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Fertility Regulation and Wives' Employment: Do Husbands See the Link? ¹

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Overview

Innumerable studies have addressed the relationship between fertility and women's employment behavior. Owing to past conventions in data collection and in policy and program directions, the majority of these studies have focused exclusively on women. Recently, however, recognition has been accorded to the role of men in the determination of women's productive and reproductive behavior. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action gave emphasis to reproductive health and sexual behavior and, specifically, to men's involvement in these concerns (United Nations, 1995:204-208). Thus, despite the various justifications for women having been given greater attention than men insofar as policies, programs and researches on fertility and family planning are concerned (Becker, 1996:292), men gradually began to figure more prominently in these issues. To date, however, more male- and couple-oriented research is being recommended, particularly where fertility and family planning decision-making is concerned. Moreover, use of qualitative, in-depth information is encouraged in this line of inquiry (Drennan, 1998:16; Bankole and Singh, 1998:23; Casterline *et al.*, 1996:34-36).

Concerning the participation of married women in the labor force, it is commonly acknowledged that childbearing affects women's work status. Having young children is frequently regarded as a deterrent to maternal employment (Browning, 1992:1449) on the assumption that women's productive and reproductive roles are incompatible with one another (Kupinsky, 1977). Because childbearing is usually a choice jointly made by couples, then husbands, through this decision-making process, already exert indirect influence on the work status of their wives. A more direct influence of husbands, however, is through the amount of income that they earn. Most women, especially in the developing countries, seek paid employment to augment family income. Where husbands' earnings are insufficient to meet the needs of the family, wives have a strong motivation to work (Bisgrove and Viswanathan, 1997:33). Ironically, however, many husbands in the developing-

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country setting may oppose their wife's participation in the labor force on cultural or normative grounds. In the Philippines, for example, traditional norms concerning gender division of labor are still prevalent. The husband is expected to be the main breadwinner of the family and the wife the child-caregiver and homemaker (Alcantara, 1994: 99; Domingo *et al.*, 1994; Eviota, 1992:150-151). Although financial needs provide adequate justification for wives' economic participation, the ideal is that husbands, if given a choice, would not want their wives to work (Castillo, 1981:20-23). It will be illuminating, therefore, to examine current perceptions and attitudes of Filipino husbands regarding the employment status of their wives, giving attention to the fertility and economic conditions prevailing in their families.

Viewed from the perspective of female-oriented conceptual frameworks, the relationship between family planning and wives' employment has typically been seen in the light of the mediating link of women's childbearing behavior. The use of family planning enables women to postpone or limit births which, in turn, presumably facilitates their participation in the labor force according to the role-incompatibility framework. Exogenous—and thus obscure—in this perspective, is the role of men in the decision-making process concerning the use of family planning and their wives' employment. To fill this particular gap in knowledge, it would be necessary to examine husbands' notions regarding connections, if any, between family planning practice and their wives' work participation.

This study, therefore, aims to meet two objectives. The first is to articulate husbands' views and attitudes regarding family planning and labor force participation of wives,² and the second is to examine linkages, if any, between their views concerning fertility regulation with those concerning their wives' employment. With the use of qualitative methods, the study expresses and interprets these views in a manner that gives relevance to the idiosyncratic, familial as well as socioeconomic and cultural contexts within which they have evolved.

Data and Methods

Qualitative data from 24 in-depth interviews of husbands collected in late 1998 and early 1999 is the primary source of information for this analysis. Serving as supplement is information from in-depth interviews of the men's wives obtained four years earlier. Selection of the male respondents in this study was contingent upon the selection of their spouses in the earlier in-depth interview. The wives had been selected purposively from a random sample of more than 3,000 mothers in Metropolitan Cebu³ who had been recruited as participants to the Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutrition Survey (CLHNS).

The CLHNS is a prospective study jointly undertaken by the Office of Population Studies (OPS) of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, Philippines and the Carolina Population Center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It started in 1983 when it identified and interviewed a cohort of pregnant women who

² In this study, wives' labor force participation, alternatively referred to as 'work', 'employment' or 'economic participation' signifies the involvement of wives in remunerative activities.

³ Metro Cebu is the second largest and most progressive metropolitan area in the Philippines, second only to Metro Manila.

subsequently gave birth within a one-year period, that is, between May 1983 and April 1984. Since then, these women have been re-interviewed 17 times. The last completed round of interviews was conducted in 1998-2000, and another round is in the offing.

During the 1994-95 follow-up survey, the CLHNS selected 63 mothers for in-depth interview under the auspices of the Women's Studies Project of Family Health International (FHI). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the context within which family planning decisions are being made and to probe into the possible consequences of contraceptive use on specific aspects of women's lives. The 63 respondents were chosen on the basis of their place of residence, parity and family planning use.⁴ In 1998, 24 of the husbands of these women were selected for another round of in-depth interviews under a collaborative project of OPS and FHI. Using information obtained in 1994-95, potential male respondents were chosen on the basis of the following criteria: 1) work status of husband and wife (both working, only husband working, only wife working), 2) couple's use of family planning (never and ever used), and 3) number of living children (less than four and four or more). This set of criteria provided a theoretical basis for selecting respondents for a study concerning husbands' attitudes and perceptions about childbearing, family planning and women's work participation. It had, however, two practical limitations. First, there were not enough couples from among the original 63 female in-depth respondents in 1994-95 who could be classified under the status "wife working, husband not working". Hence, the four sampling categories resulting from the combination of this specific work status with each of the two classifications of number of children and family planning use could not be filled up. Substitutions, compromising on work status of husbands (e.g., intermittent work instead of non-work), had to be made. Second is the fact that the selection criteria are based on information obtained in 1994-95. Family situations are not static and can easily have changed by 1998-99. It cannot be expected, therefore, that the criteria used at time of selection still applied at time of interview.

The set of guide questions used for the husbands' in-depth interviews addressed the following general topics: 1) husbands' reproductive goals and views about family planning, 2) their perspectives of wives' participation in economic activities, and 3) their economic and domestic responsibilities in the family. A similar albeit broader set of unstructured questions was used during the wives' interviews.

On average, the husband's interview lasted about 60 minutes. The interviewers were two of OPS' most experienced interviewers who also had conducted the women's survey of 1994-95. Both interviewers are female and have had intensive as well as extensive exposure to the CLHNS sample respondents owing to years of successive follow-up surveys.⁵ With permission from the respondents, all qualitative interviews were recorded on tape. These were subsequently transcribed

⁴ For a more detailed description of the sample, content, and procedures of the 1994-95 in-depth interviews, the reader is referred to Adair *et al.* (1997) and Avila and Perez (1999). For the results that deal with family planning decision-making from this study, see Avila (1998) and Avila and Wong (1999).

⁵ The study pretested and experimented with male in-depth interviewers. However, no perceptible gain was obtained from this approach. Husbands were no more (or less) cooperative in interviews conducted by males instead of females. Since the female interviewers had already forged a congenial, even personal, relationship with the sample couples, they were thus employed in this study.

and coded (by the same person who conducted the interview) following procedures prescribed by Ethnograph, the computer software chosen by the CLHNS for analyzing qualitative data.

The husbands interviewed in 1998-99 were in the age range 35-57. Only one among them had not attended school; 15 had elementary education only; five had secondary education; two had a few years of college, while another two had obtained a college degree. More than half of the respondents reported their wives as having had four or more live births; four had 10 children or more, while six had only one or two. Three-quarters of the respondents reported couple's use of family planning; six couples had never tried any means of fertility control. At the time of interview, 22 out of the 24 male respondents were currently employed. The work history of the respondents showed that three of them had been employed in the formal sector while the rest had been occupied with informal sector jobs. Two-thirds of the wives were gainfully employed at the time of their husband's interview, but only one of them was working in the formal sector.

Husbands' Views on Family Planning

In all 24 in-depth interviews, husbands affirmed the importance of men's involvement in the practice of family planning. Some, however, were less certain about their role than others. One group of husbands who, perhaps by default, fall into this category consists of those who felt no need to control their fertility because one of the spouses—usually the wife—was perceived to be sub-fecund. Another group is comprised of husbands who initially opposed fertility control but, after several children, had changed their minds. Their ambiguous stand is largely a result of lack of knowledge about family planning. Illustrations for each group are given below.

Relative indifference to family planning

An example of a husband who felt no need to get involved in family planning is 44-year old Simeon,⁶ a former truck driver who turned fisherman because of failing eyesight. Simeon and his 46-year old wife, Lina, have three children. Neither Simeon nor Lina ever had a definite idea of the number of children they would like to have. Both clearly are not averse to having additional children but are happy that, fortuitously, this did not happen. The couple never used any means of fertility control because, according to the wife, she first has to undergo a uterine massage (*magpahilot*) to be capable of conceiving. Nonetheless, Simeon thinks it is beneficial for couples to practice family planning “especially if the husband has no stable job” like himself. “How then can he support his children?” Simeon, however, admits not knowing much about family planning and that he and his wife never discussed the matter. Perhaps because financial pressures are not acute in Simeon's case since the family regularly receives remittances from the wife's mother in the United States, the couple is almost indifferent toward family planning.

A similar story can be told of Serafin and Marla, a couple with two female children. Serafin is 35 years old, finished second year of high school and currently

⁶ Throughout this paper, pseudonyms are used in place of the real names of respondents and their spouses.

works as a house painter. Marla is 32, completed Grade 5, was once a manicurist and wood polisher but is now unemployed. Although both husband and wife had originally wanted another child in the hope of having a son, they feel that this is no longer possible. Despite efforts (Marla also felt she requires a uterine massage to get pregnant), Marla failed to conceive a third time. Serafin is nonetheless very approving of family planning, especially for “couples who have proven high fertility”. He claims to be familiar with a number of family planning methods even if he and his wife never used any. He also said that couples should decide jointly which spouse should take charge in using a method because there are cases where “the wife is more knowledgeable about family planning” than the husband.

As an aside, what probably needs to be said of couples who perceive themselves as sub-fecund and are desirous to have another child is for the family planning program to provide certain services that respond also to the needs of these people. Thus far, little is known about the background and characteristics of these couples. In the Philippines, they have barely been given attention by the public health care system and family planning program implementors (see, e.g., Joaquin-Yasay and Herrin, 1998:1-2). Not surprisingly, therefore, many of them rely on traditional practices of which procedures, consequences and effectiveness remain largely unknown. Among husbands interviewed in this study, five have wives who reported having resorted to uterine massage in order to get pregnant.

Delayed involvement in family planning

Another subset of husbands who seem ambiguous in their perception and attitude toward family planning is that of husbands who were reported earlier by their wives to have objected to any form of fertility control. During the in-depth interviews, however, these husbands admitted to a recent change in attitude. This change could mean that, perhaps over time or under different circumstances (e.g., given timely and accurate information and/or improved spousal communication), initially divergent views and preferences of spouses concerning fertility and fertility regulation may converge. However, convergence generally occurs rather late in the life cycle, that is, when couples have already had several children, as illustrated in the stories below. At this stage, hardly any advantage is gained from a husband’s change in attitude toward family planning.

Alfonso is 40 years old and has never been to school. He cooks and sells pork *adobo* in the city’s public market assisted by his pregnant 33-year old wife, Ellie. The couple already has eight children. With the ninth child on the way, Alfonso finally realized the need to ensure that his wife will not get pregnant again. Because of very limited and inaccurate knowledge about family planning plus a pronatalist attitude, Alfonso had opposed attempts of his wife to use family planning in the past. He had heard alarming stories about the side effects of the pill, vasectomy and other methods and, therefore, believed that family planning is harmful. It is possible that Alfonso was simply rationalizing his once obstinate behavior. Ellie had complained about his frequent oppressive and violent behavior especially when drunk. Alfonso attributed his change of attitude toward family planning to worries that, as parents, he and his wife may no longer be able to give adequate care to their growing number of children. “Because we have many children, we can no longer attend to all of them. In fact, one was almost hit by a car. It is best that we now use family planning so that we will not

have more children.” He also confided that his eldest son is a drug addict. According to Alfonso, he would leave it to the midwife to decide what family planning method they should use as soon as his wife gives birth.

Diego and Emma are both 56 years of age and had completed Grade 4 and Grade 3, respectively. They are typical Filipino rural folks, fatalistic in their attitude toward childbearing (“abiding by God’s will”). Emma, now menopausal, has had 11 live births. She contemplated on using family planning after the sixth child as she became progressively concerned about finances and the children’s future. Physically, she gradually became less fit for pregnancy and was also embarrassed to be seen pregnant as she grew older. When a health worker suggested ligation to the couple, Diego vehemently refused saying: “why should the government urge us to practice family planning when we have never asked government to support us?” Lately, however, Diego admits that this attitude was a result of ignorance and that, although he now favors family planning, it is unfortunately too late. He laments the fact that nobody had approached him or given him advice about family planning before. Like his wife, he stressed that among older folks family planning was unheard of “unlike nowadays when people are given seminars about family planning, ...even when they are still young or about to get married”.

Also in their fifties are Andres and Narcisa (57 and 52 years old, respectively). Both have completed elementary education. Andres is a fisherman while Narcisa has never worked for pay. She has had 14 pregnancies and has nine living children. She used the pill secretly for a year after her 13th pregnancy. She did not inform her husband believing that he was against birth control since he was very vocal about “not opposing God’s will” and that “family planning was the will of government and not the will of God”. The couple never even talked about family planning. In Andres’ interview, however, it was disclosed that he could have been persuaded to agree to his wife’s use of the pill. According to him, “in the use of family planning, the wife has to make her husband understand what she wants”. He understood that his wife was already tired of bearing and rearing children, hence when he discovered empty packets of pills in the house he made no fuss about it. Apparently he himself also felt the burden of childcare. “It is tiresome to have young children... I lose sleep too and am burdened by having to buy milk all the time”. Andres just wished that his wife had explained her situation to him.

The three preceding examples underscore two particular needs of couples that should be addressed as far as the practice of family planning is concerned. The first is couples’ need for adequate and accurate information about various methods of fertility control. The purpose, mechanics, possible consequences or side effects of each method must be explained to couples in order for them to make informed decisions. It is important that this information is imparted not just to wives but to their spouses as well. Husbands with low educational attainment are, understandably, in greater need for this kind of instruction. Secondly, there is a need for husbands and wives to communicate their fertility and family planning intentions to one another. This is especially important on the part of wives. Since communication and decision-making are influenced by the power structure and relative status of husbands and wives in the home, and since this status may change over time (Medina, 1991:143-156), this goal obviously requires further and careful study. Nonetheless, it is apparent

that spousal communication regarding fertility intentions has to be encouraged early in married life.

Consistent involvement in family planning

Unlike husbands who, as demonstrated above, showed minimal or delayed interest in family planning, there also are those who readily took an active or lead role in regulating their wife's fertility. As judged from the interviews of these husbands, their behavior was prompted by one or both of two factors: 1) an early and strong awareness of their responsibilities as parent and breadwinner, and 2) a recognition of men's sexually more aggressive nature compared to that of women.

Reynaldo is a 42-year old college instructor. His 36-year old wife, Marilyn, almost completed college but has never been gainfully employed. The couple has two children: a boy aged 10, and a girl aged 15. Although Marilyn thinks that it is ideal for couples to have three children, she is nonetheless content with having only two, the number that her husband prefers. In his interview, Reynaldo admitted that even before marriage he already planned the number of children they would have and when to have them. According to Reynaldo, he needed to plan the size of his family because he is responsible for the family's economic well-being. "I planned this because I do not want to experience what my mother and father experienced. There were ten of us... and being the oldest son I saw that, when we ate, there was constant chaos and deprivation." To realize his fertility intentions, Reynaldo practiced withdrawal. According to him, withdrawal puts him in full control. Reynaldo is the kind of husband who demands subservience from his wife in return for the economic security he provides. Marilyn's complacent nature makes this an easy goal for him to achieve.

Jaime is a carpenter aged 41 years old. His wife, Imelda, is 49 and works at home as a seamstress. Both had completed elementary education only. They have three sons, aged 17, 15 and six. The couple intended to have only two children, both girls if Imelda had had her way. The third child was a result of miscalculation (in their use of rhythm), but the couple had then hoped that they would finally have a girl. When a third son was born, the husband became more determined not to have any more children and made sure that Imelda understood how important it was for them not to fail again even if this meant that they would never have a daughter. Jaime's determination was demonstrated in his practice of abstinence and withdrawal, his use of the condom, and especially in his patience in calculating the safe and unsafe days of his wife's menstrual cycle. According to him, the husband's role in family planning is more crucial than that of the wife because "a woman may or may not (want to have sex), but it is generally the man who initiates this activity". Jaime is one of those husbands who place a very high premium on their children's education. As a child, he was not given by his stepmother the opportunity to study. He finished elementary education at age 22 out of sheer determination. Not surprisingly, therefore, he wants his children to get adequate education, but given the family's economic situation, this will be possible only if the couple limits the number of their children.

A different case is that of Wilfredo and Nonita. It was Nonita who took the initiative to use contraceptives knowing that her action was in accord with her husband's wishes. Wilfredo, a tricycle driver, is 38 years old and Nonita, a food vendor, is aged 35. They have two sons, aged 11 and 15. Because of the trauma she

experienced when her second son got sick, Nonita decided to use the pill. She wished, however, to have two daughters in the future, a wish that may no longer be realized because of her husband's determination not to have any more children. Wilfredo constantly monitored his wife's pill intake. Recently, the couple switched to rhythm because it was suspected that Nonita's eye problem was caused by her prolonged use of the pill. In response to the question why he did not want another child, Wilfredo explained that "two are enough because of the nature of my job—it is not secure; and we can never tell if a child gets sick and we have no money". Also, he confided that "discipline is a burden, especially with boys... they can be troublesome. I will not have more than two... so that I will not be too stressed in disciplining them".

The three examples given above present scenarios in which the husband is a determined user of family planning as well as explanations why he is so. In all three examples, the wife would have wanted to have another child but then chose to defer to her husband's wishes. A digression from the patterns just illustrated is the case of Mark and Crispina. Their story also needs to be told because of its relevance to wives' work participation, a topic discussed in the next section. It is also a case in which the wife had taken the lead in the use family planning and continues to do so with total and consistent cooperation from her husband. The reason for her husband's unequivocal approval of family planning, however, is different from those exemplified above.

Mark is 39 years old, while Crispina is 34. He completed first year high school, she completed one year more. Mark works as a foreman, while Crispina is a sewer in a Japanese-owned shoe factory. She was employed there before she got married. Crispina has had four pregnancies but only two living children, both sons. She reported using the pill after her third pregnancy for spacing purposes only, since she would like to have a daughter some day. For a brief period, the couple tried out condoms and withdrawal but Crispina subsequently switched to IUD fearing the ineffectivity of the earlier two methods. It is unlikely that Crispina will have another child. She had confided that she would no longer want to get pregnant when she reached a certain age. She also stressed the growing difficulty of supporting a family and of finding domestic helpers. The interview of Mark proved more illuminating than that of Crispina because it revealed another angle concerning the couple's use of family planning. Although Mark's reproductive goals were never explicit—he said he would have accepted as many children as God will give them—he also admitted that he was quite content with just the two boys that he already has. He stressed that Crispina's job was her main consideration in the practice of family planning. He pointed out that Crispina's employer discouraged workers from having too many children. In fact, family planning services and supplies are being provided in her workplace. Mark said he was amenable to fertility control because pregnancy and small children are a hindrance to his wife's work. A closer examination of Mark's interview suggests yet another reason for his concern. Because Mark does not have a stable job, he takes care of the children and other domestic chores when his wife is at work and when there is no servant in the home. It is possible, therefore, that Mark sees family planning as a way of avoiding or lightening his domestic responsibilities as well as the dual responsibilities borne by his wife. Crispina is obviously the main breadwinner of the family. This reversal of roles and the change in the balance of power in the household this entails helped promote a favorable attitude of the husband towards family planning.

The stories told above showing consistent involvement of husbands in the use of family planning demonstrate considerable success by couples to regulate their fertility. Not all cases of consistent involvement or cooperation by husbands in family planning, however, had equal success. There are couples who, despite early commitment of husbands in family planning efforts, still markedly exceeded the number of children that they originally intended to have. Such is the case of Jose, aged 42, and Danilo and Elmer, both aged 49. All three husbands have wives (aged 38, 39 and 44, respectively) who have had six to 10 live births and had undergone ligation as a last resort for limiting fertility. In all three cases, contraceptive use was initiated by the wife—with husband's approval—for the purpose of spacing births rather than terminating childbearing. These wives first used modern contraceptive methods such as the IUD and the pill but had experienced method failure and/or side effects which then resulted in one or more unwanted pregnancies. A switch was subsequently made to more traditional and less effective methods such as rhythm and withdrawal before ligation was finally resorted to. There also were instances in which, at certain life cycle stages, couples modified their reproductive goal to accommodate an additional child. This erstwhile unanticipated development was precipitated by one or more of the following factors: 1) a perceptible improvement in the employment status or earning capacity of the husband, 2) a yearning for an infant or toddler in the home, and/or 3) a desire to have a child (or another child) of a particular sex. Despite subsequent changes in the couples' fertility intentions, husbands remained constantly conscious of the value of family planning. All husbands felt that they had a significant role to play in spacing and limiting the number of their children because the responsibility of feeding, clothing and educating their children rested ultimately upon them. Regrettably, however, there were some husbands whose assessments of their economic capability and potential were, at times, shortsighted, overoptimistic and premature.

Discussion

The Cebu qualitative data have revealed that, at least in present day Metropolitan Cebu, husbands generally espouse a favorable attitude toward family planning. Older husbands with low educational attainment were most likely to resist family planning in the past but may have, since then, changed their attitude. Furthermore, many husbands recognize the importance of their own involvement in fertility regulation. They feel that their role is crucial because: 1) they are primarily responsible for the economic well-being of their families, 2) they are the initiators of sexual activity, and 3) they are, together with their wives, equally responsible for childcare and child nurturing in the home. Of these three reasons, economic responsibility weighs heaviest in their minds and serves as the strongest motivation to control fertility. For some husbands, however, the gravity of their spousal and parental responsibilities dawned on them rather late in life, making it too late for them to rectify adverse consequences of past judgments. Some husbands had poor communication with their spouses and lacked accurate information about family planning. This information became increasingly inadequate when it came to modern contraception and sterilization. There are also couples whose fertility preferences were rather weak and undefined and could thus be easily modified with the slightest changes in family circumstances. Despite all these, however, it can categorically be

stated that there exists an underlying desire among husbands to be involved in controlling fertility outcomes in their families.

Husbands' Views on Wives' Employment

In general, husbands who were interviewed in this study expressed ambivalent views with regard to their wives' participation in the labor force. Like their wives, they spoke of advantages as well as disadvantages of wives' working and thus vacillated between approval and disapproval of work participation by wives. However, in contrast to their wives' views which focused primarily on the perceived effects of employment on their own lives and their families,⁷ husbands were more concerned with the expected roles and responsibilities of men in the home. These views are elaborated in greater detail below.

Although ambivalence appears to be the typical attitude of husbands in relation to wives' employment, there are nonetheless a few husbands who expressed unambiguous approval or disapproval of their wives' participation in the labor force. Romeo, Miguel and Reynaldo are examples of husbands who, for different reasons, approved of their wives' working. Pablo, on the other hand, represents a combination (or a composite case) of husbands who disapprove.

Unequivocal approval

Romeo and his wife, Zenaida, have been workers for most of their lives. Romeo had studied up to Grade 4, while Zenaida had finished high school. Romeo drove a passenger-tricycle and Zenaida sewed clothes at home long before they got married. Now 48 and 47 years old, respectively, both husband and wife are still at the same jobs, although Romeo drives fewer hours than before.

Romeo favors the dual-earner household: "A situation in which both husband and wife work is very ideal. There are fewer difficulties when two are working because the husband's income can provide for the basic needs of the family, while the wife's earnings can be used for 'extras'... Also, a working wife enables the husband to rest when he is ill." However, Romeo prefers that the wife works at home "so that she can combine various kinds of chores, including cleaning the house and looking after the children". According to him, "work away from home is not very helpful because one has to hire a maid and, therefore, the wife's salary will mean nothing." He was nonetheless explicit in his disapproval of wives who do not try to help their husbands earn a living. He said that, without his wife's income, their children would not have been able to proceed to high school and to comply with school project requirements. While Romeo expects his wife to share in his economic responsibilities, he, however, is not willing to share his wife's domestic responsibilities. He said such task ought to be relegated to his children, now that they are older. "What are children for? I did my share of domestic work when they were young."

⁷ See, for example, two studies which used the 1994-95 CLHNS qualitative data to examine wives' perspectives on women's labor force participation: Gultiano (1999:112) and Viswanathan (1999).

Romeo's income has been diminishing over time (he was once a village official as well). It is, therefore, understandable that, especially at the time of interview, Romeo approved of his wife's participation in the labor force. Unsuccessful in their many attempts to use family planning, the couple has nine children and, presently, six are still in their care. Romeo obviously needs Zenaida's economic support.

The case of Miguel is different from that of Romeo in that Miguel's earning capacity has improved over time whereas that of his wife, Lea, has declined. Like Romeo, Miguel's educational attainment is lower than that of his wife (third year high school compared to first year college). He was once a part-time band singer but is now driving a tricycle which his parents gave him as a gift. In consequence, he now earns a regular income. Lea, on the other hand, used to be a factory worker. She quit this job during her second and last pregnancy complaining of physical exhaustion. She later decided to put up a food stall near her home. Nowadays, she does not sell as much food as she used to because her capital has diminished considerably. She is unable to re-invest money into her small business because all of her proceeds are spent on providing for the needs of the family. She confided that Miguel is stingy and does not give her enough money for the family's daily needs.

In his interview, Miguel expressed wholehearted approval for wives who work. He thinks that wives who do not earn income have no concern for their family's future. He also believes that work for pay keeps his wife preoccupied and relieves her boredom. It is his opinion that neither age nor number of children will affect his wife's work. Instead, he feels that he would be the one affected if they had more children because his domestic and economic responsibilities would increase accordingly. Quite revealing is his confession that he envies other husbands whose wives earn more than his wife does; "I am not contented with what she earns now ... with the sale from the porridge alone. In the past, she used to sell barbecue as well. ... I tell her I will give her some capital and she keeps asking me 'when', but the money eventually runs out before I can."

From these two examples it is clear that husbands' favorable attitude toward their wives' employment is motivated primarily by economic gains. In some families, augmentation of family income by the wife is, without doubt, a necessity because certain conditions prevent the husband from earning income sufficient for family survival. In others, economic need is created or exacerbated by the irresponsible attitude and behavior of husbands. Irresponsible husbands are only too glad to have working wives who can make up for their shortcomings. It may be noted that, in the examples given above, the wives have higher educational attainment than their husbands. Is perhaps the greater earning potential of these women relative to their spouses what makes them more vulnerable to this kind of exploitation by their husbands? It is worth considering that this same educational advantage could eventually be used by wives to promote their own independence and autonomy. In another CLHNS-based study, it was found that wives with higher educational attainment (or income) than their husbands tend to make more autonomous decisions in their households (Gultiano, 1999:132-136).

Another example of a husband who clearly favors wives' work participation is Reynaldo. His case is conspicuously different from those of Romeo and Miguel for a number of reasons. Reynaldo's wife, Marilyn, has never worked for pay, but she was urged by her husband to serve as office secretary (without pay) in the family-operated Marine Engineering Review Center. According to Reynaldo, Marilyn showed no interest in her job and preferred to be at school watching her children. The Review Center eventually closed after less than a year of operation. Reynaldo is still adamant about wanting his wife to work. He said that, although he noticed that their house was in disarray at the time his wife worked, this did not bother him. "Housework can easily be relegated to others. What I want is for my wife to be able to assist in income-generation. ...I want to encourage her to work because we never can tell if anything happens to me. ...I do not want her to be too dependent on me." However, whether Reynaldo is sincere in his intention to teach his wife independence is doubtful. The only kind of job he wants Marilyn to do is to assist in the family business. In her interview, Marilyn said that she has no qualms about working but wants a job that would give her real income. Because Marilyn is not a college graduate and has no other work experience (whereas Reynaldo is a masters degree holder and is a full-time college instructor), Reynaldo doubts Marilyn's ability to get a decent, well-paying job. He apparently feels that both of them have more to gain if she simply assists in the family enterprise.

Under the circumstances described in the examples above, it is obvious that wives do not necessarily stand to benefit from their husbands' favorable attitude towards women's employment. Such attitude may in fact promote or perpetuate the 'double burden' of women or their inferior status in the home. However, it may also be within these women's means to turn this kind of disadvantage around, albeit only if they are able to find fulfilling and better-paying jobs that enable them to enhance their autonomy, financial or otherwise, in the household.

Unequivocal disapproval

Pablo typifies husbands with predominantly negative attitudes toward wives' participation in the labor force. He is the kind of husband who strictly adheres to traditional views concerning gender division of labor in the household. He wants his family to conform to the 'husband-as-breadwinner' and 'wife-as-homemaker' model. He has, therefore, opposed his wife's employment in the past and continues to forbid her from engaging in paid work, especially if this is done outside the home. "A wife should not work unless her husband has no job -- then he will be forced to allow her to work. I, personally, do not want my wife to work. After all, I did not marry her so that she can support me; I should be the one to support her because I am the husband. She needs to stay home and look after the children ... as well as my blind mother."

Pablo, who has a fairly large family, is not very keen about family planning. However, he strives hard to provide for his family. More importantly, he entrusts his entire earnings to his wife and gives her considerable latitude in disposing of it. He is also quite particular about the quality of care and upbringing his children get. Even if they have grown older, he feels that they still need personal care from their mother, especially in terms of discipline.

Pablo is not altogether oblivious of the economic benefits of women's employment. Nevertheless, his perception is that the costs of employment far outweigh the gains:

- “My wife thinks of supplementing my income because sometimes children have urgent needs which we cannot immediately provide because of a tight budget. That is why she attempted to work, but then the children got neglected in the process.”
- “A wife may consider working, especially if children are few or older, and if she can find a stable job that will enable her to hire a servant. In our case, however, I will not allow my wife to work because, while she is still applying for a job, we will have to hire a helper already and she is not even earning yet. And what if her income is too small? Her daily salary is not even equivalent to my overtime pay, and I constantly work overtime. What is going to happen is that the children will be left alone for no good reason. If an accident occurs, a bigger problem will ensue.”
- “If children are left alone at home, a working wife will find it difficult to concentrate on her work; she cannot help but think about the children. Even husbands face the same difficulty. At work, my mind wanders to my home and children. ... And when the children are older, we still worry about them, wondering where they might be gallivanting.”
- “I do not like it when my wife works because I cannot cope with the responsibility of having to care for the children myself when she is at work.”

Not many husbands (four) among the 24 interviewed were inclined to persistently oppose their wives' employment. The attitude of such husbands generally is that, if a husband's income is adequate (according to his judgement), then his wife should not work. These husbands are also acutely aware of the limited earning potentials of their wives. Although two of the wives acquired secondary education, their husbands still felt that the income they would earn if they worked will not be enough to compensate for the cost of hired help and the risks their children would face if left in the care of servants. One husband saw this as a crucial consideration despite musing over the advantage of his wife “learning to appreciate the difficulties of earning a living” if she were to work. A streak of selfishness that does begin to show in these husbands' revelations is that they are not willing to help out with their wives' domestic duties, particularly childcare—tasks they know they will be pressured to do if their wives are working.

Ambivalent

As stated earlier, most of the husbands interviewed expressed ambivalence in their views regarding wives' participation in the labor force. Husbands frequently objected to their wives' employment for the same reasons cited by Pablo earlier, although, in the same interview, they also expressed approval for the economic benefits that women's employment brings. There are husbands who initially objected to their wives' economic participation, particularly at the early stages of marriage, but subsequently admitted that they would also appreciate any financial assistance that their wives can provide. Serafin is one such husband. He disapproved of his wife working after their marriage. At that time, he wanted his wife to care only for their home and young children. But now that their two children are in high school, he wants his wife to work so that she can help pay for the children's school projects as well as repay the family's loans. Jose is another husband who had prohibited his wife from working. He did not approve of his wife working as a domestic helper especially since she wanted to work in Manila. With nine children and a lack of inclination to

help with housework, Jose claims not to mind that his wife is a full-time housewife. At the same time, he concedes that any additional income that his wife can provide will be a big help. He now prefers that his wife works but, like Serafin, he wants to be sure that she will get only into a 'decent' kind of job.⁸ Because his wife has no income, he said that he is forced to work even when he is sick (Jose is a taxi driver). He feels that non-employment of wives can serve as an incentive for husbands to take an active role in family planning because the responsibility of being the family breadwinner rests solely upon them. In practice, however, Jose and his wife are not serious users of contraceptives, but Jose did initiate the use of rhythm and withdrawal after the birth of their fourth child.

There also are husbands who, in the interviews, were quick to express initial approval for wives' economic participation but soon voiced out their objections and reservations. Manolo, for example, acknowledged the value of wives as supplementary income earners in the household. He works as a security guard and his wife runs a *sari-sari* (retail) store. He purportedly favors women's work regardless of whether this is carried out within or outside the home. However, he stipulates that wives should work "only when the children are older". He later confided that he prevented his wife from working in a garment factory when their third and youngest child was still very young. In addition to concerns regarding childcare, Manolo is anxious that a working wife may no longer be interested in sex because she will come home tired from work. Another example is Samuel, a tricycle driver with four children and a wife who also owns a *sari-sari* store. Samuel believes that times have changed and that a reversal of roles, whereby the wife works and the husband looks after the children, is now acceptable. "Especially if a woman has worked before marriage, she will likely continue working after marriage. ... It is beneficial anyway to have a double-income household." However, Samuel later elaborated that, "in principle and to the extent possible", he would prefer that his wife does not work. "A wife is supposed to stay home, to cook so that there is food when the husband gets home; to wash clothes and take care of the children. ... If she does not cook or when both spouses are too tired to cook, then couples will no longer eat together, ...eventually they will drift apart. And because they each earn income, no one will want to give in to the will of the other."

The preceding examples illustrate some of the dilemmas husbands face in connection with their wives' participation in the labor force. Although questions during the interviews were sometimes phrased in a hypothetical manner and responses obtained were normative, it was quite obvious that husbands' spoke from experience. In their answers, societal norms and personal attitudes were intimately intertwined. If a husband's attitude differed from his actual behavior, this may well be the result of compromises made when he weighed the costs and benefits of his wife's economic participation. It also means that attitudes and circumstances change in the course of the family life cycle. From the interviews it was likewise apparent that, whether hypothetically or empirically, husbands sometimes resolved dilemmas concerning their wives' work participation by either allowing wives to work, albeit only in their homes, or simply letting their wives decide on their work status themselves. Work at home is regarded by many husbands as the best option not only because it enables

⁸ One reservation expressed by husbands concerning wives' employment is the possibility of sexual exploitation or infidelity in the workplace. Husbands, therefore, are very selective of the kind of job that their wives can take.

wives to combine income-earning with domestic activities but also because: 1) it allows wives to rest between activities, given the flexible work schedule; 2) it involves less risk in terms of accidents, temptations and exploitation in the workplace and thus gives the husband no reason for worry, suspicion or jealousy; 3) it enables the husband to assist his wife in her economic activities when needed; 4) it involves less work-related expenses such as transportation and meal allowances; and, in a number of instances, 5) it permits the wife to take care of the family's livestock as well.

Discussion

The interviews have demonstrated that economic need is the overriding factor why husbands favor wives' economic participation. When a husband's income is nil or inadequate owing to lack of personal effort, employment opportunities or to seasonality of work, a wife is expected—even by her husband—to help augment the family's income. Husbands generally feel that a dual-earner household is necessary to meet financial obligations, especially when educational prospects of children are at stake. When wives work, husbands can anticipate some relief from the often-onerous economic responsibility that they bear. This means, for example, that they can take time out from work in case of illness.

Husbands are also aware of certain non-pecuniary benefits of wives' work participation, but these do not usually carry as much weight as the economic rewards. Two non-economic benefits that husbands in this study recognize are: the personal satisfaction wives get from working ("keeps her preoccupied" or "prevents her from getting bored"), and the satisfaction that they, as husbands, get from knowing that their wives have experienced the difficulties of earning a living, or have learned to be financially independent.

As expected, the most prominent reason for husbands' objection to wives' employment is the likelihood of their wives neglecting the home and children. Most Filipino families cannot afford to hire domestic help. Even if the wife works, her salary usually cannot compensate for the monetary and psychic costs of leaving her children in the care of others. In many instances, the husband himself is compelled to take over some of the wife's domestic duties, but few husbands are willing to do this on a sustained basis. Evidently, husbands are aware of the 'double burden' resulting from simultaneous involvement in domestic and market work. However, their main concern is to minimize their share of this burden rather than lighten the load that is borne by their wives.

Like their spouses, husbands feel that wives' employment is most disadvantageous at the time when children are small. Yet, there is no consensus among husbands as to what constitutes the right age for a child to be left alone (or with others) so that a mother can work. According to the husbands' responses, this age ranges from two to 14 years. Husbands are also not unanimous in their views concerning the effect of number of children on wives' work participation. Whereas some husbands observed that more children meant more housework (e.g., clothes to wash) and childcare responsibilities for their wives and, consequently, more obstacles for their employment, there also are those who said that their wives will in fact invest more effort in income-earning activities if they have more children to support. Other

husbands believe that the number of children is of no consequence to their wives' employment decision; according to them, their wives work because they are accustomed to doing so, having been trained by their parents to work long before they got married.

The expectation that wives should continue to take full responsibility for the children and the home despite the possibility of added economic responsibilities in the household is rooted in the traditional view concerning gender division of labor in society. Ironically, this almost universally ingrained value is, in the Philippines as in some other developing countries, construed to mean that a wife's domestic duties extend to income-supplementation when family survival is threatened. It does not, however, stipulate that the husband's duties must also extend to home and child care when this happens.

Seen as the best compromise in a system that seems to perpetuate gender division of labor in the household, home employment appears to be husbands' most favored occupational status for their wives. In Metro Cebu, or possibly the entire Philippines, this preference is easily realized because employment opportunities for the majority of married women are largely limited to the informal and self-employed sectors of the economy (Gultiano, 1999:63-64). Given the prevailing attitudes and perceptions of husbands regarding wives' labor force participation as well as the limited work opportunities available to these women, one may question whether and to what extent employment actually enhances the personal well-being of wives.

Linking family planning and wives' work participation: husbands' perspective

At the outset, the link between family planning and wives' work participation, from the perspective of husbands in Metro Cebu, is not apparent. With the exception of Mark who, as narrated earlier, categorically mentioned his wife's employment as the main reason for the couple's use of contraception, no husband explicitly associated the use or non-use of family planning with the occupational status of his wife. Even wives, in their in-depth interviews, were not quick to associate contraceptive experience with their own work experience. While wives are generally aware that children, particularly the very young, are a hindrance to economic participation, not all of them are conscious of the fact that the number and ages of their children can, in most instances, be planned effectively. Unless wives or couples take a serious, proactive stand with regard to fertility control—and not many in the CLHNS sample do (Adair et al., 1997:26-27)⁹—the causal link between contraceptive use and wives' work participation is not always evident to them. Adding further to the empirical vagueness of this association is the reality that employment of wives is as much, if not more, a function of economic necessity as it is of childbearing behavior (though the two are obviously interrelated) (Gultiano, 1999:83-110). Thus, regardless of her fertility status, a wife may choose not to work (or work) if her husband's income is adequate (or inadequate), rendering family planning decisions relatively irrelevant to her employment decisions.

⁹ It is also informative to point out that, as suggested in another study (Gultiano, 1999:109), wives who worked in the formal sector (constituting a small minority of the CLHNS sample) tended to be more proactive users of family planning than those who did not work or worked only in the informal sector.

That income of husbands is a key determinant of wives' work participation helps to bring into focus the centrality of husbands' occupation (or earning capacity) in the link between family planning and wives' work participation. From the husbands' interviews, it was established that husbands approve of, or even encourage, economic participation of their wives when they perceive their own income as unstable or insufficient to meet the needs of the family. Conversely, if their income is adequate, husbands generally prefer their wives to be full-time homemakers. In most cases, this sentiment is shared by their wives, although it can and does happen that husband and wife differ in their perceptions about income adequacy. In their interviews, husbands have also explained that their concern for, and involvement in, family planning emanate mainly from the recognition and expectation that they are the breadwinners of the family. There is cognizance that their capacity to provide for the family determines, and is determined by, the number of children a couple has. In the minds of husbands, therefore, the practice of family planning is of relevance to their wives' employment status only in the sense that a couple's family planning effort affects, and is affected by, the husband's ability to support his family; this capability, in turn, determines whether or not his wife should work.¹⁰

Because the relationship between family planning and wives' work participation is mediated by perceptions (of the husband and the wife) of the adequacy of a husband's income, it is difficult to establish the nature and pattern of this relationship. As seen in some of the cited examples, the practice of family planning—and the degree of husband's involvement in this practice—is not uniformly predictive of particular patterns of wife's work participation. Needless to say, there are many intervening and dynamic factors that impinge into this relationship. To sort out the many pathways by which family planning and wives' work participation interconnect is a task that falls beyond the scope of this study. It is one, however, that asks to be accomplished.

¹⁰ The case of Mark and Crispina is a departure from this pattern since Crispina, the working wife, is the recognized breadwinner of the family. Thus, there is a direct link between family planning use and wife's work participation. The fact that Crispina works in the formal sector and that her employer exerts pressure on their employees to regulate their fertility adds to the strength and immediacy of this relationship.

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