



## Review

## Literature on gendered agriculture in Pakistan: Neglect of women's contributions

Kristie Druzca<sup>a,\*</sup>, Valentina Peveri<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> *The International Wheat and Maize Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), Mexico*<sup>b</sup> *Adjunct Faculty, M.A. Food Studies, The American University of Rome*

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Anthropology  
Gender  
Wheat  
Livelihood  
Pakistan

## ABSTRACT

Women's role in agriculture is widely reported to be essential; despite this, women's role in the wheat-sector is under-researched. Feminist standpoint theory is applied in analyzing 73 documents on women's role in agriculture from 1990 until 2016 to answer the following questions: How does the world look, and operate, for males and females in wheat growing households? What do we know about social relationships and mediating processes (i.e., social factors mediating men's and women's access to resources and activities) that exist in the prime wheat growing regions in Pakistan? The paper highlights a knowledge gap in relation to the life histories, local experiences, as well as unofficial and informal networks of small farmers in general, and of poor and marginalized women in particular. This neglect of rural subjects is a missed opportunity to learn and to engage in improved program design that contributes to enhanced food security and resilience in rural communities. The paper is relevant to development professionals and agriculture researchers and proposes further research questions on topics that appear to have an influence on women's role in wheat farming and food systems and women's ability to be successful in securing a wheat-based livelihood.

## 1. Introduction

Wheat is an important staple crop that contributes to food security: it provides 21% of the food calories and 20% of the protein for more than 4.5 billion people in 94 countries; and sustains 1.2 billion wheat dependent poor, who live on less than US\$ 2 per day. Climate change is expected to reduce wheat production by 20–30%.<sup>1</sup> This literature review focuses on Pakistani males and females living and working in wheat-based food systems and generating a livelihood from wheat. While this review focuses on Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh provinces as the prime wheat growing regions, it is important to point out that other areas of the country grow wheat but are neglected in the literature due to their low yields.

The role of Pakistani women in producing wheat and the way wheat products are used, valued and shared by them is grossly under-researched. The initial search around the basic key words 'rural women', 'agriculture', and 'wheat' did not produce any significant outcome, identifying not so much a paucity of current published literature pertaining to gender in wheat producing regions, but rather a more fundamental and widespread inconsistency about the connection between women and grain crops. Moreover, the crop sector of the small farm

economy remains to a certain degree unexplored by economists and anthropologists alike.

The Pakistan State has historically suppressed women's rights. Consequently, "studies on women in Pakistan have largely been written in the context of the struggle of elite and urban women against the anti-women laws and structural changes that have adversely affected women's lives" (Ali, 2004:129). This important literature has "ignored the experiences of the majority of poor and rural women and women's domestic experiences" (ivi:130). This neglect of rural subject's results in a missed opportunity to learn and, consequently, to engage in improved program design that would contribute to enhanced food security and resilience in rural communities. Rouse (1996) further argues that women's rights have been framed in a teleological grid as histories of progress and setbacks and to overcome these shortcomings we must "return to sources where we find women speaking in nonpublic spaces" (Ali, 2004:129–130).

The review is feminist in nature by the way it is rooted in the realities of daily life; it takes into account gender differences in the division of labor, property rights, and power; and examines how the processes of resource use and their structuring by gender relations manifest themselves in aspects of agrarian society, in the literature, and in agricultural

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [k.druzca@cgiar.org](mailto:k.druzca@cgiar.org) (K. Druzca).<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Wheat-flyer-light.pdf>

development practice. At the same time the authors reject a focus on women alone as being too narrow and obscuring the male role. They endorse the hypothesis that an exclusive focus on agricultural production would make women fade away into invisibility/illegibility, and they therefore aim at providing alternative entry points into the lives, feelings, concerns and unofficial and informal networks of rural Pakistani women.

Likewise, mediating processes are highly relevant to the way more traditional societies are organized and can illuminate the rationale behind gender norms. Mediating processes are “formal and informal organizations and institutions with regularized practices or patterns of behavior that are structured by rules and norms of societies which have persistent use” (Scoones, 1998:12). The portfolio of resources and activities used by a given household in a given community in pursuit of viable livelihoods is complex to unravel as not only it would include measurable assets and visible outputs, but would also and concurrently be mediated by a great number of social, economic, and policy considerations. Contexts matter; and contexts are laden with political and environmental history, economic trends, demography, social differentiation, and gender inequality. To this end, the review focuses on anthropological literature to highlight the human dynamics, mediating processes (or conditioning factors), norms and values of communities where wheat is grown. A more general knowledge emerges in relation to the life histories and local experiences of small farmers in general, and of poor and marginalized women in particular.

The review finds that despite the dogmatic insistence of the strictness of *pardah* (the code of honor and modesty resulting in the seclusion of women) in public fora, women and men's actual participation in various activities points to the flexibility of the concept. It provides substantial evidence that the spheres of men and women do overlap much more than they are likely to admit. A meaningful relationship emerges from the literature linking women's energies, goals, and interests with home gardens (harvesting vegetables), storage of cereals (post-harvest activities) and natural resources management, especially with livestock tending and animal production. The reasons for these deep connections will be explored, along with observations of the so-called male dominance (patriarchy) and in general of cultural values that are widely held as hindering women's agency in the eyes of Western observers and developers.

The structure of this review is as follows: Theory; Methodology; Review Results - articulated in the sections *The Legibility of Grain Crops; Veiled Work; The Illegibility of Rural Women; Men and Women in the Shadow of Purdah; Beyond the Curtain (on Tiptoe)*; and the Conclusion that the agricultural literature reviewed tends to accept cultural norms and gender roles, rather than question their persistence or attempt to examine them. The agricultural literature tends to focus on yield, crops or climate, rather than people, history and culture. Conversely, the anthropological literature reviewed questions the traditional view of gender and the nature of *pardah* and thus highlights the need for further feminist agriculture research.

## 2. Theoretical framing

In line with Hawkesworth (2006) gender is used as an analytical category to foster greater equality between the sexes. The intention is to understand how gender operates in the agricultural literature and try to avoid more universal claims about why gender performs a particular social function. Thus, the review analyzes what is typically portrayed as men's greater and women's lesser powers of action and how these gender demarcations manifest in wheat (and in more general agricultural) literature.

A feminist standpoint theory is applied to the review to disclose alternative stances and stakes in the literature. This analysis “affords greater awareness of potential sources of error and a commitment to heightened interrogation of precisely that which is taken as unproblematic in competing accounts” (Hawkesworth, 2006:206). A feminist

standpoint analysis involves several steps (ivi:173–5):

- Step 1 - Construct alternative standpoints by collecting and synthesizing as many competing views of the subject under investigation as time allows;
- Step 2 - Acknowledge the partiality and contentiousness of comparing competing claims and methods.

In line with step 2, and Haraway (1988:193) who argues that ‘unlocatable’ knowledge claims are irresponsible, the situated knowledge of the reviewers is acknowledged. One reviewer is Australian with a background in political economy and women's economic empowerment research in Asia and the Pacific and currently works for CIMMYT based in Ethiopia. The other Italian reviewer was a consultant for the institute; an anthropologist academic with experience in African food systems from a gender perspective. Both are self-declared feminists. It is from this position that they review this work.

- Step 3 - Compare theoretical assumptions and empirical claims in conflicting accounts;
- Step 4 - Present the alternative views fairly while avoiding caricatures.

According to Clough (1994) a feminist standpoint analysis proposes to make women's experiences the point of departure. Originating from Marxist class relations, “(s)takepoint theory is an epistemology, an account of the evolution of knowledge and strategies of action by particular collectivities in specific social relations in given periods” (Cockburn, 2015:331). Hartsock (1985:231) explores the idea that women's life activity, including housework and reproduction, might be considered the source of a specific feminist standpoint. Drawing on Marx, she argues that material life sets limits on the understanding of social relations for a given class or a given sex, and can (re)structure social life. Therefore, women's lives “make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point that can ground a powerful critique of the phallogocentric institutions and ideology that constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy” (ibid.). ‘Subjugated’ standpoints are preferred because they are the one's missing from dominant discourse and knowledge, and promise more transforming accounts of the world (Haraway 1988:191).

A feminist standpoint analysis should help to confront and critique “problematic assumptions that impair an objective grasp of the complex issues confronting contemporary political life” (Hawkesworth, 2006:206) as well as to increase the reader's understanding of “women's experience, both in the past and present, and promote our appreciation of women's value in the world” (Tyson, 2015:119). The review aims to apply such militant theoretical perspective to the case of rural women in contemporary Pakistan, whose invisibility mainly persist because of a very limited understanding of the rural household economy. Gender plays in this entity a highly functional role by splitting the livelihood strategies into extra-verted and intro-verted modes respectively; one dominated by men who seek to gain income and prestige through market relations, and the other by women who rely more on familial relationships in maintaining non-market reciprocal exchanges to ensure survival and improve livelihood security.

This neglected and gendered nuance of the rural household economy draws attention to the concept of ‘legibility’ as outlined in *Seeing Like a State* by James Scott (1998). According to the author, the State “sees” the country through the eyes (and interests) of the ruling elites who develop policies and dominate the State apparatus. In doing so, the State chooses to “see” those it considers full citizens and structures societies to make their human and economic fabric legible. In the quest for legibility, the population is arranged in ways that simplify State functions (e.g., via taxation, conscription, and the prevention of rebellion). As such ‘seeing like a State’ or ‘legibility’ is often achieved by geographical concentration of the population; increasing uniformity in

crops based on a bureaucratic and commercial logic; and the use of high-value forms of cultivation, so that the cost of governing the area as well as the transaction costs of appropriating labor and produce is minimized. However, and quite interestingly for the argument of Pakistani women's invisibility developed in this review, the author does not claim that the unseen lack agency. For him, the unseen - whom the State regards as trapped into the 'backwardness' of rural habits, norms, and cultivation practices - are sometimes strategically hidden to avoid the State's purview, stigma and exercise of power.

### 3. Methodological approach

In order to take stock of the current situation with regards to integration of gender and social equity in wheat research for development, and to conceptualize opportunities for strengthening this, a critical appraisal of peer-reviewed and gray literature using a gender lens was accomplished. The literature on gender in wheat-based livelihoods was limited, and expanding to programs that cover gender in agriculture more broadly was therefore necessary but restricted to a focus on the prime wheat growing regions (Punjab and Sindh), to learn about gender relations in agricultural livelihoods in these areas. Thus the review focuses on the anthropological literature which offers the most promise for understanding social relations. Key research questions addressed are:

- ✓ How does the world look, and operate, for males and females in wheat growing households?
- ✓ What is known about social relationships and mediating processes that exist in the prime wheat growing regions in Pakistan?

This literature review has privileged an analysis of the work, tasks, and roles associated with men and women over a more technical yet gender-insensitive discussion of yields, management practices, income sources, land tenure, and technological interventions to enhance food security - topics which are mostly dealt with in economics, agricultural sciences, and development reviews (Table 1). By contrast, this study provides an outline of the socio-cultural, religious, and existential environments in which Pakistani men and women, of the lower segments of society as well as from wealthy families, participate in a variety of agricultural and non-agricultural activities to secure their livelihoods; struggle with, and challenge, cultural constraints and financial problems; perceive of their own needs and performances; and make decisions over material and immaterial resources.

A desk-based review of literature (both peer-reviewed and secondary/gray/unpublished) was conducted using databases such as Google Scholar, ProQuest, JSTOR, SAGE Journals Online, Taylor & Francis Online Journals, and Wiley Online Library. The search terms used in combination with 'Pakistan'/'gender'/'wheat' were: agency, agrosystem, agronomic strategies, climate change, consumption, crop choice, crop diversity, cuisine, decision-making, diversity, division of labor, domestic sphere, emotion, empowerment, environment, equity, family farms, family politics, foodways, food preferences, food security, green revolution, human capital, identity, inequality, landscape, livelihood, lived experience, livestock husbandry, local ecology,

**Table 1**  
Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review.

Selection criteria	Exclusion criteria	Wild card
Punjab and Sindh (prime wheat growing regions)	Non-wheat growing regions	Articles which demonstrate gender relations in non-wheat growing regions
'Pakistan'/'gender'/'wheat' plus see below for additional search terms Anthropological	No reference to social equity or gender roles	

marginalization, masculinity, natural resources, nutrition, patriarchy, performance, privilege, political ecology, postcolonial relations, poverty, resistance, resilience, rural development, rural women, seasonality, seclusion, small farmers, social hierarchy, social roles, subsistence, sustainable development, traditional farming, traditional knowledge, women's autonomy, women in agriculture, workload.

A total of 73 documents was reviewed. The annotated bibliographical resources (46) are listed in the annex and grouped into the following headings: *Development, Livelihood Strategies, Vulnerabilities; Gender Division of Labor; Domesticity and Agency Revisited*. The headings were chosen to retrace a progression, found in the literature itself, from the overt and visible scene where an androcentric frame seems to be universally applied, to spaces and times where the rules were negotiated (or even subverted) allowing women to have a voice and to operate. The majority of the data presented is of an anthropological nature. Articles which merely focus on wheat production and productivity without reference to social equity or gender roles have not been included.

### 4. Review results

#### 4.1. The legibility of grain crops: historical introduction to the literature

This section offers an historical introduction into Pakistan - the State, agriculture, and wheat growing areas. It foregrounds the inversely proportional relation between the legibility of grain crops and the legibility of rural women.

Since Pakistan's creation in 1947, the country has been a configuration of shifting alliances and competing political and social ideologies. Urdu, the official national language and lingua franca, dominates the cultural center and this has bred a sense of exclusion among other linguistic groups. The proliferation of ethnic nationalism and the strengthening of regional identities further hinders the emergence of a national culture that democratically includes the diverse voices and languages present in the Pakistani cultural spectrum (Ali, 2004:127–128). Within this context of cultural politics and ethnic polarization, certain areas of the country emerge as more visible and legible from an economic and demographic viewpoint, namely the irrigated plains of the Indus Basin. The literature mirrors this divide between the irrigated plains (including Punjab and Sindh) and 'the rest' consisting of mountains, highlands, and deserts. Ethnographic research has mainly worked on these peripheries of the nation-State. Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier Province), Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are characterized as 'tribal' cultures in which the people espouse fiercely egalitarian rhetoric and carry out cultural practices and discourses which overtly assert idealized notions of masculinity and honor. Ethnographies of Punjab and Sindh, in contrast, characterize populations there as 'peasant' cultures (Lyon 2012:30).

The plains areas of Punjab and Sindh, the focus of the review, account for over nine-tenths of the rural population, and an even greater proportion of value added in crop agriculture. The irrigated plains are also at the forefront of technological innovation and agricultural growth. These regions, while relatively better off compared with the rest of the country in terms of infrastructure and average incomes, nevertheless account for much of rural poverty and under-nutrition (Balagamwala, Gazdar, & Bux Mallah, 2015:16).

Pakistan is one of the stars of the Green Revolution (Lopez, Castro, Krutmechai, Kaewtankam, & Habib, 2012:73). The fertile plains of Punjab were one of the first regions in the developing world in which farmers adopted semi-dwarf wheats. Despite initial and subsequent success in improving yield potential and stability, maintenance of disease resistance, and other plant characteristics, the popularity of the Green Revolution semi-dwarf wheats has provoked criticism (Smale, Hartell, Heisey, & Senauer, 1998). While in aggregate terms it is true that the Green Revolution has managed both to meet national food

requirements and to fuel economic growth, yet in disaggregate terms it has worsened the incidence of rural poverty, and the maldistribution of rural incomes and assets. After Pakistan's independence in 1947, there were limited land reforms which led to less than half of the arable land being occupied by a majority of small landholders, while most of the land went to a minority of large landholders. Almost 67% of Pakistan's population resides in rural areas where the average farm size has decreased from 13.1 acres in the early 1970s to 7.7 acres in 2000. These inequalities were made worse by the innate bias of Green Revolution technology towards the rich in rural Pakistan, a situation that favors commercial farmers, better-off peasants and large landholders over poor peasants, simple commodity producers, subsistence smallholders and landless tenants (Niazi, 2004). Pakistan's agricultural policy, which is largely influenced by a powerful lobby, is likely to continue to benefit the rich instead of the poor (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:55).

Successive central governments have directly supported the intensification of resource use through the development of irrigation and intensive agricultural technologies. These agriculture policies and packages are inclined towards richer farmers in their design, cost and uptake. The cumulative impact of these historical developments has been to shift the balance between animal husbandry and agriculture increasingly in favor of the latter, and to replace the role of vegetative dynamics with human labor (Besio, 2006:261–262). At a later point, the review discusses the way women tend to livestock and that their role in animal husbandry is not considered agriculture in the literature, which is highlighted here to originate from the State's view.

Nowadays the most commonly grown crops are wheat and rice. The priority of wheat in most areas is a relic from the days of the hereditary rulers who demanded taxes in grain (Allan, 1990:407). Grain crops have long been integrated into the modern market system and made 'legible' to the State. This means that a percentage of crop production is extracted from farmers in the form of rents, taxes, costs of milling, transporting and irrigation, and market middlemen. This extraction has increased over the past several decades through Green Revolution development projects, which have introduced productive but costly packages of high-yielding variety seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. The legibility of crop farming and its transformation through commercialization and development makes it vulnerable to a host of risks, including market busts and pest destruction cycles (Carpenter, 2001:14).

Only rarely do accounts on the life of grain crops (their rise, fall, productivity, and legibility) record the point of view of farmers, and even less of female farmers. Information on dietary preferences, the value and use of crop residues,<sup>2</sup> and perceptions of local as well as new high-yielding varieties<sup>3</sup> is largely absent. Farmers rarely grow just one variety of wheat, or only wheat as a livelihood protection strategy.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, there hasn't been any government-funded research on the link between traditional knowledge systems and sustainability (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:39). The idea that wealthy farmers tend to be progressive (and vice versa) is an integral part of the institutional belief system of many government agencies, not only in Pakistan but elsewhere as well (Dove, 1994:338–339). As a result, indigenous solutions and local innovation for achieving sustainable development and food security are rarely recorded and portrayed.<sup>5</sup> There are also knowledge

gaps with respect to the organization of agricultural work, particularly from the point of view of gendered aspects of work and income. The understanding of how choices with respect to work, care and consumption are made, by whom, and even the extent to which these are choices, is limited to anecdotal accounts (Balagamwala et al., 2015:16). The scientific agricultural literature is gendered in the way it privileges male views; and also exclusive in the way it ignores poor and more marginal populations and women.

#### 4.2. Veiled work

The previous section offers a historical introduction into wheat growing areas and the State's purview. Gender relations, women, indigenous knowledge, marginal regions and poor farmers are missing from the literature. This section introduces the concept of *pardah* and how it shapes economic and social relations.

The population of Pakistan is predominantly Muslim, with a strong Islamic influence felt in the socio-economic, cultural and political spheres (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:52). Many Western scholars view Pakistan's Islamic society as a monolithic community. This assumption tends to lead to the homogeneous treatment of Pakistani women as powerless entities, unable to exercise autonomy over their lives, decisions and reproductive rights. In fact, *pardah* is seen as the cause of women's suppression in much literature.

*Purdah* means 'curtain' and in its literal sense is understood as the veiling of women's faces and bodies underneath a cloak (*burqa*). *Purdah* divides village life into two domains - a public, male one and a private, female one - and decrees that everything that occurs within the female domain be literally unseen by men in the public domain. The male domain is exemplified by the market, and includes roads and public transport. Because markets are male realms, *pardah* prevents almost all women from entering them. In most of Pakistan, it also prevents male traders from visiting women in their courtyards (Akram-Lodhi, 1996:91–93; Bari, 1998:126–127; Elahi, 2015:15–17). The female domain is exemplified by the four walls of the courtyard, but this does not mean that rural women cannot work outside of it: at certain times of the day or when traveling in groups, women go to their own fields, the village wells, uncultivated grasslands on the outskirts of the village, and to the forest.

*Purdah* institutionalizes the separation between women and the government officials who might be interested in their activities (census takers, tax collectors, foresters, agricultural extension agents, veterinarians, etc.) because these officers are all men and all come from outside the village. *Purdah* also prevents urban women from joining these male-dominated bureaucracies, or from working in rural areas. All dealings of a household with the world outside the village must go through men, and all information that the State collects about the household must come from men. Women and what they do are matters of family honor and Islamic law.

According to some authors (Carpenter, 2001; Grünenfelder, 2013; Ibraiz, 1993; Mumtaz & Salway, 2005; Nyborg, 2002), the ultimate punishment for failing to respect *pardah* is death. However, this is factually erroneous and confuses 'disrespecting *pardah*' with 'adultery.' The religious sanction of the latter is the 'death penalty,' but this is not gender specific as both adulterer and adulteress should be punished (at least in theory). This review understands *pardah* to relate to 'sex segregation' and disrespecting *pardah* may include a Muslim woman 'unveiling' her face voluntarily or involuntarily.

The literature is full of such fallacious examples that reveal the misbegotten feminist perspective that claims that *pardah* (and in fact Pakistani culture) denies Pakistani women their 'agency' and hobbles them as a 'dependent' appendage of men.

(footnote continued)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Dove, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> An exception is represented by the notes on the household food supply of a mountain community in Northern Pakistan (Allan, 1990:407–409). Another isolated note refers to the multi-functionality of wheat in rural Sialkot (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:74).

<sup>3</sup> In rural Punjab (Sialkot) the point of view of women was exceptionally recorded with regard to the decline of local soil fertility; they unanimously attributed this decline to a switch to artificial fertilizers (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:72).

<sup>4</sup> These risk-minimizing practices are described for the Baltistan region and are characteristic of what has been called a 'mixed mountain farming system', within which much of the operative agroecosystem can be interpreted in terms of polycultures that are based upon a diversity of species (MacDonald, 2010:140).

<sup>5</sup> A notable exception is represented by the study of indigenous environmental knowledge in the rain-fed tracts of Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces, now called

### 4.3. *Purdah and the structure of the economy*

Crops belong to the male domain. Anything grown for cash in Pakistan becomes the province of men, because of their domination of markets. The crop sector of the small farm economy is motivated by rural households' desire to better their socio-economic position and their willingness to experiment with new crops, taking a variety of risks to do so. It is through crop production that rural households 'develop' themselves, and thus participate in the national development process. In most of Pakistan, grain crops are strongly identified with men; the plough, for example, is such a potent male symbol that women may not even touch it. Even if women weed crops, this role fits within the livestock sector as the weeds are fed to animals (Carpenter, 2001:13–14).

Raising livestock is what women do, in the same way that raising crops is what men do (Carpenter, 2001:15). Milk and milk products are the primary source of protein in the diet of the small farming household. Livestock and crops are part of a single, integrated farming system that once characterized the Indian subcontinent. Farmers need to ensure their survival in the face of risks associated with development, a need that divides the household into a commercial sector that is legible to the State and takes risks, and a subsistence sector that is not legible to the State but plays an important role in the household's food security (*ivi*:13). The gender division of labor lends itself to this split, and patriarchal values and practices such as *purdah* keep the subsistence half hidden (*ivi*:17). The gender division of labor based upon *purdah* is how male dominance and female subordination manifest.

On one hand there is a clear division of labor - e.g., provision of care to newborns and infants is almost entirely a female responsibility within the household (Ali et al., 2011:2–5; Fafchamps & Quisumbing, 2003; Halvorson, 2002, 2003); on the other hand, there is a gray area around farming. A range of agricultural tasks must be undertaken by females. These tasks need to be identified further. In rural areas women seem to enjoy much more freedom of movement, and veiling is less strict compared to town areas. This greater freedom and mobility is positively correlated with more working hours, inside and outside the households. The next section discusses mobility in more detail.

### 4.4. *Mobility and purdah*

Certain approaches in development thinking associate increased economic prosperity with increased empowerment of women. However, the evidence collected in rural Sialkot (Punjab) reveals that women became more confined to their homes as the economic prosperity of their household's increases; and women now report a greater perception of insecurity and social isolation compared to the past. In rural areas, the practice of secluding women within the home is more common among women from large land-owning families than among poorer groups where women are economically forced to leave the home for work (Mumtaz & Salway, 2005:1752). Conversely women may feel and assert that they are better off economically and socially than before, even though their social mobility has decreased (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:79).

The control of women's mobility and their exclusion from public space is perhaps the most salient feature of *purdah* in Pakistani society. And it is equally true that gender is one of the most powerful social relations that shape Pakistani people's everyday lives, reflecting the social and political constructions of difference between women and men. However, gender hierarchies interact closely with those of socio-economic class, resulting in diverse behaviors among different subgroups of Pakistani women. While it is important to be aware of the extensive degree to which women's interests have been neglected in various social sectors, understanding gender relations in Pakistan requires more than a study of national statistics or quantitative surveys. In general, much information is available on urban, literate, middle and upper class women, and the ways they articulate notions of family, individuality, and sexual mores in rapidly changing social and

economic milieus (Ali, 2004; Ali et al., 2011; Sathar & Kazi, 2000a, 2000b).

It should be noted here that the work of Mumtaz & Salway (2005:1758) provides insight into the issue of mobility but not with respect to agriculture. In fact it examines the relationship between mobility and uptake of reproductive health services. Moreover, the research is limited to certain areas. While relevant, the income earned from agriculture could make mobility relations and permissions very different and thus generalizability is cautioned. Nevertheless, many women in the study made the statement *mai kiddle nai jandi* (I never go anywhere) as a matter of routine. Further probing usually elicited an admission of traveling out, but only to attend weddings or funerals. Such mobility was represented as an unavoidable necessity. However, there was some variation in mobility restrictions, with the richer women emphasizing their restricted mobility, while a few very poor women admitted that it is a luxury they can ill-afford (*ibid.*). To some extent *purdah*, veiling, and women's lack of involvement in market-based economic activities can be viewed as luxuries only the financially affluent can afford. These 'luxuries' become cultural ideals that men aspire for their women, as women's restricted mobility epitomize women's sexual chastity and family honor; and moreover, it reflects positively on their image as good earners and, hence, on their masculinity (Ibraiz, 1993:120; Zakar, Zakar, & Kraemer, 2013).<sup>6</sup>

Women's mobility is a complex and contested issue, which classically exemplifies the fluid nature of gender norms, how they are policed and embodied. Cultural norms glorify restricted mobility and seclusion (Siegmann & Sadaf, 2005:4–6). However, for the large majority of women, especially from poorer households, the practical needs of survival necessitate mobility outside the home. Despite women subscribing to the notion that they should not travel outside, they are observed to be quite mobile, and a woman walking alone in a distant field is not an unusual sight in Pind (a village pseudonym), Punjab. Women visit each other's houses, making *roties* (flat bread from stoneground whole meal flour) in a *tandoor* (a cylindrical clay or metal oven) and meet to collect water from wells, wash clothes and bath together in nearby streams. The poor women look after livestock, which include herding cattle and collecting fodder from family cultivated fields, sometimes involving 1–2 h walk in lonely fields. Women's farm work in rain-fed villages is significantly greater than that found in the irrigated villages because they travel farther for water in the former. Similarly, women travel to and from the *dhokes* (isolated farm houses), alone or in groups, some of which are located at distances of 30–45 min walk from the main village, with no clearly defined paths (Mumtaz & Salway, 2005:1758). One can expect these practices to vary considerably depending on location and proximity to infrastructure and larger towns.

One explanation for the variance between women's stated and observed mobility is the emic construction of space and movement. Women's construction of space is not determined by physical geography but rather by social geography. The identity of the people who share a space at a particular moment in time determines whether the space is classified as *bahir* (outside) or *ander* (inside) space. The presence of *biradari* (related by blood) members, both women and men, creates a socially acceptable 'inside' space, while the presence of a non-*biradari* man, or even a woman, creates an 'outside' space. There is little correlation between the social boundaries and physical village geography. Women could visit a relative's house that involved a lonely 45 min walk

<sup>6</sup> "The loss of social status associated with women's work is often cited as an explanation for the low reporting of women's labor force participation rates in Pakistan where data on women's work is collected by male enumerators from the male head of households [...]. In addition to the reluctance to admitting to women working because it may be associated with a loss of status, husbands may simply not be aware of their wives employment or did not consider it as productive activity [...]. Men are reluctant to admit that wives are participating in the outside sphere of decision making even though women admit a higher level of participation in outside decisions" (Sathar & Kazi, 2000b:897–909).

in the fields, but would not visit a non-*biradari* house a five-minute walk away. If most of the *biradari* houses happen to be located in close proximity constituting a *mohalla* (neighborhood), women of the *biradari* may move from home to home as if each was an extension of their own homes. Even the *ghalian* (village lanes) are a socially acceptable space to linger around chatting (Mumtaz & Salway, 2005:1758).

Given the paucity of the available first-hand accounts of Pakistani women's lived experience of distance, time, and space, this section necessarily draws on a couple of key sources, which are not generalizable but make the point that seclusion has never been absolute, and that observed mobility outside the home cannot simply be equated with some generic notion of 'freedom of movement' (Mumtaz & Salway, 2005:1752). It should also be pointed out that it is not entirely clear how much mobility is related to greater status. It is perhaps more of an indicator that women are as much 'equal' to their husbands in terms of leaving the confines of their homes. Their exposure to the outside sphere is likely to be greater by virtue of that ability, but their decision-making authority and participation may remain unaffected (Sathar & Kazi, 2000b:899).

Presenting *pardah* as an inflexible practice that subordinates women is contested by the anthropological literature focusing on women's experiences, beliefs and practices. *Purdah* is not strictly observed. Women in farming households walk about without, or despite, the imperative of *pardah*; with an ability to exercise their agency that now and then shows up in subtle ways. This observation stands as a reminder of the untidiness of a reality which belies neat and simplistic generalizations.

#### 4.5. Alternative views

The previous sections suggest that *pardah* governs economic and social life and by extension that women are subordinated and men powerful. However, these absolute gendered notions are contested by the anthropological literature as an over-simplification. Thus, gender roles and cultural practices such as *pardah* may only be one part of the explanation for why women are less visible in the agricultural sector.

As poignantly put by Carol Carpenter,

(w)omen's work in rural Pakistan has been documented; its invisibility does not stem from its never having been studied. But this documentation lies in what we call, interestingly, 'gray' literature, which is unavailable outside Pakistan, and not readily available inside the country. [...] After more than two decades of efforts by women, in Pakistan and elsewhere, to make women's work visible and thus involve them in the development process, why does this invisibility persist? (2001:12)

Is it because the majority of agricultural scientists are male and *pardah* makes researching and analyzing women's roles difficult? If this is the case then it suggests a bias in agricultural research because Pakistani male scientists will privilege male ways of knowing and engaging with the world.

Studies that build upon Carol Carpenter's model provide further evidence that women's role in agriculture is more substantial than what is portrayed in the agriculture literature. Research conducted in Sindh province shows that women are actually found to be involved in a range of agricultural tasks either on their own or as part of a family unit. Cotton harvesting is the most conspicuous activity in terms of women's agricultural work. Ploughing and field preparation are activities exclusively carried out by adult males. The same is true of on-farm water management, and the application of fertilizers and pesticides to crops. While there do not appear to be strong gendered norms around weeding, collecting fodder and caring for livestock, these activities are mainly carried out by women and children rather than adult males. The sowing of wheat is done exclusively by men. Wheat and rice harvesting is carried out by families - men, women and able-bodied children - and makes a major contribution to a household's annual consumption of the staple. However, there are only specific sets of activities that are almost

exclusively seen as women's work, and for which women's entitlement to remuneration is only nominally acknowledged: cotton and vegetable harvesting, and livestock rearing (Balagamwala et al., 2015:21–27).

The role women play in the harvesting of cotton deserves special recognition and special caution. As a highly valuable monsoon season (*kharif*) crop, cotton enters into the agricultural cycle in combination with wheat (the major winter crop) in Southern Punjab and Northern Sindh (Altaf, 2010:32–39; Dorosh, Malik, & Krausova, 2010:169; Hussain, Byerlee, & Heisey, 1994:41). Yet the few sources mentioning women's contribution do so laconically and without any substantial discussion of this productive and somehow submerged relationship (Begum & Yasmeen, 2011:641; Hassan, Ali, & Ahmad, 2007:664; Sathar & Kazi, 2000a, 2000b:97). The area around women's role in farming becomes even more gray when it comes to cotton activities. This may be due to the industrial nature of cotton picking. Cotton was originally cultivated for domestic consumption, with women mastering collection, spinning, and textile-making (Munawar-Ishfaq, 2010:61–62); however, cotton has over time ended up to be mostly cultivated in the fields of powerful producers for cash and accumulation of profits, and as such has stopped being livelihood of poor residents (Mustafa 1998:300–301; Nazli, Birol, Asare-Marfo, & Tariq, 2015). Cotton is an expensive crop to cultivate; it requires enough finances to buy expensive packets of fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides essential for a good harvest; and therefore it remains out of reach of most small farmers. These inequalities in socioeconomic status intersect with those related to gender. According to the rule that "anything grown for cash in Pakistan becomes the province of men", women enter into the production of cotton in a progressively marginalized position. Again, a large population of women cotton pickers across Punjab and Sindh - who work long hours in the fields at the mercy of landlords, vulnerable to sexual harassment, frequently without adequate law and union protection, and facing occupational hazards and health costs (Siegmann & Shaheen, 2008) - remain unaccounted for in the literature and await recognition in the daily headlines as well as in academic research.

A study which explores the emerging pattern of changes in the economic activities of women in Ziarat district, Balochistan, takes a closer look at women's productive activities, and reveals that the assumption that women's roles are confined to household chores only, or that a household's economy has been monopolized by males, is mere myth. Women start participating in economic activities from a very young age by keeping and tending livestock and poultry in addition to a number of other tasks that add to the family income (Mohyuddin, Chaudry, & Ambreen, 2012a, 2012b:243–247). So it appears that women engage in more agricultural activities than what much of the agricultural literature that emphasis *pardah* implies.

In the Punjab province most livestock related activities are undertaken by females. Females are actively involved in livestock decision making except for decisions regarding insemination of cows where their participation is low. Although mutual consultation seem to be the norm for most livestock-related decisions, the female role in decisions to keep goats or sheep, breed selection, replacing old breeds with improved ones, allocation of land for fodder and putting animals on concentrated feed, is found to be more prominent (Tibbo et al., 2009:8).

One of the most striking findings with regard to the lives of rural women is not so much their special connection to livestock husbandry in terms of time allocation and intensity (Allan, 1990:406; Halvorson, 2002:262; Ibraz, 1993:106–112; Joeques, 1995:67–68), but rather the degree of their commitment and enjoyment in performing the task:

(w)omen prefer housework to fieldwork, and they particularly like to raise livestock, feeling that it is both proper and emotionally interesting and rewarding, in contrast to agriculture, which is slightly improper and not, for women, valued. For a household to have its women working in the fields is a sign that its means are limited (even though very few households can afford to hire the labor that would keep their women entirely out of the fields); for a household

to have milk animals, on the other hand, is a sign that it is prosperous (Carpenter, 1997:159).

Therefore, women's role in certain livelihoods may well be a choice acted upon (thus a display of agency) that is associated with an individual's sense of satisfaction and with the household's reputation. A similar sense of satisfaction is generated by women's ownership of home gardens (Azhar-Hewitt, 2002:84).

Additionally, the definition of agriculture requires discussion. Carpenter's (1997) quote above implies that 'raising livestock' does not count as agriculture. 'Crop agriculture' is different to raising livestock which is classed as 'animal agriculture' but both are agriculture activities. The manure from livestock is often part of a farm's eco-system in that it fertilizes crops and crop residue is fed to animals. Women's involvement in livestock shows that Pakistani women are already playing a key role in agricultural production, but their contributions await 'classification' or documentation. This omission has a lot to do with the androcentric bias of male researchers to which this work is a timely corrective.

The standpoint taken in the literature presented in this section offers a more nuanced understanding of women's agency and their involvement in agriculture. The anthropological literature available shows that in Pakistan customary practices and gender roles are successively refined through slight and incremental variants, and the same is true with regard to the productive behavior of men and women, where strong linkages are found between women and men's productive activities. For example, in the rain-fed regions there has been a tradition of seeking employment outside the farm sector. As a consequence, women are left with a larger burden/responsibility of managing the family farm, while the men diversify into the non-farm sector to supplement family income. A livelihood system has emerged which provides relatively stable male paid employment in the formal sector combined with subsistence agricultural production managed by women (Sathar & Kazi, 2000b:896).

#### 4.6. Men and women in the shadow of *pardah*

The previous sections have shown how certain research - based on a Western-biased and hegemonic model of the global feminine subject - draws upon *pardah* to explain women's invisibility in agriculture, and can even be used as an excuse for why research does not have to focus on women. Alternative views found in the literature do nonetheless demonstrate that the structure of *pardah* is not universal and changes over time. Explaining what *pardah* means in contemporary society, by region, and for men and women requires research rather than assumptions.

There is little research thus far on whether social realities are different for men and women. In all probability women and men are susceptible and constrained by the same social constructs, which confine them in certain roles and reinforce the status quo. This does not necessarily lead to male dominance and female powerlessness. Women may well (and unsurprisingly) be found to reaffirm and redefine an existing set of social relations as men do (Sathar & Kazi, 2000b).

The anthropological literature highlights the way women's voices are powerfully and provocatively channeled: (a) in popular women's magazines (in the case of middle- and lower-middle-class literate women) which allow the readers to fantasize about the reversal of the status quo (Ali, 2004); (b) through a vocabulary of fear (and the related category of risk) as expressed by lower-class women workers in gendered public spaces in Karachi (Ali, 2010); (c) in the rural development sector, and specifically in gender-mixed working environments, where they are forced to negotiate gender relations so that they can reconcile the requirements of being both a good Muslim and a good worker (Grünenfelder, 2013). A rich body of literature explains how women place themselves in the patrilineal ordered system of religious charisma and secure support or forms of patronage, acting pragmatically and

innovatively with what is available to them (Kasmani, 2016).

The studies also highlight women's desire to, and creativity in, shaping their own feminine identity in the future. Women use energizing ritual performances (or festivities, or gatherings commemorating death, marriage, birth and other such events) to practice an oblique, undeclared dispute against their subordinate position in society; and, in so doing, they nurture resilience in the face of constant reminders of their dependency and lack of agency (Ahmed, 2005; Hegland, 1995). The aesthetic of suffering expected of women is discussed as inherent in the framed genre of life stories, through which women convey sentiments and emotions that are inappropriate to tell out of specific contexts of intimacy and privacy, but at the same time, function as a discourse of honor that gains them reputation (Grima, 1991). These studies suggest possibilities of social networking and solidarity that may be for Pakistani women a mode of resisting patriarchal arrangements, of struggling to survive and generating trust and support at home and in the community. In terms of agriculture, this means that group-based interventions may be more effective than one-to-one extension services.

Equally rich records exist of Pakistani masculinity in its hegemonic or subordinate variants. The work of Magnus Marsden among Chitrali Muslims (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) stands out prominently for its fine ethnographic analysis of the active role played by the youth in embodying, interpreting, and rewriting forms of Islamic ethical sensibility and piety. Great attention is paid to the ways in which rural Muslims act within, perceive, and invest with relevance to their worlds. As a result, the assumption that village Muslim life is static, bucolic, and of little relevance for anthropological debates is sharply contested. Far from Chitral being a dead space of immobile villagers, mobility is central to the ways in which its young men are trained in locally valued modes of inhabiting and perceiving their world (Marsden 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

Rural, and frequently illiterate, women are under-researched although there are a few exceptions which highlight their defiance of men's domination; namely: a study of how women and men of Sultanabad negotiate over several types of resources - i.e., agricultural land, monetary and grazing resources, timber and firewood (Nyborg, 2002); research on girls who enjoy wanderings in out-of-bound spaces in rural Punjab, and on their performances of rebellious, unruly selves (Chaudhry, 2009); an intriguing ethnography of how Askole villagers (Karakoram Mountains) use space to assert their agency in strategic ways against the backdrop of describing space through the dichotomy 'public' versus 'private' (Besio, 2006); and an article that explores women's autonomy in relation to that of men, but also in relative ranking with women, from different rural communities in Pakistan (Sathar & Kazi, 2000a).

The anthropological literature highlights acts of resistance which suggests female manoeuvres may be filled with more challenges and practical consequences than men's. Seemingly innocuous actions that may indeed signal deviations from patriarchal norms are documented. Women in corporate households (common to South Asia) with dominant male household heads often choose covert strategies in resource negotiations, as compared to women in segmented households (common in Africa) who can negotiate more overtly. In the Pakistani context it is not always possible or desirable to actively or vocally contest or lobby for control over resources for fear of physical retaliation. Consequently, women resort to less confrontational forms of negotiation (Nyborg, 2002:114). Sometimes discussed as 'soft power', women's power can be more subtle than men's as it is not displayed publicly. This often renders it invisible to the male gaze, as the agricultural literature illustrates.

These actions of breaking away from otherwise publicly accepted norms create co-existing and co-mingling worlds where the contours of mobility, honor, domesticity, and agency of both sexes appear less static. Men equally negotiate and test strategies and pathways for increasing autonomy within a society with strong traditional family ties.

The ways men and women bargain their social and work roles reflect to a certain extent a conscious strategy to gain access to resources and power that they need or desire. So not only is the strictness of *pardah* questioned in the literature, but also the subordination or passivity of women, along with male supremacy and contentment.

However, this rich literature about rural men and women does not really venture into the realm of crop choices or livelihood strategies; of seasonality, intra-household decision-making and 'making kinship', or building social relations; of overlapping bonds, loyalties, allegiances and debts between families (extended and nuclear). Food items, food preferences and preparation, women's control and influence over resources are mentioned rarely, if at all.

#### 4.7. Beyond the curtain (on *tiptoe*)

So far this review illustrates the way the standpoint of the agricultural literature overplays *pardah* and women's subordination and invisibility, which serves to reinforce and reproduce patriarchy. Whereas, the anthropological literature offers a more nuanced view of power relations and struggles for autonomy from women themselves. The following case-study illustrates how existing development approaches also overlook localized feminine concepts of empowerment to the detriment of women's adoption of agricultural innovations.

This case-study touches upon rural women's competence and contribution, and refers to research done in the Hunza and Nagar districts in the Karakoram Mountains (Joekes, 1995). In the late 1980s, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program tried to introduce apricot kernel cracking machines, on the assumption that this was an effective labor saving device that would relieve women of one of their most demanding tasks (since the cracking was otherwise done manually). The women themselves had not pressed AKRSP to supply labor saving machinery for this or any other task, and the effort was suspended for lack of interest on the part of the recipients. Another type of project, by contrast, was very successful, namely support for new productive activities under women's control (poultry raising and vegetable growing). Both poultry and vegetable growing are beneficial to the agro-ecological system by adding to the supply of organic matter, poultry manure, green manure and fodder (from vegetable waste and residue) for soil improvement. Both also help women meet their household provision obligations by significantly improving the quantity and quality of food intake for their families. The production of eggs is particularly valuable, for household incomes otherwise allow for only a low level of consumption of protein (in milk and milk products). In narrow economic terms, vegetables in particular are highly profitable. They are less labor intensive than production of wheat, purchased inputs are less costly, and realized prices give a clear margin of advantage. It may well be that, along with these dimensions, poultry and vegetable production generated more immediate benefits than the mechanization of kernel crushing. There was no resistance to mechanization per se in these communities. Such failed project experiences often conceal other issues.

Women's resistance to the new technology makes sense in terms of the political economy of gender relations. The crucial feature of the activity was that, unlike poultry and vegetable production, it did not offer women any individual benefit within the gendered agro-ecological system. The savings in women's time would have been redirected to increase total household income, which is subject to male control and their discretion of expenditure. Poultry and vegetable production, by contrast, offered an avenue whereby women could for the first time control the proceeds themselves, because the products can be sold or bartered locally. Other crops (wheat, maize, fresh or dried fruit, potatoes) are all sold in wholesale markets in Gilgit town, a journey of two hours or more away by truck. Women do not have access to distant marketing of this kind.

This case highlights how even women focused programs can overlook important aspects of women's decision making and the wider social relations that enable and constrain adoption of agricultural

innovations. It also highlights how gender relations can shape livelihood choices and how little is known about the mediating processes that exist in the prime wheat growing regions of Pakistan.

## 5. Conclusion

To summarize, the literature provides substantial evidence that the spheres of men and women do overlap and that the structures of *pardah* are not rigid nor universal. A knowledge gap remains in relation to the life histories, local experiences, as well as unofficial, un-ritualized or informal networks of small farmers in general, and of poor and marginalized women in particular. There is scant or no information about their means of experimenting on their fields and of spreading results. This neglect results in a missed opportunity to learn and, consequently, to engage in improved program design that would contribute to enhanced food security and resilience in rural communities. As women's lives get enmeshed in the process of developmental priorities, certain kinds of voices - the unruly, the contradictory, the peripheral, the feminist - may remain suppressed. This review suggests that instead of creating grand narratives of change and resistance, it may be worth a moment of introspection and rethinking to enhance researcher's work on the private sphere of women's lives.

The agricultural literature reviewed tends to accept cultural norms and gender roles, rather than question their persistence or attempt to examine them. The binary thinking which simplistically identifies men with technology and farming, and women with tradition and home, accompanies much gender blind work and is strongly reasserted in agricultural literature. Conversely, the anthropological literature reviewed questions the traditional view of gender and the nature of *pardah*. There is extreme variation across parts of Pakistan that is reflected in the literature and yet frequently downplayed by agricultural literature which focuses on yield, crops or climate, rather than people, history and culture.

There is a clear need for women's involvement in agricultural research as principal investigators, and in the design as analysts, scientists and authors. While women do not automatically represent and focus on women, the evidence from this review and elsewhere (Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Thomas, 1994) suggests that women as leaders and researchers are more likely to identify and lobby for women's issues. Frequently agricultural literature (like development projects) blame 'culture' or 'gender' for the failure of projects to reach women, when in reality the failure stems from the absence of gender analysis at the research/project design phase.

This review sheds light on the dynamics that are rarely tackled in both policymaking and the development agenda. Firstly, it foregrounds the inversely proportional relation between the legibility of grain crops and the legibility of rural women. Secondly, Pakistani women use alternative scripts to cope with the dominant paradigm, be it inside the domestic walls or in open fields, talking around rather than contradicting it head on. There is scope for exploring how women's assertion of their independence may well cohabit with their desire to be modest, self-sacrificial, subservient, and humble and the way this plays out in the agriculture sector. Thirdly, women's work mainly and meaningfully stands in the realm of subsistence; yet often development institutions, in their attempt to commercialize agricultural activities, competes with the subsistence sector for natural resources and women's labor. Women's role in providing food security for the family and managing farms when their spouses engage in non-farm income elsewhere should play a more prominent role in the literature. And finally, women's relationship with livestock has to be brought into clearer focus in its emotional as well as practical components if a full understanding of the important role women play in agriculture and in intra-household decision-making is to be identified.

This theoretical visibility of women is needed considering that:

the female sector of the economy of the small farming household is

invisible to the State. As we have seen, the labor that women invest in livestock does not appear in government statistics. Livestock are also notoriously undercounted in Pakistan, and livestock products - milk and dung - are not measured at all. In addition, the fuel wood women collect, the poultry they raise, and the vegetables they grow are undercounted or simply do not appear in government statistics. Even women themselves, especially daughters, are known to be undercounted in censuses (Carpenter, 2001:13).

The review raises the question of whether women want to be seen by the State and in society; and if so, in what way? Scott (1998) demonstrates that certain forms of autonomy come from invisibility. This line of thinking warrants further research before, yet again, a Western notion of what women should want is projected onto Pakistani women.

By simplifying women's role, by overlooking women's agency, by naively assuming *pardah* is responsible for all gender inequalities little room is left for gender research questions to be developed. Agricultural literature on Pakistan is gendered in the way it defines femininity and masculinity traditionally and by the criterion of visibility. More nuanced accounts of women's perceptions, aspirations, and actual roles inside houses and on farms is needed. Otherwise, the traditional view of *pardah* will stay intact, thus reinforcing its existence as fact. This inflates male power and female subservience and results in women being defined in convenient terms for men. In the case of male scientists this means they do have to put in additional effort, such as hiring female enumerators so that women can be interviewed. More effort and funding is needed for agricultural research that tries to avoid universal claims about gender roles and their particular social function. Gender should not be seen as unproblematic – it is complex, contested and requires sound research design that is primarily gender focused to interrogate and identify more fluid gender roles and responsibilities, strategies for change and survival; and to empirically critique the problematic assumptions that impair an objective grasp of rural women's roles in wheat systems and livelihoods more broadly.

In terms of answering the research questions posed in the introduction, the most obvious conclusion is that we know far less in 2017 than we should about these topics. So many knowledge gaps remain about the politics of gender and the livelihood choices of Pakistani farmers. The review generates a range of further research questions: Is it through agriculture that women could increase their economic prosperity, and through prosperity, they could overcome confinement and seclusion? Do women like to take part in farming and in other agricultural work? Do women find it emotionally interesting and rewarding? How do women view the activity of growing crops compared to other livelihood opportunities? Do women have strong opinions about what crops and livelihoods to enter? How are these opinions formed and do women share these opinions with anyone (their spouse)?

Many of the studies highlighted in the review relate to a certain village or area and their findings should be generalized with caution. What they do highlight is the heterogeneity of Pakistan and why State-centric viewpoints and generic agriculture packages may not be relevant or optimal across the country. Moreover, social relationships and mediating processes that exist in the prime wheat growing regions in Pakistan, especially those pertaining to gender, cannot be assumed. Pakistani women's agency cannot be overgeneralized as a dependent extension of patriarchal relations. Similarly, gender roles and cultural practices such as *pardah* should only be considered one part of the explanation for why women are less visible in the agricultural sector. Given the male dominated nature of agriculture research and the contrasting anthropological literature it does appear that the world looks and operates differently for males and females in Pakistan and by extension, in wheat growing households. However, the details of this difference and its relevance requires greater scholarship.

The authors' selection of a feminist standpoint theory illustrates that a standpoint is “an ongoing achievement rather than a spontaneous attribute or consciousness” (quote). Focusing on women, using feminist

methodologies and theoretical frameworks are needed to make women visible. More research is required to investigate the nebulous but immense region of life between submission and revolt, between silence and overt talk - which overlays gender relations in agriculture. A feminist standpoint is “both a product and an instrument of feminist struggle” (Weeks, 1998:8). The research into women's role in wheat-related livelihoods continues....

### Compliance with ethical standards

**Funding:** This review received financial support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany under the project ‘Understanding gender in wheat-based livelihoods for enhanced WHEAT R4D impact in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ethiopia’ implemented by CIMMYT <http://www.cimmyt.org/>. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### Acknowledgements

This review received financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Project No.: 14.1432.5-001.00, Contract No.: 81180344), Germany under the project ‘Understanding gender in wheat-based livelihoods for enhanced WHEAT R4D impact in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ethiopia’ implemented by CIMMYT <http://www.cimmyt.org/>.

### References

- Allan, N. J. R. (1990). Household food supply in Hunza Valley, Pakistan. *Geographical Review*, 80(4), 399–415.
- Dove, M. R. (1994). The existential status of the Pakistani farmer: Studying official constructions of social reality. *Ethnology*, 33(4), 331–351.
- Dove, M. R. (2003). Bitter shade: Throwing light on politics and ecology in contemporary Pakistan. *Human Organization*, 62(3), 229–241.
- MacDonald, K. I. (2010). Landscapes of diversity: Development and vulnerability to food insecurity in subsistence agroecosystems of northern Pakistan. In M. Kugelmann, & R. M. Hathaway (Eds.). *Hunger pains: Pakistan's food insecurity* (pp. 135–159). Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Niazi, T. (2004). Rural poverty and the green revolution: The lessons from Pakistan. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 31(2), 242–260.
- Smale, M., Hartell, J., Heisey, P. W., & Senauer, B. (1998). The contribution of genetic resources and diversity to wheat production in the Punjab of Pakistan. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 80, 482–493.

### Gender division of labor

- Akram-Lodhi, A. H. (1996). ‘You are not excused from cooking’: Peasants and the gender division of labor in Pakistan. *Feminist Economics*, 2(2), 87–105.
- Ali, T. S., Krantz, G., Gul, R., Asad, N., Johansson, E., & Mogren, I. (2011). Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: A qualitative study. *Global Health Action*, 4, 7448.
- Azhar-Hewitt, F. (2002). Women and sustainability in the Karakoram Himalayas. *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, 6(3–4), 84–89.
- Balagamwala, M., Gazdar, H., & Bux Mallah, H. (2015). *Women's agricultural work and nutrition in Pakistan: Findings from qualitative research. LANSA working paper series* (No. 2).
- Bari, F. (1998). Gender, disaster and empowerment: A case study from Pakistan. In E. Enarson, & B. Heam Marrow (Eds.). *The gendered terrain of disaster* (pp. 125–132).
- Carpenter, C. (1997). Women and livestock, fodder, and uncultivated land in Pakistan. In C. E. Sachs (Ed.). *Women working in the environment* (pp. 157–176). London & New York: Routledge.
- Carpenter, C. (2001). The role of economic invisibility in development: Veiling women's work in rural Pakistan. *Natural Resources Forum*, 25, 11–19.
- Elahi, N. (2015). *Development in crisis: Livelihoods and social complexities in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan*. Unpublished PhD Thesis Norway: Norwegian University of Life Sciences, NMBU.
- Fafchamps, M., & Quisumbing, A. R. (2003). Social roles, human capital, and the intrahousehold division of labor: evidence from Pakistan. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 55(1), 36–80.
- Halvorson, S. J. (2002). Environmental health risks and gender in the Karakoram-Himalaya, Northern Pakistan. *Geographical Review*, 92(2), 257–281.
- Halvorson, S. J. (2003). A geography of children's vulnerability: Gender, household resources, and water-related disease hazard in northern Pakistan. *The Professional Geographer*, 55(2), 120–133.
- Ibraiz, T. S. (1993). The cultural context of women's productive invisibility: A case study of a Pakistani Village. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 32(1), 101–125.

- Joekes, S. (1995). Gender and livelihoods in northern Pakistan. *IDS Bulletin*, 26(1), 66–74.
- Mohyuddin, A., Chaudry, H., & Ambreen, M. (2012a). Economic empowerment of women in the rural areas of Balochistan. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 19(2), 239–257.
- Mohyuddin, A., Chaudry, H., & Ambreen, M. (2012b). Economic empowerment of women in the rural areas of Balochistan. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 19(2), 239–257.
- Munawar-Ishfaq, S. (2010). *Women's traditional knowledge and sustainable development in rural Sialkot, Pakistan*. Unpublished MA Thesis New Zealand: School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Siegmann, K. A., & Sadaf, T. (2005). Gendered livelihood assets and workloads in Pakistan's north-west frontier province (NWFP). *Paper presented at the 7th Sustainable Development Conference, Islamabad*.
- Tibbo, M., Abdelali-Martini, M., Tariq, B., Salehy, P., Khan, M. A., Anwar, M. Z., ... Aw-Hassan, A. (2009). Gender sensitive research enhances agricultural employment in conservative societies: The case of women livelihoods and dairy goat programme in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Paper presented at the FAO-IFAD-ILO workshop on gaps, trends and current research in gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty, Rome*.
- Zakar, R., Zakar, M. Z., & Kraemer, A. (2013). Men's beliefs and attitudes toward intimate partner violence against women in Pakistan. *Violence Against Women*, 20(10), 1–23.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledge: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.
- Hartsock, N. C. M. (1985). *Money, sex and power: Towards a feminist historical materialism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press 231–251.
- Hawkesworth, M. (2006). *Feminist inquiry: From political conviction to methodological innovation*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press.
- Scoones, I. (1998). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: A Framework for analysis*. IDS Working Paper 72.
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Thomas, S. (1994). *How women legislate?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tyson, L. (2015). *Critical theory today: A user friendly guide* (Second Edition). NY: Routledge.
- Weeks, K. (1998). *Constituting feminist subjects*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

### Domesticity and agency revisited

- Ahmed, A. (2005). Death and celebration among Muslim women: A case study from Pakistan. *Modern Asian Studies*, 39(4), 929–980.
- Ali, K. A. (2004). 'Pulp fictions': Reading Pakistani domesticity. *Social Text*, 78(22(1)), 123–145.
- Ali, K. A. (2010). Voicing difference: Gender and civic engagement among Karachi's poor. *Current Anthropology*, 51(2), 313–320.
- Besio, K. (2006). Chutes and ladders: Negotiating gender and privilege in a village in northern Pakistan. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 5(2), 258–278.
- Chaudhry, L. N. (2009). Flowers, queens, and goons: Unruly women in rural Pakistan. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 246–267.
- Grima, B. (1991). The role of suffering in women's performance of Paxto. In A. Appadurai, F. J. Korom, & M. A. Mills (Eds.). *Gender, genre and power in south Asian expressive traditions* (pp. 78–101). University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.
- Grünenfelder, J. (2013). Negotiating gender relations: Muslim women and formal employment in Pakistan's rural development sector. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 20(6), 599–615.
- Hegland, M. E. (1995). Shi'a women of northwest Pakistan and agency through practice: Ritual, resistance, resilience. *PoLAR*, 18(2), 65–80.
- Kasmani, O. (2016). *Fakir Her-Stories. Women's spiritual careers and the limits of the masculine in Pakistan*. TRAF0 – Blog for Transregional Research <https://trafo.hypotheses.org>.
- Marsden, M. (2007a). All-male sonic gatherings, Islamic reform, and masculinity in northern Pakistan. *American Ethnologist*, 34(3), 473–490.
- Marsden, M. (2007b). Love and elopement in northern Pakistan. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13(1), 91–108.
- Marsden, M. (2009). A tour not so grand: Mobile Muslims in northern Pakistan. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15, 57–75.
- Mumtaz, Z., & Salway, S. (2005). 'I never go anywhere': Extricating the links between women's mobility and uptake of reproductive health services in Pakistan. *Social Science & Medicine*, 60, 1751–1765.
- Nyborg, I. L. P. (2002). *Yours today, mine tomorrow? A study of women and men's negotiations over resources in Balistan, Pakistan*. NORAGRIC PhD Dissertation No. 1 Agricultural University of Norway.
- Sathar, Z. A., & Kazi, S. (2000a). Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(2), 89–110.
- Sathar, Z. A., & Kazi, S. (2000b). Pakistani couples: Different productive and reproductive realities? *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(4), 891–912.

### Theory section

- Clough, P. (1994). *Feminist thought: Desire, power, and academic discourse*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Cockburn, C. (2015). Standpoint theory (2015) In S. Mojab (Ed.). *Marxism and feminism* (pp. 331–346). London: Zed Books.
- Dodson, D., & Carroll, S. (1991). *Reshaping the agenda: Women in state legislatures*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for American Women in Politics.

### Additional references

- Altat, Z. (2010). Food security in pluralistic Pakistan. In M. Kugelman, & R. M. Hathaway (Eds.). *Hunger pains: Pakistan's food insecurity* (pp. 30–45). Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Begum, R., & Yasmeen, G. (2011). Contribution of Pakistani women in agriculture: Productivity and constraints. *Sarhad Journal of Agriculture*, 27(4), 637–643.
- Dorosh, P., Malik, S. J., & Krausova, M. (2010). Rehabilitating agriculture and promoting food security after the 2010 Pakistan floods: Insights from the south Asian experience. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 49(3), 167–192.
- Hassan, M. Z. Y., Ali, T., & Ahmad, M. (2007). Determination of participation in agricultural activities and access to sources of information by gender: A case study of district Muzaffargarh. *Pakistan Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 44(4), 664–669.
- Hussain, S. S., Byerlee, D., & Heisey, P. W. (1994). Impacts of the training and visit extension system on farmers' knowledge and adoption of technology: Evidence from Pakistan. *Agricultural Economics*, 10, 39–47.
- Lyon, S. M. (2012). Conceptual Models of Nature in Pakistan, in Cultural Models of Nature and the Environment: Self, Space and Causality - Proceedings of the Workshop. Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy, Northern Illinois University, 29–34. *ESE Working Papers*, 1(1).
- Lopez, V. M., Castro, M., Krutmechai, M., Kaewtankam, V., & Habib, N. (2012). *Women's Wisdom: Documentation of Women's Knowledge in Agriculture (Case Studies from Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan)*. Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific: Penang, Malaysia.
- Mustafa, D. (1998). Structural Causes of Vulnerability to Flood Hazard in Pakistan. *Economic Geography*, 74(3), 289–305.
- Marsden, M. (2005). Muslim Village Intellectuals: The Life of the Mind in Northern Pakistan. *Anthropology Today*, 21(1), 10–15.
- Nazli, H., Birol, E., Asare-Marfo, D., & Tariq, A. (2015). Wheat farmers' preferences for wheat traits in Punjab, Pakistan: A choice experiment approach. *29th International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE)*, Milan, Italy.
- Rouse, Shahnaz (1996). Gender nationalism(s) and cultural identity: Discursive strategies and exclusivities. In Kumari Jayawardena, & Malathi De Alwis (Eds.). *Embodied violence*. New Delhi: Kali Press for Women.
- Siegmann, K. A., & Shaheen, N. (2008). Weakest link in the textile chain: Pakistani cotton pickers' bitter harvest. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 51(4), 619–630.

**Kristie Druca** is currently based in Ethiopia where she manages a research for development project on gender in agriculture for CIMMYT (the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center). Dr Druca has an MA in gender and applied anthropology and participatory development from the Australian National University and a PhD from Deakin University that explores social inclusion and social protection in Nepal. Research interests include: building inclusive institutions, markets and states, protecting the poor and excluded, women's economic empowerment, and the inter-relationship between agency and structures of power.

**Valentina Peveri** holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Bologna University (Italy). Since 2004 she has carried out fieldwork in Southern Ethiopia on the robust constitution of an indigenous plant and of the (women) farmers who cultivate it. She is currently committed to projects on underutilized crops for achieving food security, and on ecological knowledge as a guide to science and policymaking. Peveri has been a consultant at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). Her latest research focuses on opening new lines of inquiry into the notion of culinary citizenship through the methods and perspectives of multi-species ethnography.