.3	48
Paid Work Inside Home	24.2	95
All Women who Participated in the Labour Force	19.1	351

Education is consistently found to reduce rural women's labour force participation rate which is to be expected since educated women in rural settings are likely to belong to well off households which can afford to adhere to social prescriptions against women's work. However the negative relationship is largely due to falling levels of unpaid work with increasing education of respondent. The relationship with paid employment is U shaped; highest for uneducated women falling with years of schooling and rising for women who have completed eight years of schooling [Sathar and Kazi (1996)]. Nearly one-fifth of the women in the highest education group were teachers.

Education and employment are often used, as proxies for women's status, the objective here is to directly assess the impact of employment and education on some dimensions of women's autonomy. These include indicators of mobility which measure women's freedom to move within and between villages, decision-making authority in the household particularly related to economic decisions and control over their own earnings as well as their say in the disposal of household income. To assess women's mobility respondent's were asked if they could go alone to certain places



within the village—such as the local market, fields, health center and also if they could travel unescorted to an adjoining village. For the sample as a whole the results indicate that women's mobility was quite restricted (Table 4): about 43 percent said they could go to the fields alone, slightly more than one third of women could go to the local market, around 27 of the respondents could go unescorted to a health center while less than 12 percent of the women could travel alone to the next village. However, *purdah* within the village was observed by less than 30 percent of the respondents interviewed.

The perceptions of men are far more liberal in terms of where women can or cannot go alone. Mobility of women is reported to be much higher according to husbands. A much higher proportion of husbands report that their wife can go to a health center and local market alone. However men were less likely than their wives to report mobility to go to the fields. Men clearly do not like to report the involvement of women in agriculture as it impinges on their sphere of life. The reporting of mobility to go to the adjacent village is not very different for men and women and is most limited in both their points of view. The level of prevalence of *purdah* as stated by men is higher.

The findings indicate that women who were earning an income had significantly greater mobility. However, there was not much difference in mobility between women who were not economically active and those engaged in unpaid work although the latter had greater freedom to go to the fields alone and were less likely to observe *purdah* in the village. Differences in freedom of movement were greater by the category of employment. As would be expected, freedom of movement of home-based workers was as constrained as that of non-working women while non-agricultural workers outside the home were most mobile. Education had hardly any bearing on mobility except the ability to go to a health center alone, a decision that may have other dimensions than additional mobility. It may have to do with a greater decision making capacity and ability to access health care.

Regional patterns of mobility were quite striking where only 18 percent of Southern Punjabi women were able to go to a health center alone as compared to 47 percent of women in Central Punjab. There were similar differences reported in being able to go to the local market alone. Older women and those living in nuclear households are much more mobile. It should be pointed out that though a critical issue in certain respects of freeing women to gain access to markets, health care and just experience the world outside their homes, it is not entirely clear how much mobility is related to greater status. It is perhaps more of an indicator that women are as much "equal" to their husbands in terms of leaving the confines of their homes. Their "exposure" to the outside sphere is likely to be greater by virtue of that ability, but their decision-making authority and participation may remain unaffected.

Table 4

*Indicators of Women's Mobility*

	Percent who can go unescorted to:								Percent who Practice		No. of Cases
	Heath Centre		Local Market		Fields		Next Village		Purdah in the Village		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
<b>All</b>	26.9	43.1	34.8	49.9	43.1	36.9	11.5	8.3	30.9	35.8	470
<b>Employment Status</b>											
Not Economically Active	24.1	39.3	30.4	48.2	33.9	33.9	12.5	12.5	41.1	52.7	119
Unpaid Work	26.4	43.3	34.6	48.1	45.7	35.1	9.1	7.2	28.4	31.7	208
Paid Work Outside Home	33.3	52.1	45.8	56.3	60.4	52.1	10.4	6.3	16.7	18.8	48
Paid Work Inside Home	26.3	42.1	33.7	52.6	40.0	37.9	15.8	7.4	31.6	33.7	95
<b>Education Level</b>											
None	25.3	44.9	34.4	51.9	43.8	39.8	11.8	9.1	29.0	33.6	372
< Primary	26.5	29.4	35.3	38.2	35.3	14.7	8.8	2.9	29.4	44.1	34
Primary+	35.9	39.1	35.9	43.8	42.2	32.8	10.9	7.8	42.2	45.3	64
<b>Family Structure</b>											
Nuclear	35.3	47.4	40.9	57.2	50.2	40.5	14.0	8.4	27.0	34.9	215
Extended	19.6	39.2	29.4	43.5	36.9	34.1	9.4	8.6	34.1	36.9	255
<b>Age</b>											
< 25	12.9	29.8	20.2	40.3	31.5	27.4	5.6	5.6	37.1	41.9	124
25 < 35	27.3	44.9	35.2	50.9	43.5	33.8	10.6	8.3	31.0	34.3	216
35 or More	39.5	52.7	48.1	57.4	53.5	51.2	18.6	10.6	24.8	32.6	129
<b>Region</b>											
Barani	23.1	56.9	25.6	60.0	51.3	41.9	11.3	13.1	23.1		160
Peri-urban	40.0	58.0	50.0	60.0	44.0	52.0	20.0	14.0	22.0		50
Central	46.6	46.6	53.4	54.4	59.2	30.1	17.5	4.9	15.5		103
Southern	17.6	25.0	21.3	42.6	29.6	42.6	6.5	4.6	36.1		157

F: As reported by wives.

M: As reported by husbands.

Interestingly, a similar pattern was observed in the relationship between productive activity and the respondent's say in key economic decisions (Table 5). The decisions considered here relate to the purchase of major household goods, sale and purchase of livestock and the employment of women outside the home. Questions were asked as to whether the respondent participated in these decisions and as to who had the final say in the matter. In general economically active women indicated a greater involvement in economic decision making as compared to women who were not engaged in productive activity. Within the categories of employment those who did remunerative employment outside the home had the greatest share in these decisions. Home-based workers had almost the same decision making authority as unpaid family workers. Farm and non-farm workers exercised the greatest say in decisions related to women's employment outside the home although they had little voice in decisions related to household purchases.

Differences in reporting of men and women are really striking. Men report a higher share of decision making in decisions of major household purchases but a much lower share in the decisions of whether women should work and be involved in the sale and purchase of animals. In particular men are very reluctant to admit to the women having a final say in any of these decisions presented in Table 5. It was also interesting to note that education did not necessarily confer greater decision making powers in the outside sphere to the respondent. Better educated women had a slightly higher say in buying major household purchases but this was not so for women's work outside the home and purchase of animals. Similar findings have been found in other parts of South Asia [Basu (1996)]. Results not presented here show a similar weak association between household income and these decisions with women from well off families were not necessarily more empowered to participate in these sets of decisions. However, age of respondent is clearly associated with greater autonomy, both in terms of decision making authority which underscores the strong life cycle effects of allowing women to move from their main activity of reproduction to wielding more power and influence over the public sphere [Ahmed (1988)].

Decision-making authority in the household is strongly associated with the extent of the respondents' contribution to household resources [Sathar and Kazi (1996)]. Women who contributed 20 percent or more to household income were twice as likely to have the final say in the major decisions considered as compared to those whose share of total income was less than 10 percent. An important indicator of economic autonomy is whether the woman retains control of her own earnings and has a say in how her income is spent. The findings indicate that home based workers, who fared poorly on other dimensions of autonomy, are more likely to keep their earnings. Nearly three-fourth of home-based workers retain their own earnings as compared to 44 percent of agricultural workers and 42 percent of women earning income in the livestock sector. It is also surprising to note that women who earn relatively larger amounts and whose contribution to household income is greater are

Table 5

*Indicators of Women's Decision-making Participation in Outside Sphere*

	Major Household Purchase				Women's Work Outside Home				Sale/Purchase of Animal				No. of Cases
	Percent of Respondents				Percent of Respondents				Percent of Respondents				
	Participated in Decision		Had a Final Say		Participated in Decision		Had a Final Say		Participated in Decision		Had a Final Say		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
All	17.7	24.3	4.3	5.3	36.9	21.3	14.7	1.9	20.0	15.6	4.5	1.7	470
Employment Status													
Not Economically Active	17.9	22.3	4.5	9.8	28.6	18.8	12.5	2.7	17.0	8.9	3.6	1.8	119
Unpaid Work	14.4	22.1	3.4	3.4	35.6	16.8	10.1	1.0	20.2	16.9	1.9	2.4	208
Paid Work Outside Home	22.9	29.2	4.2	2.1	64.6	22.9	33.3	2.1	31.3	25.0	8.3	–	48
Income Earning Activity													
Inside Home	20.0	26.3	5.3	5.3	34.7	31.6	15.8	3.2	18.9	13.7	9.5	1.1	95
Education													
None	17.5	24.2	3.8	4.6	39.0	22.0	16.1	2.2	21.5	16.2	4.6	1.9	372
< Primary	11.8	20.6	–	8.8	38.2	17.6	8.8	–	23.5	11.8	2.9	2.9	34
Primary+	21.9	26.6	9.4	7.8	23.4	18.8	9.4	1.6	9.4	14.1	4.7	–	64
Family Structure													
Nuclear	20.0	29.3	6.0	7.9	43.3	23.7	20.9	2.3	29.3	15.8	6.5	2.3	215
Extended	15.7	20.0	2.7	3.1	31.4	19.2	9.4	1.6	12.2	15.4	2.7	1.2	255
Age													
< 25	16.1	23.4	4.0	4.0	25.8	19.4	6.5	2.4	14.5	8.1	2.4	0.8	124
25 < 35	18.1	22.2	5.1	4.2	34.7	19.9	13.9	1.4	19.4	11.2	4.6	0.5	216
35 or More	18.6	28.7	3.1	8.5	51.2	25.6	24.0	2.3	26.4	30.2	6.2	4.7	129

M: As reported by husbands.

F: As reported by wives.

more likely to hand over some or all of their earnings to other household members. Also unexpected is the result that there is not much difference in terms of control of earnings between respondents living in nuclear as compared to extended families. Education is positively associated with the control of income. Importantly, less than half of uneducated women retain control on their earnings, as compared to nearly three-fourth of the respondents with a few years of schooling. Education has this strong empowering effect on women's access to resources, conditioned by their ability to secure paid employment. Education by itself is less of an avenue of empowerment in this sphere.

The results indicate that the impact of employment on autonomy depends most importantly on the nature of employment—whether it is paid or unpaid employment. Further, within the category of remunerated employment it depends on the type of income earning activity. The influence of home-based work is weakest on the mobility and decision-making dimensions of autonomy. This may be because home-based work fits in with the prevailing cultural norms and does not draw women out in the public sphere. At the same time home-based workers do retain control of their cash income, which is an important indicator of economic autonomy. The impact of employment on various indicators of autonomy may not be in the same direction; a beneficial effect on a particular dimension may be countered by a negative influence on another aspect of autonomy. Women who enjoy greater autonomy in the households who by most indicators belong to the lowest socio-economic groups are likely to by virtue of their class have little say or influence in the public domain in the community. It is interesting to note that (Table 6) after controlling for total household income, age and region, the relationship between paid work outside the home and being able to go alone to the market and with decision to be able to work was retained and statistically significant. The odds ratio of being able to go to the market alone was 2.3 and to have a part in deciding whether they could work outside the home was 3.7 as high as women who were not participating in the labour force. No other association was statistically significant even though some regional effects were quite strongly associated with these two measures of degree of women's participation in the outside sphere.

### **The Domestic Sphere**

There are notable differences in the way men and women perceive which one has the greatest role in decision-making. As pointed out in the earlier section, women feel they have much more of a say in the 'outside' sphere if they are involved in the labour force and receive payment for work. Generally women do admit that they have a much greater say in households revolving around the home sphere in comparison to those involving extra-household decisions (Table 7). While under 20

Table 6

*Logistic Regression of Participation in the Outside Spheres*

	Ability to go alone to market		Respondent has say in whether she should work outside the home	
	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Odds Ratio	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Odds Ratio
<b>EDUCATION (Years of Schooling)</b>	1.01	0.98	0.96	0.99
<b>FAMILY STRUCTURE</b>				
Nuclear	1.69**	1.24	1.65**	1.31
Extended (Omitted)	—	—	—	—
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
Not Economically Active (Omitted)	—	—	—	—
Unpaid Work	1.25	1.26	1.33	1.13
Paid Work Outside Home	1.91*	2.33**	4.14***	3.70**
Paid Work Inside Home	1.11	1.26	1.16	1.07
–2 Log Likelihood		511.8		570.1
Model Chi-square (P Value)		83.5 (P< .000)		35.8 (P< .000)

Model 2 controls for total household income, age of woman and regional dummies (*Barani*, Peri-urban, Central and Southern Punjab).

\*Significant at .05 level.

\*\*Significant at .00 level.

\*\*\*Significant at .000 level.

Table 7

*Indicators of Women's Domestic Decision-making Participation*

	Number of children to have				Care of sick children				Schooling of children				No. of Cases
	Percent of respondents				Percent of respondents				Percent of respondents				
	Participated in decision		Had a Final say		Participated in decision		Had a Final say		Participated in decision		Had a Final say		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
All	64.6	72.0	16.2	2.8	29.0	47.9	9.0	22.6	51.2	55.3	17.1	3.8	470
Employment Status													
Not Economically Active	62.5	72.3	16.1	2.7	31.3	41.1	12.5	20.5	54.5	42.0	12.5	3.6	119
Unpaid Work	63.0	73.9	11.1	2.1	23.3	44.4	9.5	25.4	48.7	58.7	13.9	3.7	208
Paid Work Outside Home	77.1	72.9	33.3	2.1	35.4	58.3	6.3	18.8	62.5	58.3	27.1	2.1	48
Paid Work Inside the Home	61.1	67.4	18.9	3.2	32.6	56.8	5.3	22.1	48.4	61.1	26.3	4.2	95
Education													
None	62.4	73.0	16.9	2.4	31.5	48.5	7.5	23.7	51.3	55.5	18.9	3.2	372
< 5 Years	76.5	61.8	8.8	2.9	17.6	52.9	8.8	14.7	55.9	58.8	8.8	5.9	34
5+ Years	70.3	70.3	15.6	4.7	20.3	40.6	17.2	20.3	46.9	51.6	10.9	6.3	64
Family Structure													
Nuclear	64.7	74.9	18.6	1.9	36.7	52.6	3.7	27.9	60.5	60.5	20.5	6.5	215
Extended	64.3	69.3	14.1	3.5	22.4	43.7	13.3	18.1	43.1	50.8	14.2	1.6	255
Age													
< 25	58.9	75.0	12.9	4.0	18.5	43.5	20.2	9.7	39.5	50.0	12.9	4.0	124
25 < 35	64.4	68.8	16.7	3.3	29.2	43.7	6.9	21.9	55.1	52.1	17.3	2.3	216
35 or More	70.5	74.4	18.6	0.8	38.8	48.9	1.6	36.4	55.8	65.9	20.9	6.2	129

F: As reported by wives M: As reported by husbands.

percent of women report having a say in decisions in the outside sphere and less than 15 percent have the greatest say, in the case of 'inside' decisions their share is 40 percent or higher. It is interesting to note that husbands respond to state that women have a much higher say in decision-making in the inside sphere than they do in the outside sphere. This reinforces the position that men are invested in maintaining the status quo in gender relations, which divide the two spheres, the outside and the inside, for their wives.

There is lesser disagreement in the responses of men and women in these decisions which do not extend beyond the traditional spheres of women as child bearers and nurturers (with the exception of children's schooling) as compared to responses in spheres which are traditionally male, that is employment and handling of household financial transactions. This reinforces the view that men are indeed less threatened by women having a substantial share in decisions to do with the number of children to have, and even in the schooling and marriages of children but are nevertheless unlikely to concede them full control in those spheres. Once more women themselves also feel they have more of a say in this area over 50 percent). So men and women are not particularly in disagreement in that the major decision making rests with men, however, they do differ to the degree of the control. Again older women definitely claim a greater share in decision-making. Women who were participating in the labour force particularly those who did paid work outside the home were slightly more likely to participate in the decision of children's schooling and how many children to have. But particularly important was the strong positive correlation between living in a nuclear household and being in control of these inside decisions. The lack of in-laws and other relatives necessarily gives women an edge in participating in these major household decisions, particularly notable in the case of children's schooling. Education, once again had a weak but positive association with these decisions.

These results presented in Table 8 show logistic regressions of decisions about who children should marry, about how many children to have and a new variable representing control over resources, freedom to buy a shalwar kameez independently. While paid work outside the home and education are both statistically significant in enhancing the odds of a woman deciding how many children to have, it is paid work inside the home and nuclear residence which increases the odds that she would participate in the decision to choose marriage matches for children. The results here are not definitive: it seems again the type of employment is important in what degree women participate in domestic decisions. The association is not as robust in terms of enhancing domestic decision making as it was in the case of extra-household decisions. In fact the suggestion is that education, nuclear residence and paid employment inside the home may be significantly more empowering in the domestic sphere than outside paid work.



Table 8

*Logistic Regression with Domestic Decisions as Dependent Variables*

	Has part in deciding on how many children to have		Has part in deciding whom children should marry		Has freedom to buy a Shalwar Kameez on her own	
	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Odds Ratio	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Odds Ratio	Model 1 Odds Ratio	Model 2 Odds Ratio
<b>Education</b>	1.09**	1.09*	0.99	1.00	1.14**	1.18***
<b>Family Structure</b>						
Nuclear	1.08	1.04	2.02***	1.66**	1.63**	1.38
Extended (Omitted)	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Employment Status</b>						
Not Economically Active (Omitted)						
Unpaid Work	1.17	1.20	1.22**	1.05	0.49***	0.38***
Paid Work Outside Home	2.33**	2.73**	1.46	1.24	0.33***	0.28***
Paid Work Inside Home	1.06	1.12	1.39***	1.14	0.64	0.59*
–2 Log Likelihood		586.3		605.6		566.5
Model Chi-square (P Value)		13.8		33.1		52.1
		(P< .88)		(P< .000)		(P< .000)

Model 2: Controlling for total household income, age of woman, regional dummies (*Barani*, Peri-urban, Central and Southern Punjab).

\*Significant at .05 level.

\*\*Significant at .00 level.

\*\*\*Significant at .000 level.

Two important dimensions of women's empowerment are decision making and access to resources. These two do not necessarily coincide. In this regard the strong positive association between education and the ability of women to buy their own shalwar kameez and the statistically significant negative association with work (paid and unpaid) outside the home are especially interesting. This result was maintained after controlling for income and age, it shows that the actual dispensation of household income may be more of an area of control of educated women and in fact out of the purview of working women. This may have to do with the fact that women doing paid work are more likely to supplement household output and income and cannot have the luxury to spend any part of the household income (no matter how trivial) on themselves. Once more paid work and education do have a slightly contrary influence on women's access to resources, a very important avenue to empowerment and social change.

The most critical aspect of the domestic sphere decisions is reproduction. Decisions regarding reproductive roles, goals and behaviour are of essential interest. Once more the assumption is that men, because they bear the lesser burden of childbearing and rearing, would tend to be more pro-natalist or at least less concerned with controlling fertility. Surprisingly, the data collected seems to indicate the opposite, with men appearing to be less pronatalist. They desire fewer children on average, and have a stronger desire to stop childbearing. The average may not show greater distinctions between the outliers. An interesting contrast is brought out when we compare women's perceptions about whether their husbands want more children and husband's own responses and the corollary about wives preferences as perceived and reported. Data show that both husbands and wives err about the other's actual preferences (Table 9). This has been documented to occur widely even in developed country settings [Thompson *et al.* (1990); Mason and Taj (1987)]. But it is particularly important to note that a non-negligible proportion of men proclaim themselves as not wanting more children when women think they are undecided. This proportion is 4.2 percent. Importantly, there is a 95 percent concordance between husbands and wives who want no more children when both men and women are reporting about their spouses. Men also tend to be more definite about their answers as fewer of them report being undecided. In contrast a substantial proportion of women report their husbands to be undecided about reproductive intentions. This has important implications for reproductive decision making on the part of couples. Fertility surveys, which conventionally interview women are perhaps mistakingly attaching the claim to continue childbearing on husbands' desire for more children.

Table 9

*Reproductive Intentions: Wife's Desires as Perceived by her and her Husband;  
Husband's Desires as Perceived by him and his Wife*

	Husband Desires for Additional Children (As Reported by Wife)		
	Wants More	Wants no More	Undecided
<b>Wife Desires for Additional Children (As Reported by Wife)</b>			
Wants More	90.5	4.2	48.3
Wants no More	9.1	95.8	43.3
Undecided	0.4	—	8.3
Total	54.1	38.9	7.0
(N)	(462)	(332)	
	Husband Desires for Additional Children (As Reported by Husband)		
	Wants More	Wants no More	Undecided
<b>Wife Desires for Additional Children (As Reported by Husband)</b>			
Wants More	95.5	3.8	0.4
Wants no More	3.1	95.7	0.5
Undecided	0.4	—	—
Total	54.7	44.9	0.4
(N)	(256)	(210)	

### CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents empirical evidence of the rigidity of division of spheres of men and women in Pakistan. While most women in rural areas do contribute to household production, this work is generally not recognised by families. Men are reluctant to admit that wives are participating in the outside sphere of decision making even though women admit a higher level of participation in outside decisions. Paid work especially outside the home raises autonomy of women in the outside sphere in terms of their private lives but this is almost necessarily associated with lower social status. There is a schism between public and private space with women with paid employment gaining in the former but losing in the latter sphere while educated women have a slight advantage in the opposite direction.

In the private spheres men are more generous in conferring autonomy among women. Yet there are misperceptions between men and women in this sphere also. Men are reportedly more liberal in stating the participation of decision making of women than reported by women themselves. However, even in this sphere men do not concede the final say in major decisions. They are, however, as keen if not more to stop childbearing and are perhaps clearer about articulating their preferences than wives speaking on their behalf.

So in conclusion, the spheres of men and women do overlap much more than they are likely to admit. Men however are the main decision makers in both spheres, though women are able increasingly to make decisions autonomously, if they are older,

they live in a nuclear family, their locality is more exposed to modern influences. The type of employment is important in discerning whether it is associated with empowerment: paid employment outside the home leads to higher decision making in the outside sphere and higher mobility while women in home based employment are likely to be more assertive in expressing their desire to stop childbearing.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, N. (1988) The Determinants of the Socio-economic Status of Women in a Rural Society. *Pakistan Administration* 25:1.
- Balk, D. (1994) Individual and Community Aspects of Women's Status and Fertility in Rural Bangladesh. *Population Studies* 48:1.
- Basu, A. (1996) Girls Schooling, Autonomy and Fertility Change: What do these Words Mean in South Asia? In R. and A. Basu (eds.) *Girl's Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Cain, M. (1979) Class, Patriarchy and Women's Work in Bangladesh. *Population and Development Review* 5.
- Dharmalingam, A., and P. Morgan (1996) Women's Work, Autonomy and Birth Control: Evidence from two South Indian Villages. *Population Studies* 50:2.
- Dwyer, D., and J. Bruce (1988) Introduction. In D. Dwyer and J. A. Bruce (eds.) *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Folbre, N. (1988) The Black Four of Hearts. In. D. Dwyer and J. Bruce (eds.) *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.
- Mason, K. O. (1995) *Gender and Demographic Change: What Do We Know?* Liege, Belgium: IUSSP.
- Mason, K. O. (1995a) A Comparative Study of the Status of Women in Five Asian Countries. Paper presented at International Symposium: Life and Earth in the 21st Century, March 1996. Tokyo, Japan.
- Mason, K. O., and A. Taj (1987) Women's and Men's Reproductive Goals. *Population and Development Review* 13: 4.
- Niraula, B., and P. Morgan (1994) Gender Inequality in Two Nepali Settings. IUSSP Seminar on Women, Poverty and Demographic Change, Oaxaca, Mexico, October.
- Sathar, Z., and S. Desai (1996) Work Patterns in Rural Pakistan: Intersections Between Gender, Family and Class. (Population Council Working Paper, No. 90.)
- Sathar, Z., and S. Kazi (1996) *Women's Autonomy, Livelihood and Fertility in Rural Punjab*. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute Development Economics.
- Taj, A. *et al.* (1995) Fertility, Patriarchy and Development in India. *Population and Development Review* 21:2.
- Thompson, E. *et al.* (1990) Fertility Desires and Fertility: Hers, His and Theirs. *Demography* 27: 4.

## Comments

The paper presented by Zeba Sathar and Shahnaz Kazi on the critical issue of gender relations in Pakistan is research timely produced and nicely written. The authors in this paper want to establish that if there is an inequality in gender constructs regarding the productive and reproductive issues, it defines the male-female role ascriptions where men are the breadwinners and women the producers and nurturers of children. They have also tested that men and women perceive them differently and accept this social construct. They also attempt to find out that men necessarily want to maintain the status quo and women want to break away from it. The authors define the productive as the “outside” sphere and reproductive as the “inside or domestic” sphere of life.

The data used for this paper come from a sample survey of 10 different communities in the Punjab. The analysis is also based on 470 interviews with husbands, and a few focus group interviews, to establish gender-related norms. The authors select employment status, educational level, family structure, age of the respondent, and region of residence as indicators of women’s decision-making and participation in the outside sphere. Bivariate analysis is used to find out the association between the variables and logistic regression analysis is employed to find out the independent effect of each explanatory variable.

The authors find out that the spheres of men and women do overlap much more than they are likely to admit. They conclude that men are the main decision-makers in both spheres, though women are able increasingly to make decisions autonomously, if they are older or if they live in a nuclear family and are exposed to modern influences. The type of employment is important to discerning whether it is associated with empowerment; paid employment outside the home leads to higher decision-making in the outside sphere and higher mobility, while women in home-based employment are likely to be more assertive in expressing their desire to stop childbearing.

The title of the paper is misleading because it does not show the picture of the whole country. It is limited to Punjab province only. Therefore, the title should be restricted to Punjabi couples instead Pakistani couples. Second, the authors present arguments which are based on empirical statistical evidence. But the sample used for this study is too small (470) to employ such statistical methodology; any hermeneutic conclusions would be misleading.

Finally, the authors conclude that the participation of women in activities outside the home mainly depends on the men, but husbands’ education is not included in the logistic regression analysis. In such societies, husbands’ education

would be the best predictor of allowing women to work outside the home. Inclusion of this variable (husbands' education) in the regression analysis would have given different results.

**Arshad Mahmood**

Ministry of Population Welfare,  
Islamabad.