



**Disempowered by Whom?
Gender vs. Generation in Family Decision Making**

**Mitali Sen
Sonya Rastogi
Reeve Vanneman**

**India Human Development Survey
Working Paper No. 2**

IHDS



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Mitali Sen

University of Maryland College Park
msen@socy.umd.edu

Sonya Rastogi

University of Maryland College Park
srastogi@socy.umd.edu

Reeve Vanneman

University of Maryland College Park
reeve@umd.edu

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The logo for the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), with the letters 'IHDS' in a large, bold, green serif font.

Views presented in this paper are authors' personal views and do not reflect institutional opinions.

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ABSTRACT

The now-frequent use of decision-making questions in household surveys has greatly enhanced our understanding of gender inequalities. While much of the gender interest focuses on whether these decisions are made by the husband or the wife, in developing societies where extended families are common, senior men and women in the household often have important voices in these decisions. Our analysis disentangles the extent to which a woman is being disempowered by her husband versus others in her household. We use data from a new 40,000 household survey, the India Human Development Survey, 2004-2005, to examine how a respondent's lack of power is a function of both gender and generation. Age, a senior position in the extended family, and landlessness are all related to more decision-making power for *both* the wife and her husband. Labor force participation and endogamy, on the other hand, strengthen her say in decision-making relative to both her husband and her senior male in-laws. By ignoring the full dynamics of power distributions within a family, we may be conflating inequalities of gender with those of generation and thereby mis-specifying our models of empowerment.

Survey questions on household decision making have greatly enhanced our understanding of gender inequalities. The development of a standard module of decision-making questions by the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) has opened up a rapidly expanding research trajectory of demographic research. A similar, even more detailed, set of questions from the five-country Survey on the Status of Women and Fertility (SWAF) has also led to a series of important analyses that now shape the way we think about women's empowerment. Responses to these empowerment questions have been linked to a wide variety of demographic outcomes (Kishor and Subaiya, 2005; Morgan et. al., 2002; Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001). The distinction between household and community level measures has further enriched our understanding of how gender relations shape demographic behaviors and outcomes (Morgan et. al, 2000; Mason, 1997).

These decision-making questions have sought to measure more directly the empowerment basis of gender inequalities. However, the questions may actually tap into more than just a gender dimension of household decision making. In developing societies where extended families are common, women frequently report that an important voice in these decisions is their father-in-law's or mother-in-law's. Especially when it is the mother-in-law (or elder sister-in-law) whose authority is supreme, it is not clear whether the respondent's empowerment should be interpreted as a gendered dimension of autonomy. (Sofilios-Rothschild 1982; Caldwell, 1981)

While most studies acknowledge that the respondent's autonomy can be defined in relation to men *and* to other women, they often interpret their results primarily within a context

of patriarchy and implicate males as the disempowering agent (Dharmalingam and Morgan, 1996, Mahler, 1996, Morgan and Niraula 1995, Remez 2003). This gender focus is not surprising since disaggregated results usually show that the husband is the more common locus of decision making in the family, and even when in-laws are identified, it is more often the father-in-law. Nevertheless, a mother-in-law is sometimes acknowledged which may imply that something more than gender is being used to establish dominance in the family. And even those households (or decisions) for which the father-in-law is the central authority are apt to be somewhat different than the households or decisions for which the husband is the final authority.

We argue that it is essential to disentangle to what extent a woman is disempowered by her husband versus others in her household. By ignoring the full dynamics of power distributions within a family, we may be conflating inequalities of gender with those of generation and thereby mis-specifying our models of empowerment.

We use data from a new 40,000 household survey- the India Human Development Profile of India, 2005, to examine how women's empowerment is a function of gender and generation. This survey has an appropriately detailed set of gendered and generational alternatives in its decision-making module and a rich array of household and demographic measures that can be related to variations in gender and generation in decision making. Thus, in addition to examining the extent of generational inequalities in responses to these questions, we also explore whether the correlates of women's disempowerment are different depending on who else in the family holds decision-making authority.

The Nature of Empowerment

Recent research on women's empowerment in developing countries has helped clarify some of the issues raised by Mason (1986) in her seminal article on measuring gender inequality. The concept of empowerment allows for a more narrowly defined attribute that can be compared across cultures, social locations and over time. Although definitions of empowerment differ, most scholars agree that it implies having greater control over one's life. Empowerment has been interpreted variously as the extent to which women have the freedom to participate in domains that are either private or public, make decisions that influence their life and that of their family, and the degree to which they can control economic, social or political resources. It has been commonly measured using dimensions like mobility, control over resources, and decision-making power in the household (Kishor and Subaiya, 2005; Bloom et. al., 2001; Mason and Smith 2000; Govindasamy and Malhotra 1996; Jejeebhoy 1991). A growing body of research finds evidence that a lack of empowerment may have serious consequences for reproductive health (Bloom, Wypij and Das Gupta, 2001), child mortality (Das Gupta, 1990), contraceptive use (Kishor and Subaiya, 2005; Dharmalingam and Morgan, 1996) and domestic violence and abuse (Jejeebhoy, 1998)

However, research on empowerment has been relatively silent about which other family members apart from the husband have power in the household. (Govindswamy and Malhotra, 1996; Jejeebhoy, 2002). While many acknowledge that mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law are dominant in patriarchal, patrilocal kinship systems, few studies have actually tested how a woman is disempowered vis-à-vis these family members or vis-a-vis her husband (Bloom,

Wypij and Dasgupta, 2001; Caldwell, 1982; Conklin, 1973). Family and social structural factors that disempower women vis-a-vis their husbands may or may not be the same as the factors which disempower women vis-a-vis their in-laws. Without examining the decision-making power of others in the household, we may end up assuming that some empowering factor comes at the expense of her husband when it actually comes at the expense of her in-laws.

The usual practice has been to create a single index of women's empowerment based on how many household decisions the woman participates in or that she has the most say in. If she does not make or participate in the decision, there has been little interest in who does make or participate in the decision. Sometimes the survey data do not even record who else participates in the decision; sometimes there is a record of whether it is the husband or "others" who participate in or make decisions (the typical DHS format); and sometimes there is more detail whether it is the husband, a "senior male", a "senior female", "others", or "no one" (the SWAF format). But as yet, no analyses have bothered to investigate the determinants of these other categories. Thus, gendered bases of her disempowerment get conflated with generational bases.

Studies with the adequate data have identified the husband as the primary decision-maker on most issues in most families. However, it is less clear who else makes decisions in the remaining families. These other centers of power in the family are important, because extended families are quite common in many parts of the developing world. In most of India, for instance, the ideal "joint" family is a multigenerational household with parents, their sons, the son's wives and all their children. In reality, joint families are rarely intact but do include members beyond the nuclear family. In such families, a woman's position in the household depends not only on her relation to her husband but also to other members in the household, especially to her senior

in-laws. In fact, scholars have argued that the key to sustaining such joint family structures is an emphasis on the generational dimension of authority in the household while minimizing interaction between the conjugal pair (Conklin, 1973; Goode, 1963).

Studies have shown that living with a mother-in-law is associated with diminished autonomy for a woman (Bloom, Wypij and Das Gupta, 2001; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Balk 1994). Mason (1997) found that the household head's wife has more decision-making power than do "junior" wives in joint families. So we know that a woman's position in a multi-generational household helps determine her empowerment. Unfortunately, there has been no independent investigation of the consequences for the husband's decision making power in such households. Does living with his mother or father enhance or diminish the husband's authority? That is, does the woman's disempowerment in these joint families come at the expense of her husband or her in-laws?

The survey results are consistent with ethnographic evidence that the youngest daughter-in-law or sister-in-law in a household is the most disempowered member, but less is known about the remaining power dynamics between various genders and generations. It is not uncommon in India for the senior generation to make decisions on behalf of a couple, even if they do not reside in the same household. But the survey analyses have not yet asked which part of women's disempowerment is gendered and which is generational?

Theoretically, inequalities based on gender have different underlying roots than those based on generation. Kinship systems have rules of marriage and descent that structure both gender and generational inequalities (Morgan et. al., 2002; Niraula and Morgan, 1996; Caldwell, 1982; Mason, 1986; Conklin, 1973). While we believe it is essential to make the conceptual

distinction between gender and generational dimensions of authority, we recognize that in practice these systems may be inter-related and even mutually reinforcing patterns of inequality (Safilios-Rothschild, 1982).

Determinants of Empowerment:

Dyson and Moore (1983) were among the first to observe that the contrast between the kinship systems in North and South India had important implications for the status of women. In particular, the practice of village exogamy in many parts of North India, where marriage partners are required to come from different villages and must be unrelated, deprives a woman of much of her social networks upon marriage (Desai 1994; Dyson and Moore, 1983). In their study of Nepal, Niraula and Morgan (1996) find that even in villages which practice village exogamy, women who have more contact with natal kin tend to be more empowered. Bloom, Wypij and Dasgupta (2001) found the same result for Varanasi. But we don't know whether this empowerment comes at the expense of her husband's decision-making power, her in-laws', or both.

Female employment should also influence women's empowerment since she has an independent source of income (Cain 1979) and is contributing to the household finances. Of course, the benefits of employment may be reduced by the cultural context, particularly where women are forced to turn over their wages to their families (Jain 1970 cited in Mason 1986, Sharma 1982, Wolf 1985). But a positive correlation between work and increased decision making is one of the most consistent findings in the empowerment literature. Kishor and Subaiya (2005) observed it in Benin, Cambodia, Kenya, and Peru (but not in Jordan); Jejeebhoy and

Sathar (2001) found it in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (but not Pakistani Punjab); Dharmalingam and Morgan (1996) for two villages in Tamil Nadu; Bloom et al (2001) for Varanasi; and Mason (1996) for five Asian countries. But no one has yet determined whether female employment empowers women vis-a-vis her husband or her in-laws or both..

Education may also enhance a woman's empowerment by exposing her to ideologies regarding more equal conjugal relationships and independence from extended families (Malhotra and Mather 1997). Furthermore, educated women may obtain confidence and knowledge to negotiate for resources in the household (Malhotra and Mather 1997). On the other hand, education may reproduce patriarchal ideologies (Jeffery and Basu 1996). The empirical evidence is fairly consistent, however, that more educated women report more decision-making power (Kishor and Subaiya, 2005, in Cambodia, Jordan, Kenya, and Peru but not in Benin; Mason, 1997, for Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines but not for India; Balk, 1994, in Bangladesh; Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2000 for secondary education in all three South Asian states but for primary education only in Tamil Nadu). However, Bloom et al., 2001, did not find a significant education relationship in their Varanasi data, nor did Dharmalingam and Morgan in Tamil Nadu. Thus, India may be the exception in this case.

Life cycle stages such as age are also likely to influence empowerment. There are two countervailing influences of age. There may be a cohort effect, in which younger women may hold relatively more equal gender ideologies compared to older women. More recent cohorts may also be more exposed to new ideas about nuclear families and independence from extended families. However, life cycle effects are likely to be strong as well, especially through changes in the woman's position within the extended family. As women age in the household, so long as her

husband is still alive, she accrues more power particularly over other women and children in the household. Therefore, a new bride is virtually powerless, but a mother-in-law has substantial domestic power (Mason 1986). The oldest daughter-in-law will also exhibit greater control compared to youngest (Bloom et. al. 2001). However, the power that women obtain as they age, is most often over other women, not men (Mason 1986). As noted above, there is substantial empirical evidence that a woman's position within the extended family structure is strongly correlated with her decision-making power, but little understanding of whether any increased power comes at the expense of her in-laws or her husband.

Beyond the changing position in the extended family, age may have a direct impact on empowerment as a woman becomes more experienced and confident. Even after controls for household position, Kishor and Subaiya find significant age correlations in all five countries they studied; Mason found a significant correlation for three South East Asian countries but not for India and Pakistan; and Jejeebhoy and Sathar in all three South Asian states.

The duration of marriage is another factor which may influence female empowerment. Mason (1997) argues that the longer a woman is married, the more experience she gains and she acquires a more secure position in the family, which results in higher levels of empowerment. She finds that duration of marriage is indeed associated with greater decision-making power in the household in South Asia but not in South-East Asia. Duration of marriage will often be highly correlated with age so separating these effects on empowerment may be difficult. Only Mason included both variables in her analyses and the contrasting age associations in South East

Asia and marriage duration associations in South Asia may reflect these collinearities.¹ Again, we have no evidence whether age or marriage duration increases her power vis-à-vis her husband, her in-laws, or both.

The number of children may also enhance a women's empowerment since having more children allows women to fulfil their reproductive duty of continuing the family line. However, Mason (1997) finds that the number of children is *negatively* associated with more decision-making power for women, a result she interprets as most likely reflecting the endogenous negative influence of women's empowerment on lower fertility (see also Balk 1997). Kishor and Subaiya (2005) find mixed results: the number of children is positively correlated with decision-making power in Jordan, negatively in Kenya, and not significant association in the other three countries.

Therefore, our purpose in this paper is twofold: (1) to examine whether women's exclusion from some types of decisions are differentially based on gender or generation, and (2) to analyze the extent to which the various determinants of empowerment described above are related to gender or generational differences in family power. India presents an interesting country to investigate these gender and generational dimensions of family power because of its immense variation in gender inequality, family structure, and kinship systems. The data we use are unique in that it is the first large national dataset which measures a female respondent's empowerment vis-à-vis both her husband and her in-laws.

¹ Age and marital duration effects are further complicated by possible effects because of age at marriage. Women who marry younger may belong to households who support more conservative views about gender. But age at

METHODS

Data:

In 2004 and 2005, the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research designed and fielded a survey of over 40,000 Indian households. The India Human Development Survey, 2004-2005, was conducted throughout India in 35 states and Union Territories and included urban as well as rural areas.

As part of the survey, ever-married women between the ages of 15 and 49 were asked a series of five questions about decision making in the household (see Table 1). This module is patterned after a similar module in the SWAF surveys (Smith et. al., 2000). For each decision, the woman reported whether she, her husband, a senior male, a senior female, or someone else had a say in that decision. After reporting who had some say in the decision, the respondent was asked who had the most say in making that decision. The five decisions investigated were:

- What to cook on a daily basis?
- What to do if a child falls sick?
- How many children to have?
- Whether to buy an expensive item such as a TV or a fridge?
- To whom your children should marry?

----- Table 1 about here -----

marriage is linearly dependent on age and marriage duration so separating these relationships, like separating age, period and cohort relationships is fraught with problems.

Analyses:

In the first part of the analysis we report simple frequencies of each of the five decisions for which members have “any say” and the “most say.” One of our concerns here is to examine how the different domains of empowerment play out with respect to gender and generation. We also examine how this varies across nuclear and joint families.

In addition to this empowerment module, the survey included a wide range of questions about marriage practices, family structure, education, employment and income. In the second analysis, we examine the variation in women’s empowerment across these different types of households. We model not only her decision-making power but also her husband’s, the senior females’ and the senior males’. Because these four outcomes are necessarily related, we use seemingly unrelated regressions to account for the correlations among the four error terms.

Dependent Variable:

In the multivariate analyses, empowerment is measured as four decision-making indices that range from 0 (least power) to 4. The scales are counts of the number of issues on which the woman identifies that person as having the most say in the household. We exclude the cooking item from these counts because of its lower correlation with the other four decisions. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability is 0.70 for the respondent’s decision-making scale, 0.71 for the husband’s, 0.64 for the senior females’ and 0.71 for the senior males’.

Independent Variables:

Family structure was measured with a series of dummy variables. First, households were divided into three types: those in which the respondent was the *only ever married woman*, those in which she was the *senior woman* (eldest) in a household of two or more ever-married women,

and those in which she was a *junior woman* in a multiple married woman household. Senior women and only married women were compared against junior women. We also identified with two separate dummy variables those women who were *separated, divorced, or widowed* and those women whose *husbands were absent* from the household.

----- Table 2 about here -----

Age is the respondent's own report of her age. We include also *age squared* to test the possibility for curvilinear relationships. *Years of marriage* was calculated by subtracting the age at which a woman began living with her husband from her current age². Her *number of children* is a count of the number of children who are alive as reported by her.

Women's *employment* captures wage employment, participation in a family business, or farm work. The survey was especially designed to probe women's contribution to farming and home based businesses, even if they worked only part time or seasonally in the past year. Her education is measured using two dummy variables: *primary* (grades 1 – grade 8) and *secondary* (grade 9 and above), both of which are compared to respondents with no formal schooling.

Village *endogamy* is a measure of whether the woman belongs to a caste or community in which a woman can marry someone in her natal village.

We use a consumer goods asset index to measure the economic status of the household (cite). The index is a count of 23 items that range from basic, inexpensive items like a clock or watch to expensive items such as a refrigerator. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the index is 0.88. We rescale the index into ten approximately equal deciles. *Landownership* indicates

² In some parts of North India, a marriage may take place when a girl is very young. In such cases, the bride does not consummate (*gauna*) or start residing with her husband until she attains puberty.

whether the woman's household owns land for cultivation. We use the Census of India definition of an urban area to identify households residing in a *rural* area.

We divide the households into seven mutually exclusive groups based on caste and religion. *Scheduled tribes* and scheduled castes (*dalits*) are separate categories, regardless of their religion. Then, two categories are created for *Muslims* and for other religions (*Christians, Sikhs, and Jains*). The remaining Hindus are divided into *Brahmins, other high caste Hindus,* and other backward castes (*OBCs*) according to the household's own identification. In the analysis, all groups are compared against Brahmins.

Regional variation is controlled in the multivariate analyses using dummy variables for each state.

RESULTS

Our analysis begins with a comparison across the five issue domains of who in the household has any say or the most say in each decision. We then disaggregate the results between nuclear and joint families to better understand how household composition affects these patterns of responses. The second major section of the analysis then looks at the household correlates of these responses to examine which factors affect gender or generational differences in decision-making authority.

Examining Variation across Issue Domains

Table 3 presents results for both who has any say and who has the most say in each of the five decisions. For cooking decisions, the respondent herself almost universally has some say in what is cooked; most often she has, in fact, the most say in these decisions. If it is not her say

which is dominant, then it is likely to be another senior female who determines cooking. Not surprisingly, husbands and senior men in the household have less say about cooking than any of the four other household decisions.

----- Table 3 about here -----

Women also usually have some say in decisions about sick children, often the most say, although husbands have the most say about twice as often. For decisions about the number of children to have, women also usually have some say although the most say is skewed even more towards their husbands. Both of these issues, however, tend to have lower rates of participation by senior family members than for decisions about cooking, purchases, or marriages.

Nevertheless, when there is participation by senior in-laws, it is as likely or more likely to come from women as from men.

In contrast, senior family members often have a say, sometimes the most say, in decisions about major purchases, but for these decisions it is senior men and not senior women who have the authority. The gender ratios for purchasing are almost the reverse of those for cooking.

Decisions about children's marriages are the most likely issue to have important input from senior family members, both men and women, but, again, senior men are four times as likely as senior women to have the most say about this matter. The women respondents themselves have the least say about these two issues. So for major purchases and children's marriages, decision making is more likely to be gendered and more likely to be subject to generational authority.

These appear to be domains where generational and gender inequalities reinforce each other.

Thus, these five types of decisions reveal a substantial range of generational and gender patterns of authority. Cooking is clearly in the female domain just as major purchases and

children's marriages are in the male domain. All of these issues tend to have substantial input from senior family members. In contrast, senior family members have less say with respect to the number of children and the course of treatment if they are sick. But wives have greater control over the treatment of children's illnesses than about the number of children to have.

A comparison of nuclear and joint households helps illustrate the difference between decisions reflecting gendered inequalities and those reflecting more generational inequalities (Table 4). In joint households where there are two or more married couples residing together, senior females are far more likely to make cooking decisions than in households where the respondent lives only with her husband. Thus, if the respondent is disempowered about cooking, it is based more often on generation than gender.

----- Table 4 about here -----

Similarly, for each of the other four decisions, women are less likely to have the most say when living in a joint family. But husbands are *also* less likely to have the most say under these circumstances too. This is especially true for major purchases and children's marriages where senior family members are most likely to have the primary authority. This reinforces our conclusion above that generational inequalities are especially likely to disempower women regarding decisions about major purchases and children's marriages.

These differences in decision-making patterns illustrate quite clearly that when a woman is disempowered, it is not always by her husband; sometimes, it is by a senior female or a senior male in the household. Nevertheless, it is still true that the proportion of households in which senior members have the most say about any of these decisions is quite modest. This may have led to the impression that in investigating the determinants of women's empowerment, not much

is lost by ignoring the seniors' authority or by collapsing it with husbands' authority. In the multivariate analyses in the next section, we will see how misleading that impression can be.

Examining Decision-Making Variation Across Household Types:

The regression results examine the dynamics of intra-household decision making. We are especially interested when a woman is empowered or disempowered, which other members of the family lose or gain decision-making power relative to her? While most of the independent variables significantly affect a woman's empowerment, the dynamics are not always gendered.

----- Table 5 about here -----

Not surprisingly, family structure defines the basic context within which decision making is allocated among family members. Women who are the senior or only female in the household make more decisions than do "junior" wives; senior women's increased power comes not at the expense of their husbands who are also more powerful than "junior" husbands, but because there are no more senior men or women to whom they have to defer. Similarly, women whose husbands are absent from the household, either temporarily through migration or permanently because of death or divorce, make more decisions than do women with husbands present. Absent husbands lose decision-making power not only relative to their wives but relative to other senior men and women in the household. None of these associations are surprising, but it is important to hold the family structure constant in order to examine the relationships of the other variables.

Older women gain decision-making power within the household, as past research has consistently suggested. The effect of age comes at a decelerating rate so that there is no

additional estimated impact after 43 years. Husbands *also* gain decision-making power with the wife's age, a result that, while not surprising, reinforces the importance of separating gendered from generational empowerment. The empowerment that comes with a woman's age increases at the expense of senior men and women in the household not at the expense of husbands.

Interestingly, it is women's absolute age and not their years of marriage or the number of children they have that appears to increase their decision-making power. A woman's years of marriage, while closely correlated with her age, seem to have no additional association with decision-making dynamics in the household. The number of her children is, in fact, negatively correlated with her decision-making authority – the opposite of what we might expect from an increase in status with motherhood. Undoubtedly much of this negative association results from the endogeneity of fertility in these models: families in which women are most subordinated are also those families with the highest fertility.

The economic position of the household has more important consequences for the generational distribution of decision-making power than the gender differences. Senior men's power increases with the wealth of the household as does senior women's (although much less so) while the respondent's husband's power decreases. The woman herself appears to be relatively unaffected by the wealth of the household, having neither more nor less authority in rich households than in poor ones. Thus, wealth reinforces generational power: raising senior male authority at the expense of junior males, and even raising senior women's authority somewhat over that of the respondent.

Agricultural landholding has a similar generational impact, although in landed households, the major loss is for the female respondent's own power. Senior men have more

authority in landowning households than in landless ones while junior men have somewhat less. Similarly, senior women have somewhat more authority in landowning households than in landless ones, while junior women have substantially less. Thus, landholding has both generational and gendered impacts on empowerment: raising the authority of the senior generation at the expense of the respondent's and raising the authority of men at the expense of women.

Rural village life, independently of landowning, has a similar pattern of generational and gender empowerment, although more muted than landowning itself. Rural senior men have somewhat more authority than their urban counterparts, but there is little rural-urban difference for the husbands' own power. And the rural women respondents have less authority than urban women, although senior women's authority doesn't vary across the rural-urban divide. So, like landownership, rural residence benefits senior men the most and disempowers junior women the most, but the rural-urban differences are smaller than the landowning-landless differences.

Assets, landowning, rural residence, and traditional family structures seem to leverage the older generation over the younger one. So a woman's empowerment in the household is linked to her relationship status to other senior members. But as she grows older, she exerts greater control over household decisions at the expense of senior household members of both genders, even holding household structure constant. And, of course, as women grow older they are less likely to be the junior wife in an extended family and so her power grows with that changing family structure as well.

On the other hand, endogamy and labor force participation have primarily gendered associations with decision-making power. Women whose communities accept the practice of

marrying men within a natal village have significantly more household authority than women in strictly exogamous communities. And women who are in the labor force have more authority than women who are not. In both cases, women's increased authority comes at the expense of both their husbands' power and their male in-laws', in almost equal proportion. So, the results here do not support a generational argument for empowerment, but a gendered one, much as the original Dyson and Moore (1983) argument suggested.

Differences among educational levels, castes, and religions are surprisingly small. More education is moderately associated with more empowerment of women, but the differences are smaller than for landlessness, endogamy, or labor force participation. In fact, among young women another year of age seems to be associated with about as much increase in authority as having had another year of education. Husbands with educated wives appear to lose the most decision-making power in these families although there is also some evidence of a loss of authority among the senior in-laws of women with secondary education. And among the 24 caste and religious group coefficients, only one is statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that the social structural factors that disempower women do not necessarily empower their husbands. As a crude index, we note that of the 21 coefficients in Table 5 for women's empowerment, only 12 have the opposite sign as their husbands' empowerment coefficients. Age, position in the extended family, and landowning all have similar relationships with both the wife's and her husband's decision-making power. Other factors which disempower women have no relationship with her husband's decision-making

power (e.g., rural residence), and those which disempower her husband may not be related to her decision making (e.g., wealth). We cannot merely assume that a single scale of women's disempowerment also measures her husband's empowerment.

The reason why wife's and husband's empowerment are not necessarily opposites is that they are enmeshed in a web of familial relationships that are both gendered and generational. A woman's empowerment may come just as often at the expense of her senior in-laws' decision-making power as of her husband's. Analyses of women's status must recognize these generational inequalities as well as gender inequalities.

The first part of our analysis confirmed that apart from cooking and taking care of sick children, women still have relatively limited say in many family issues. But in households where senior family members are present, women have an even harder time participating in household decisions. While the proportion of households in which senior men and women have the most say on an issue appears at first quite modest, these low percentages can be misleading if we infer from them that women's empowerment must come primarily from more equal gender relations with her husband. That turns out to be untrue as the multivariate analysis demonstrated. Several of the determinants of decision-making power like family structure, class, and land ownership are associated more with generational inequality than with gender.

The results of the multivariate analysis also confirm that some of the determinants of family decision-making power that have been commonly associated with gender empowerment do prove to be primarily gendered dimensions. Specifically, labor force participation and endogamy are clearly more gendered than generational. Women who are employed or whose communities accept marriages within the natal village share more equal decision making with

their husbands. But women's labor force participation and endogamy also reduce the decision-making power of senior men in the household. Conversely, patriarchy enhances the power of both husbands and fathers-in-law.

In emphasizing the need to consider both gender and generational inequalities of decision making, we do not mean to suggest that these are necessarily unrelated dimensions of family power. Generational inequalities may reinforce gender inequalities within patriarchal structures. Even though it is often the mother-in-law who harangues a daughter-in-law to reproduce or who prevents her from visiting her kin, the pro-natalist ideology and the practice of village exogamy are parts of a system that is clearly gendered. Nevertheless, we think it is necessary to maintain the conceptual distinction between gender and generational inequalities in order to investigate their interrelationships. We believe that our model or one like it is required in order to differentiate between those aspects of patriarchal systems that are gendered, those that are more generational, and those that are both. A single analysis of a unidimensional scale of women's empowerment confuses the two processes.

We believe that our results demonstrate that it is essential to distinguish between gender and generational bases of empowerment.

Table 1. Intra-family Decision-Making Questions in the Survey.

Tell me who in your family decides the following things: (Instruction: Code all members that have any say)							
	You?	Husband?	Senior Males?	Senior Females?	Other?	Not applicable No one	Who has the most say?
What to cook on a daily basis?							
Whether to buy an expensive item such as a TV or a fridge?							
How many children to have?							
What to do if a child falls sick?							
To whom your children should marry?							

Source: Human Development Profile of India 2004-2005

Table 2: Means of Dependent and Independent Variables.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
Respondent – Most Say Index	0.68	1.07	0	4
Husband – Most Say Index	2.78	1.33	0	4
Senior Female – Most Say Index	0.14	0.50	0	4
Senior Male – Most Say Index	0.32	0.78	0	4
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Age	32.75	8.10	14	50
Years of Marriage	15.31	8.39	1	39
Number of Children	2.66	1.65	0	13
Primary Education	0.30	0.46	0	1
Secondary Education	0.22	0.42	0	1
Labor Force Participation	0.46	0.50	0	1
Asset Deciles	5.33	2.98	1	10
Land Ownership	0.43	0.49	0	1
Endogamy	.49	.50	0	1
Urban	0.29	0.45	0	1
Nuclear Family	.57	.50	0	1
Senior Female	0.05	0.22	0	1
Junior Female	0.33	0.47	0	1
Only Female	0.62	0.49	0	1
Non-Resident Spouse	0.03	0.18	0	1
Divorced, Widowed or Separated	0.04	0.20	0	1
Panel Sample	0.37	0.48	0	2
Brahmins	0.04	0.20	0	1
Other Hindus	0.18	0.38	0	1
OBC	0.33	0.47	0	1
SC	0.22	0.41	0	1
ST	0.08	0.26	0	1
Muslim	0.13	0.33	0	1
Sikh, Christian and Jain	0.03	0.16	0	1

Source: India Human Development Report 2004-2005

Table 3: Percent of Members Having “Some say” or “Most say” on Five Decisions.

Decisions	Percent Participating				
	Respondent	Husband	Senior Female	Senior Male	
Cook	<i>Some Say</i>	94	45	25	13
	<i>Most Say</i>	74	12	12	2
Treatment of Sick Child	<i>Some Say</i>	85	84	18	16
	<i>Most Say</i>	30	60	4	6
Number of Children	<i>Some Say</i>	84	92	12	8
	<i>Most Say</i>	19	76	3	2
Purchase an expensive item	<i>Some Say</i>	75	90	20	22
	<i>Most Say</i>	11	74	3	12
Choose Child's Marriage Partner	<i>Some Say</i>	79	91	24	25
	<i>Most Say</i>	10	73	3	14

Source: India Human Development Report 2004-2005.

Table 4: Percent of Household Members Having Most Say on Five Decisions by Family Structure.

Decisions	Percent having Most Say in Decisions					
	Respondent	Husband	Senior Female	Senior Male	N	
Cook	<i>Joint Family</i>	59	9	27	5	13766
	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	86	13	1	0	17167
Treatment of Sick Child	<i>Joint Family</i>	25	53	9	12	13174
	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	34	65	0	1	17627
Number of Children	<i>Joint Family</i>	18	74	6	3	13654
	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	21	78	1	0	17724
Purchasing an expensive item	<i>Joint Family</i>	8	59	7	25	13749
	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	13	86	0	1	17865
Choose Child's Marriage Partner	<i>Joint Family</i>	8	60	6	24	12880
	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	12	82	1	5	17226

Source: India Human Development Report 2004-2005.

Table 5. Seemingly Unrelated Regression of Most Say in Four Household Decisions.

	Respondent	Husband	Senior Female	Senior Male
Family Structure				
(Junior Female Omitted)				
Senior Female	0.140**	0.385**	-0.219**	-0.336**
Only Female	0.146**	0.579**	-0.258**	-0.463**
Non-resident Husband	0.477**	-0.803**	0.054**	0.248**
Divorced/Widowed/Separated	2.005**	-2.617**	0.143**	0.255**
Age of Eligible Woman	0.025**	0.077**	-0.026**	-0.062**
Age squared (/ 100)	-0.029**	-0.103**	0.032**	0.074**
Years of Marriage	0.004	0.001	-0.001	-0.001
Number of Children	-0.019**	0.064**	-0.003	-0.021**
Landowning household	-0.128**	-0.043*	0.019**	0.147**
Assets Owned (deciles)	-0.001	-0.020**	0.004**	0.020**
Urban	0.050**	-0.011	0.014	-0.076**
Labor Force Participation	0.127**	-0.059**	-0.008	-0.065**
Community Endogamy	0.145**	-0.075**	-0.010	-0.056**
Primary Education	0.036*	-0.047**	0.004	0.007
Secondary Education	0.094**	-0.049*	-0.024**	-0.011
Groups (Brahmin omitted)				
Other Hindus	0.005	0.017	-0.037*	0.014
OBC	0.024	-0.03	-0.027	0.033
SC	0.043	-0.031	-0.028	0.007
ST	0.009	0.013	-0.021	-0.007
Muslim	-0.042	0.039	-0.022	0.023
Sikh, Christian and Jain	0.015	-0.018	-0.036	0.000
States	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Panel Sample	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-0.176	1.014**	0.884**	1.942**
R-square	.23	.25	.11	.25
Observations	28511	28511	28511	28511

Source: India Human Development Report 2004-2005.

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