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**MIDDLE-INCOME WOMEN IN DHAKA CITY:
GENDER AND ACTIVITY SPACE**

by

Salma Islam

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**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.**

**Department of Geography
University of Durham
Faculty of Social Sciences
U.K.**

July 1995



14 NOV 1995

To My Sister Shamim

Abstract

This study aims to understand the activity patterns and gender relations of middle-income working women in Dhaka City in private and public space. A total of seventy-five middle-income working women from three age groups; under 30 (unmarried), 30-50 (married), and over 50 (married) were interviewed in three different areas of the city, Azimpur, Mohammadpur, and Maghbazar. Case histories of six women, two from each age group, were recorded.

The study shows that the involvement of middle-income women in activities which take them into public spaces has increased considerably during recent years and women are now more visible in public places than in the near past. For economic reasons and also due to changing attitudes, such women are now substantially involved in the job market and many of them, particularly the young and educated, carry executive responsibilities on an equal footing with men. Working women, like men, contribute a significant portion of their income to the family budget. Women's higher level of education and their involvement in employment have given them more power and autonomy in family decisions.

The household workload of the working women has not changed in the course of time. Irrespective of their level of education or grade of employment, middle-income working women are overloaded by their household activities, particularly cooking, within their private space. The rapid changes from extended families to nuclear families have created new constraints for these women, particularly with regard to childcare.

The everyday and lifetime activity space of middle-income working women in the city of Dhaka have expanded considerably in recent years. Their mobility depends not only upon their level of education but also upon their occupational type and employment status. Young women's daily movement pattern is more frequent and extensive than that of older women.

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Acknowledgements

This work would have not been possible to complete without the thoughtful supervision, valuable advice, and continuous encouragement of my supervisor Dr. J.G. Townsend. I would like to give her my deepest gratitude not only for her supervision but also for her kindness in helping my family in many ways, particularly at difficult times.

I would like to acknowledge my second supervisor Dr. P.J. Atkins for his continuous support, advice, and comments to improve the text of the thesis. Dr. N.J. Cox gave much of his valuable time to teach me the programme STATA. I deeply acknowledge his help. My sincere thanks to Mr. A.R. Townsend for his valuable advice at different stages of the work.

During my questionnaire survey Miss Jahanara Hamid (Zinuk) and Miss Firuza Sultana (Rosy) spent much of their valuable time with me. My thanks are due to them for sharing with me the pain and pleasure of the survey. I am most grateful to Dr. Rehnuma Ahmed of Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh for supplying me some valuable literature from her collection.

I should express my acknowledgment to Professor K. Maudood Elahi and Dr. M. Nurul Islam Nazem, both at the Department of Geography, University of Jahangirnagar, Bangladesh for their encouragement. I would like to thank Professor Nazrul Islam and Dr. Shanaz Huq Hussain, both at the Department of Geography, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh for their advice and encouragement. I would also like to thank Mrs Suhara Salim, Mrs Francis Warnell, Mrs Shefina Begum, Mr. Enamul Kabir, Mr. A.Z.M. Shoeb and Mr. Gebril M. Ali for their help at different stages of the work.

I give my sincere acknowledgement to my family for their support and encouragement, particularly to my husband. Finally, I deeply acknowledge the help of my little daughter Maumita and baby son Shefat who suffered greatly during the work.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. General Introduction

The geography of gender has emerged as a discipline over the last 20 years. In the other social sciences, gender has long been considered; but in geography it has been more recently introduced and has had less attention. Boserup (1970), the economist, drew attention to the regional patterns of gender divisions of labour and her work is considered to be a major forerunner to contemporary gender geography (Momsen and Townsend, 1987).

The conceptual distinction between the term 'gender' and 'sex' developed by Ann Oakley (1972) is widely accepted as a useful analytical tool. The term 'sex' is used to refer to biological differences, which are the same anywhere on earth, while the gender identity of men and women in any given society is socially and psychologically constructed and thus varies geographically (Wallace and Candida 1991). Gender studies have now come to the attention of geographers. During the mid and late 1970s, most gender geographical work was concerned with women and their disadvantaged position in many areas of their lives: women's lives and gender relations within the home, in the community and in the work place. And thus these fell into the ambit of social geography (Bowby et al,1989)

Recently, geographers along with sociologists, historians, planners, architects, anthropologists, policy analysts, and environmental psychologists, are contributing to the feminist study of gender in urban environments. The central concerns of the human

geographer can be summarised as the relationship between society and the environment; society and space; and the uniqueness and the interdependence of place. Gender geography is concerned with understanding the relationships between socially constructed gender relations and socially constructed environments (Little *et al.*, 1988) and with the search for improvement. Thus the scope of gender geography is now widely expanded. Gender geographers began more than ten years ago to attempt to understand the basis for, and consequence of, the separation of male and female spheres in cities and the division of public from private activities, and to place an analysis of the changing relationship between domestic and waged labour at the centre of urban theory (WGSG, 1984). As Mackenzie (1989) described, changes in gender roles and definitions of gender have been an insistent force shaping social and economic life over the past two decades and there has been growing recognition that these are issues of fundamental importance to the geographer. Feminist geographers became active in considering social and class inequalities, and access to facilities, as well as becoming interested in the problem of women and development (WGSG, 1984). Gender studies incorporate liberal, socialist and radical feminism; socialist feminism attempts to link gender relations to the wider framework of social relations and radical feminism is heavily concerned with patriarchy.

The geography of gender is expanding its scope in various ways from the different points of view of different scholars. Townsend (1990) argues that there is a great variation at the world-wide, local, regional and national levels in gender roles and relations and that the geographer should know how and what the differences are and how they are changing. To expand theoretical knowledge in gender geography,

McDowell (1983) suggested that gender geography has a vast scope to investigate the construction of gender differences in the particularities of place, and their significance in society (where gender may be seen as a social construction) should be studied with anthropological approaches; there is a mutual interest of the gender geographer and anthropologist in extending their definition of gender and gendered identities. Over the last decade gender geographers have addressed three of the central concepts of the discipline - space, place and nature - and the ways in which these are implicated in the structure of gender divisions in different societies, as well as in the case of nature, itself gendered. In the last 10 years gender geography has moved away from the analysis of gender differences in spatial behaviour and activity patterns towards a concern with the social constitution of gendered beings in particular places.

1.2. Gender and Geography in Bangladesh

Gender is emerging as a significant research area in the essentially androcentric discipline of geography worldwide (Townsend, 1990; Raju, 1993). Most work (Mazey and Lee, 1983; Bondi and Peake, 1988; Mackenzie, 1988; Tivers, 1988; Pickup, 1988 and so on) on this subject has dealt with the spatial behaviour of urban women in industrial countries. Little attention is given to the spatial behaviour of urban and rural women in developing countries. Geographers in Bangladesh have come late to the recognition of gender as a field of study and still a wide gap exists. Women have been invisible to geography in Bangladesh for a long time and are now only beginning to be taken into account in human geography. Some geographers did become concerned about gender but most of their work (Ahsan and Hussain, 1987; Elahi, 1989, 1993) has focused on rural women, whether issues related to work participation, or to women

in their productive and reproductive roles. There is a scarcity of studies of gender in space, particularly in urban areas. Recently a few geographers (Chowdhury and Mili, 1992; Hussain, 1992) have given attention to women's spatial behaviour and changing pattern of activities. Chowdhury and Mili (1992) show how human environments in urban Dhaka are changing with the changing trends of women's occupation over the generations. A major contribution to urban gender geography has been made by Hussain (1992), who examined the causes and consequences of women's migration in urban areas, looking at poverty, living standards and employment prospects and their adoption in the urban environment, and their effects on change in urban socio-economic environments. However, this interest in gender is pursued only by individual scholars rather than as a part of collective efforts to produce a gender perspective on Bangladeshi geography. Gender, as a research field, receives little emphasis at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and no specific course on gender has yet been introduced into geography in Bangladesh.

Currently, the geographers of Bangladesh are giving some attention to women with reference to environmental issues, and the environmental crises in Bangladesh with its persistent floods, cyclones and desertification, particularly in northern and southern region of the country. The seminar on **Women and Environment** (6-8 September, 1991) sponsored by the Bangladesh Geographical Society and **International Seminar on Commercial Activity, Women and Ecology** (24-26 November, 1994) organized by IGUCCA (International Geographical Union Commission on Commercial Activities) and BGS (Bangladesh Geographical Society) Department of Geography, University of Dhaka, may be hoped to be indicators of research directions in future. Besides,

geographers from Bangladesh can also contribute to gender studies on issues of patriarchy and power relations, class, race and ethnicity, like their counterparts in the arts and social sciences. To develop such a new paradigm, both qualitative and quantitative data are highly desirable (Schandorf, 1993). More empirical research at local, regional and national levels by geographers will yield more information, where various categories of women and men in urban and rural settings need to be studied. In order to do this some of the parameters that could be taken into consideration are employment status, gender relations over time (which reflect the changing patterns of occupational structure, settlement patterns, population and family planning), and spatial mobility. The different types of migration and their impact on both women and men, access to the various levels of education and the discrimination against women in the labour market should be studied simultaneously in a geography of gender. The relevant literature from Bangladesh will be discussed in Chapter 2.

1.3. Urban Women in Bangladesh: An Overview

Bangladesh is one of the least urbanized nations of the world. At present, the national level of urbanization is only 15.5 percent (Islam, 1992a), of which a little more than half are women (Chowdhury, 1992). Female labour force participation in urban areas has been increased significantly during last few years. In 1985-86 female civilian labour force (CLF) in urban areas was 0.6 million which has been increased to 2.0 million in 1990 (BBS, 1993).¹ Women, particularly middle-class women, have had less attention by urban planners, policy makers and academics. During the UNITED NATION'S

¹ The lack of conceptual definition of economic activities is misleading and women's labour force participation is grossly under estimated in the Govt. statistics where unpaid family labour bulks large, and is excluded in this statistical enumeration (Khan, 1984; Khuda, 1984).

Decade for Women, from 1975 to 1985, the urban women of Bangladesh became the focus of study for some scholars and for a few research organizations (see Reports of Chaudhury, 1976; Majumdar, 1986, 1992; Islam and Haque, 1992; Ahsan and Ahmad, 1992; Murshid, 1992; Salauddin and Shamim, 1992).

The social stratification in urban Bangladesh is classified into working-class and middle-class by Jahan (1975). Salahuddin (1990) has categorized urban women into lower/lower middle class, middle/upper middle class, and upper class on the basis of their family income. Islam (1979) distinguished three structural units based on income level: upper, middle and lower. The social classification of urban women is a very complicated task because many social and economic factors must be considered. Most discourses on urban women classify them on the basis of income and property status into three broad classes such as lower class, middle class, and upper class.

1.3.i. Lower Class Urban Women

Many urban, lower class, poor women have migrated from rural areas. Rural poverty, landlessness, and unemployment on the one hand and scope for survival in the towns on the other hand are the main causes of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh (Salahuddin and Shamin, 1992; Hussain, 1992). These women live in the slums or in rented accommodation in very poor conditions where urban facilities like water supply, gas, electricity, transport etc are grossly inadequate. The present rapid urbanization process creates a new movement pattern for lower class women who now move around the city for different types of income-earning activities. Most are illiterate, unskilled and not able to work in the formal sector. They are mostly engaged in informal

activities, predominantly as domestic servants and as brick crushers in construction work (Hussain, 1995). A World Bank report of 1981 (cited in Salahuddin, 1990) showed that in Dhaka City 65% of all income earning activities were in the informal sector. Recently a large number of lower-class, less educated, semi-skilled women, especially in Dhaka and Chittagong, have entered some formal job sectors like garment manufacturing, pharmaceutical, electronics, and fish processing (Mahmud and Hamid, 1990; Salahuddin, 1990; Islam and Haque, 1992; Saleheen and Jahan, 1992). In Dhaka City, 90% of the workers in garment factories are women (Salahuddin, 1990).

From early childhood a female child receives discriminatory treatment and is considered less precious than her brothers. The girls in these families get very little support for education. Because of poverty, many school-age girls drop out at school and start working at an early age as their mother's helping hands. The age at first marriage of poor girls is fifteen to sixteen (Salahuddin, 1990; Khan, 1988). Many women in these groups are the victims of dowry and, because of the problems associated with this, domestic violence, divorce, separation, and remarriage are very common (Rashid, 1992). Women-headed de-jure households are common due to the high divorce rate and as a consequence of early marriage and widowhood. In Dhaka City 17% of the urban households of this class are women-headed (Hussain, 1992). Women of this class exercise *purdah*¹ though not as strictly as their rural counterparts. On the one hand

¹ *Purdah* literally means curtain or veil- a symbolic characteristic of Islamic norms. Papanek (1973) notes that *purdah*, in its most complete and extreme form, has two dimensions: physical segregation of living space and concealment of the female face and body. To fulfil the principle of *purdah*, segregation of living space is achieved by setting aside an area of the home compound for women and by reserving a closed portion of public meeting places and facilities for them. Concealment of the face and body, when it is necessary for a woman to leave the home, can be provided by the portable seclusion of a *burqa* or concealing cloak, a garment that totally covers the woman from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet, with slits through which she can see.

the urban social environment in Bangladesh has no orthodox practice of *purdah*, and on the other hand being poor they cannot observe it. Women exercise *purdah* by covering their heads with a corner of their saris, which is all they can afford.

The activity space of these women is wide but they cannot afford the cost of public transport. Almost 80% of them move on foot and all female household heads walk to their work place (DITS, 1994). The life patterns of urban, lower class women are very complicated and tragic. They work hard, have no leisure, and live in a very unhygienic environment. This class of women in the urban areas sustains many unchanged rural socio-cultural forms of behaviour. Conceptualizations of the traditional role of women remain very strong among them even though they are working outside the home for their survival, which would not be acceptable in rural areas.

1.3.ii. Middle Class Urban Women

The middle -class constitutes nearly 40% of the population of Dhaka City (Islam, 1992a). Women of this social class are much better off than the earlier class in terms of their socio-economic status. Most of them are formally well educated, and get similar rights and scope for jobs as their male counterparts. They are now increasingly involved in the job market, in both the private and public sectors. Because of their more advanced education, better scope for jobs, and the influence of western culture, their life style is changing very fast.

The observance of *purdah* is a sacred duty of Muslim women as it is sanctioned by their religion. But *purdah* is more relaxed for a young woman when she lives in the

parental home where she has less restriction on mobility and less household work to do (Chaudhury and Ahmed, 1980). Traditionally most marriages are arranged by the family but now this tradition is changing slowly. The choice of a marriage partner is now increasing among the younger generation of this group of women, though the majority still prefer arranged marriages. After marriage the woman has to move from her parental home and her status then changes from a daughter to a daughter-in-law, and subsequently, and most significantly, to that of a mother (Elahi, 1989). The ideology is that the prime role of women is motherhood and being a good housewife, and many urban women with higher education remain as housewives while some women of this class still do not even like to see men doing household work. The discrimination in gender roles which is perpetuated by the attitude of both men and women is still present in the family or in the society though women have in law had for some time the same educational and employment status. As a result, men's participation in domestic work is largely casual and sporadic (Standing and Bandopadhyaya, 1985; Majumdar, 1986).

Children from middle-class families usually have no gender discrimination in their education or their activities in public space. But at home parents give toys such as cooking devices, dolls, etc to their daughters and a ball, gun, racket etc to their sons. Therefore from childhood the gender role and activities are practised through playing with toys. After the attainment of puberty girls are no longer allowed to play with the boys and their outdoor movement and activities are then regulated by their parents. Girls try to perform the traditional feminine roles and in practice the social segregation between sexes begins then.

One home economic college in Dhaka is only for female students and most of them come from middle-class families. This college mainly teaches good house-keeping, knitting, sewing, food and nutrition, cookery and bakery which is an indication of the female role in the existing society. Negative attitudes towards women's roles in productive work and the patriarchal family structure also demonstrate the division of labour between the two sexes. Men are responsible for providing for the family and are engaged in income earning activities in the outside world, while women are more likely to do household activities even when they are working outside, earning as much income as men (Paul, 1992; Majumder, 1986, 1988). The situation of middle-class urban women is not very different from this stereotype. Majumder (1986, 1988, 1992) shows that the middle-class women of Dhaka City who are working outside the home have to maintain double responsibilities as a wife and mother in the family and official responsibilities at the office. By the long-term patriarchal social structure, private space is seen as for the women and public space for men (Khan, 1985; Kabeer, 1988, Paul, 1992), and urban middle-class women are more likely to spend most of their time within the home and its kin-based extensions (Adnan, 1988). Urban social space in Bangladesh is not very rigidly divided along gender lines, and crossing the line is not prohibited, unlike in other Muslim societies. But the size of female space varies regionally and the accessibility of urban services in Bangladesh differs in the context of socio-economic conditions and the practice of *purdah*. Chittagong, the second largest urban centre of the country, and Noakhali, are considered the most conservative urban areas of Bangladesh, and women are more likely to observe *purdah* there. The opposite picture can be observed in the other metropolitan cities, such as Rajshahi and Khulna, and especially Dhaka (Paul, 1992). Over the last two decades an increasing number of

urban, married and unmarried, educated women are working outside their homes and expanding their social space as well as their activity space to equate to that of their male counterparts, and they are becoming more visible in urban space. Some women are now breaking purdah as well as their traditional feminine roles and activities in society (Salahuddin, 1990; Mahmud and Hamid, 1990; Adnan, 1988).

Urban middle class women are subject to two opposite trends. One is Bengali tradition and culture and the other is Islamic principles and norms. Most of them encourage their children to learn modern arts, songs, dance, drama etc which are not supported in Islam; but at the same time they like to teach their children the Islamic principles and norms. Naila Kabeer (1989) used the term "**Bengali Muslim Women**" for them. The middle class is the most dominant group in the urban environment. Many women politicians, leaders of women's movements and organizations, poets, artists, authors, and social workers come from the urban middle class (Salahuddin, 1990; Rashid, 1992).

1.3.iii. Upper Class Urban Women

The women of this class are fewer in number. They adhere to the so called "western modern life style" and they, therefore, do not reflect the social and cultural status of the Bengali women of the country. In most cases they are the wives of rich business men or other urban elites. Though they are living comfortably, many of them are victims of gender oppression such as mental persecution (Rashid, 1992). They are not actively involved in economic activities on a large scale. Only a few are engaged in business and have big share holdings. Most like to spend some time outside the country

and do occasional shopping abroad. Their mobility is much higher than that of middle-class women, and for those who are voluntary workers their activity space is becoming wide. They exercise freedom in their movements but with due respect to their husband (Islam, 1979). But they have a great influence on policy and decision-making by using their social and political networks as the wives of the elite class.

1.4. Dhaka and Durham

The author has not conducted any research in Durham, but it may help English readers if she makes a subjective comparison of gender and activity space in Durham and Dhaka. In Durham, at certain times of day, certain spaces are dominated by women and children. In Dhaka, this would only be in modern "shopping centres", and only on Thursday afternoon to evening, or on Friday. (After dark, the shops would be open, but women would only be there if accompanied by a husband or male relative.) In Dhaka, as in Durham, women would take their children out shopping to give them the variety-but not usually very young children, as there are no baby-changing facilities. The family outing is the easiest, as both parents can keep an eye on the children. Various factors interplay here: if children must be taken to a doctor for a check-up, an educated mother will often take them, but in an uneducated family she will be unable to cope and it will be the father. If the child is seriously ill, perhaps with a fever, both parents will go.

In Durham, women are often seen in public space alone or with other women. Women in Dhaka often prefer to be accompanied by their husband, male relatives or family. Public spaces in Dhaka are more commonly male-dominated, and we shall see that middle-income women fear harassment and worse except in purpose-built shopping

centres. There are no recreational spaces for women or children; men may gossip at roadside tea stalls, but women do not, and there are no tea-rooms or equivalents to cafes where women can go. There are, of course, no pubs. There are parks, but women do not go there without men; it would not be acceptable and they would be at risk of harassment. Again, at weekends and in the evening, many middle-class women will go to the theatre, possibly in groups of women, usually women and men. The most popular theatre hall is the 'auditorium' of the Ladies' Club (attended by men and women) where the theatre groups of Dhaka commonly perform their plays. Cinemas, on the other hand, tend to have a lower-class attendance and to show "sex-and-violence" films; many are unacceptable to the middle class. When institutions such as the British Council Library or Public Library show good documentaries, middle-class educated women will attend with their husbands. To borrow books, middle-class women do use libraries in the daytime, and most university students will use the British Council and Public Library, which have the best collections of literature.

Transport is a limitation for women. Most, even in the middle-class, walk or use rickshaws, when women in Durham might feel safe in using a car. As we shall see, women in rickshaws or walking are vulnerable to insult and assault. It is usually the father or the brother who takes the children to school, although some housewives do so.

We see that public spaces in Dhaka hold few attractions for women alone, unless they have a specific objective such as shopping (in a centre) or a library. After dark, it is not usual for middle-class women to go out alone; even for working-class women, it is new that women travel to and from garment factories alone after dark. Bangladeshi men

prefer that women in their families do not go out after dark without a male escort, as it is not safe.

There are some occasional events for which middle-class women do go out, to celebrate in a restaurant, for instance, some family occasion such as a wedding (since about ten years ago, it has become fashionable to hold the ceremony in the restaurant or community centre), or even to celebrate a new job. These are family events attended with other members of the family. Religious holidays may also take women out, but not usually alone. Public space in Dhaka is enjoyed by women with their families.

Chapter 2: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1. Introduction

It has been argued above that gender, as a geographical study, is still in its early stage of development in Bangladesh. The scarcity of income-based geographical studies of urban women indicates a research gap to be filled. The present study examines the activity space of middle-income women in Dhaka City, with an exploration of spatio-temporal changes. Such research may be considered as a scientific approach to the study of gender. This chapter will discuss the methodology of the study under the following headings:

Objectives

Defining 'middle-income' groups

Methodology

Methods

Significance

Literature Review

Dhaka City: An Introduction

Study Area: A Brief Account

Limitations of the Study

Organization of the Thesis

2.2. Objectives

The present study focuses on the varying activity spaces of middle-income, urban women in three areas of Dhaka city. The specific objectives of the study are as

follows;-

- i. to explore activity patterns in three age-groups of women: under 30 years, 30-50 years, and over 50 years old,**
- ii. to study the social pattern of these women's involvement in the labour market and family income,**
- iii. to examine the gender relations of these women in public and the private space, and**
- iv. to investigate temporal changes in the activity spaces of these three groups of women.**

2.3. Defining 'Middle-income' Groups

Income distributions in Bangladesh have already been studied and some work has explored both rural and urban distributions (Bergan, 1976; BBS, 1988; Osmani and Rahman, 1986). According to the World Development Report (1994), Bangladesh is a low income group country where the GNP per capita is only \$ 220 and ppp (purchasing power parity) estimated of GNP only 5.3 (Per capita income /total population). There is a considerable disparity of income distribution between rural and urban areas; the per capita income of urban and rural areas was estimated at Tk 7420¹ and Tk 4969 respectively (BBS, 1988); the former was about 49% higher than the latter. The non-agricultural sector, both private and public, plays a predominant role in this unequal income distribution (Osmani and Rahman, 1986) and the population of urban areas is of course mostly engaged in this sector. According to the official figures 276,253 of the female labour force were engaged in this sector in 1986 (BBS, 1991).

Income distribution is highly unequal within urban areas, particularly in Dhaka City,

¹ In 1995, 60 Bangladeshi Taka are equivalent to 1 £ in U.K

(Islam, 1992b) where there is inequality in wages and salaries in paid work in the public and private sectors. Even within manual work, in the private sector there are a number of industries with a significant investment by multi-national companies, where wage rates for all skilled categories are several times higher than in comparable public or domestic units (Murshid and Sobhan, 1987). The cost of living has also changed in urban areas. Though there is no recent data on this, in 1974 Alamgir and Berlage showed that the cost of living for middle class families in the four major cities, Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Narayanganj, had increased by about four times between 1969/70 and 1974/75. Osmani and Rhaman (1986) found that the cost of living index of Government employees was 3.8 times higher in 1976/77 as compared to 1969/70. This squeezed the salaried classes on fixed incomes, while self-employed people more or less maintained their position by keeping up the price of goods and services.

It is difficult to identify income groups in Dhaka, taking into account these contrasts between private and public sectors together with those of agricultural or non-agricultural wages and salaries and the other factors mentioned. DITS (1994) classified income groups, but only considered the household income. No exact definition exists of personal/individual income groups in urban or rural areas. It is therefore problematic to define "middle-income" groups in Dhaka City.

The Household Expenditure Survey (HES) of Bangladesh for 1985/86 and the other surveys mentioned above are ten years old and in recent years there is a lack of studies on urban income distributions. Given national economic growth, it is possible that there has been a considerable shift of per-capita income from lower to higher levels, and in

urban areas this shift might be higher than rural areas. Dhaka City is characterized by a large number of all types of livelihood, full-time or part-time, opportunities to hold more than one job, more chance of self employment, etc.; Dhaka City is the urban centre of Bangladesh with the highest rate of population growth (Islam, 1992b). It can, therefore, be expected that the rate of individual income increase in Dhaka is greater than in any other urban area of the country.

Taking these considerations into account, we may attempt to give an operational definition of the "middle-income" groups of Dhaka City. The basic salary scale for Government Gazetted Officers of the fifth grade starts from Tk 2850 per month and, including all other peripheral benefits such as rent, medical insurance, etc., the total is around Tk 4000 per month. The equivalent salary range in the private sector varies considerably, from around Tk 6000 to even Tk 15000 per month. Therefore, the monthly income range of Tk 4000 to Tk 15000 will be taken as the "middle-income" range in Dhaka City for the purpose of this research. The monthly income of self employed people is highly variable. Income from personal assets is excluded from this definition. The term 'middle income group' does not necessarily mean 'middle class group', the definition of which is a separate task.

2.4. Methodology

The present study is empirical in approach and its nature is exploratory. Any social research can try to answer two fundamental questions about society. The first one is, 'what is happening?', which can be descriptive and secondly, 'why is it happening?'. This can be answered in an explanatory fashion (de Vaus, 1994). According to de Vaus,

qualitative social research should focus on both descriptive and explanatory methodologies. This type of research could be conducted with deductive methods, where hypotheses are used to test the pre-theories and another is the inductive method, with no hypothesis or pre-assumption (Harvey, 1976). The present study is a kind of social research where the activity space of middle-income women in the three age groups has been studied by descriptive and explanatory methods of inductive analysis.

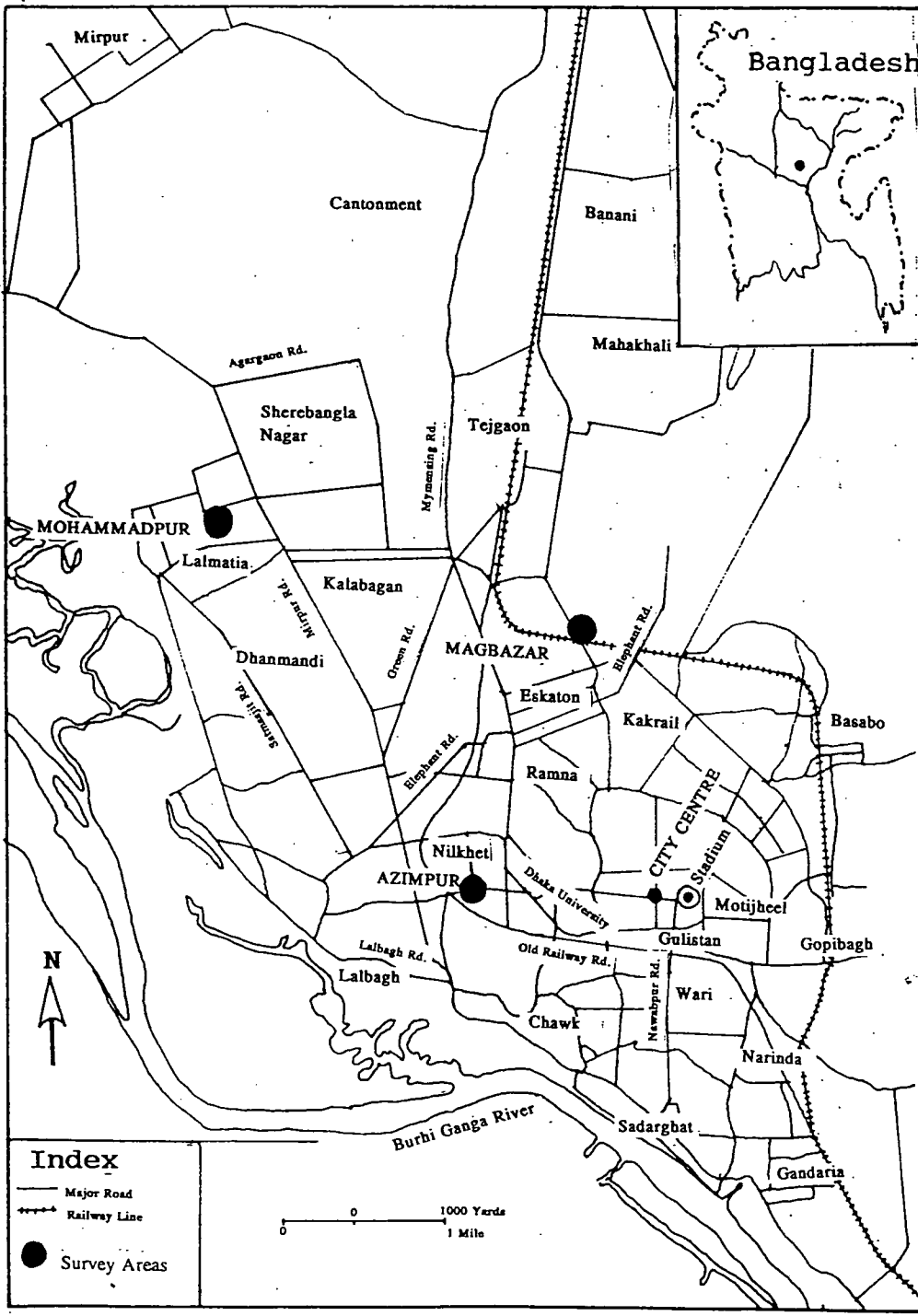
2.5. Methods

The present study is primarily based on empirical, interview data collected from two surveys which will now be described.

2.5.i. Reconnaissance Survey

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh and its largest metropolitan area, has little segregation of residence by social group. Each area includes a mixture of population from all classes and income groups; the only exceptions are some contemporary residential areas in new Dhaka occupied almost exclusively by upper class residents. It is, therefore, difficult to define areas where only middle-income women live.

Some parts of the city, like Gandaria, Azimpur, Kamalapur of south and old Dhaka; Maghbazar, Malibagh, Kalabagan, Hatirpul of middle and newer Dhaka; and Mohammadpur, Tejgoan, Mirpur and Rampura of north and new Dhaka are popularly known as having concentrations of middle-income families (Fig. 2.1). In order to identify suitable areas for this study, a reconnaissance survey was conducted in all the above areas by the researcher. This reconnaissance included a few preliminary



2.1. Dhaka City showing Survey Areas

questionnaire interviews, discussion with local residents and key informants, and personal observation. Finally, three areas - Azimpur, Maghbazar and Mohammadpur - were selected for detailed study for the following reasons:-

1. Azimpur represents the southern and old part of Dhaka, Maghbazar and Mohammadpur represents middle and newer, and relatively northern and new part of the city respectively.

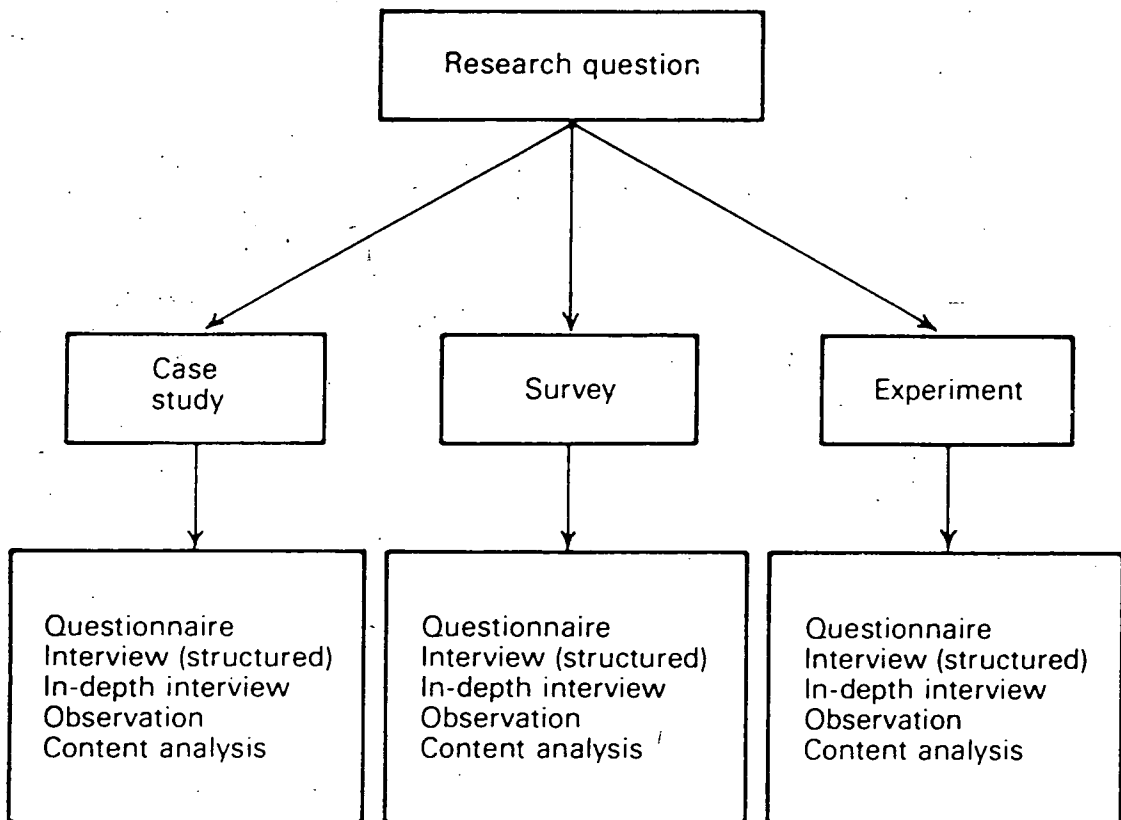
2. Greater concentrations of middle-income women were found from the reconnaissance in these areas.

3. All these areas were convenient to the researcher for detailed questionnaire survey, in terms of her personal security, and frequent and easy transport services.

2.5.ii. Questionnaire Survey

'Survey' is not synonymous with a particular technique of collecting information. Questionnaires are widely used but other techniques such as structured and in-depth interviews, observations and content analysis are also appropriate. The distinguishing feature of surveys are the form of data collection and the methods of analysis (de Vaus, 1994). The primary method of the present study is a questionnaire survey, with in-depth interviews and observations. de Vaus has a model of the range of research and techniques of data collection and this is shown in Figure 2.2.

The detailed questionnaire survey was conducted in these three areas. A questionnaire



2.2. de Vaus's Model of the Range of Research and Techniques of Data Collection

with more than 100 questions was employed (Appendix 1). In each area women were selected for interviewing from three groups: single women of under 30 years of age; married women from 30 to 50; and married women over 50. The interviewees were selected by calling at houses in each area and interviewing the women who were found to be aged over twenty and in employment. This might be just one woman in the household, or, at the other extreme, it was three women: two sisters and their brother's wife, all of whom went out to work. No woman refused to answer. More women (30) were found between 30 and 50 than under 30 (27), and very few (18) were over 50. The three age groups are central to the thesis and need some explanation.

All the respondents of the first group were selected from unmarried women. The age boundary of 30 was chosen after consideration of the following points. A report of the Bangladesh Civil Service Commission (1986) shows that the average age of unmarried women in the Civil Service, by definition within the middle income group, is 28.6 years. The maximum age, currently in Bangladesh, to apply for any public service is 30 years and nowadays highly educated young women like to remain unmarried until they can secure a suitable job, as found from the reconnaissance. Besides, a BIDS report (Majumdar, 1992) shows that the average age of first marriage of urban women is increasing; 85% of urban unmarried employed women belong to the age group 20-29 years, which is also supported by the reconnaissance survey. Considering all these points, the under 30 age group was chosen. This group is considered here to be the present generation. The second division of age at 30 to 50 was decided upon to consider the second generation; and the third group's age of 50 and over is assumed here to be older generation. The three age groups have been considered in the study for observing

the changing patterns of their livelihoods. But the number of 50 over women in middle income group is small.

Seventy-five women were interviewed in this way; twenty-five from each sample area. Out of these twenty-five, nine from the under 30 age group, ten from the 30 to 50 age group, and six from the over 50 age group were interviewed in each area (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1:
Questionnaire and Case studies Survey by Area and Age Group.

Age groups Areas	under 30	30-50	over 50
Azimpur	9 1 Case history	10 1 Case history	6 1 Case history
Mohammadpur	9	10 1 Case history	6 1 Case history
Maghbazar	9 1 Case history	10	6
Total	27 2 Case histories	30 2 Case histories	18 2 Case histories

2.5.iii. Case Studies

The technique of in-depth interviews, where case histories are recorded, has been successfully applied in much social research. This technique was attempted for the present research, but with great caution. First, difficulties were encountered by the researcher when she attempted to use a tape recorder for this purpose. Most respondents interviewed proved reluctant to disclose their private lives to a stranger. Despite these constraints, the researcher sought to establish a good personal relationship within the

limited time of each interview and to collect as much information as possible through informal conversation. The individual case history was then reconstructed. Six case stories are presented below, drawn from all groups of women (Chapter 7).

2.5.iv. Secondary Sources of Data

Besides the primary data, collected by the researcher, various types of secondary data sources were also used. All possible published reports, statistical year books, government gazettes, government survey reports, newspapers, and journal articles were collected and consulted.

2.5.v. Computing

All collected data has been statistically analyzed by using the program **STATA**. The program is very powerful and convenient to use in producing various kinds of tables, cross-tabulations, graphs, correlations and different types of statistical tests.

2.6. Significance

Among developing countries, Bangladesh is distinctive in the emphasis which has been given in studies of women to two issues. One is the disadvantaged position of rural women and other is lower class urban working women and their life patterns. Most such studies have been done as part of Government or NGO projects, both national and foreign, with the aim of improving the women's welfare or livelihoods. Yet gender roles, relations and change are obviously of equal importance to all groups of women irrespective of class or place of residence. Non-poor urban women have always been left out of research and the specific issue of the activity space of middle-income women

is still unexplored. But recently a few feminist scholars have given attention to urban middle class women [such as Ahmed (1995) from the anthropological point of view], and the class, kinship and gender of urban middle-class women. Therefore, an attempt to explore the life patterns and activity spaces, both private and public, of middle-income women in Dhaka City is both necessary and timely.

A small number of studies (Chaudhury, 1976; Adnan, 1988; Salauddin, 1990; Islam, 1979) indicate that women's activities are changing over time and space; but the numerical data are weak and there is still a need for a thorough investigation as to the extent and direction of change, and the groups of women most affected by change. Working women, whether part-time or full-time, formal or informal, must as part of their duties go out of their homes and use public spaces. On the other hand, as part of their traditional role as wife and/or mother they have to work within their private space. How they are coping with these two spaces at the same time, in a traditional, muslim-dominated society, at the same time, is of great interest to geographers. It is, therefore, of significant importance to explore these research questions and the present research is an attempt in that direction.

2.7. Literature Review

Much literature has been reviewed for this study and only the most important will now be discussed.

2.7.i. Gender Research in Geography

The conceptual framework of gender studies has been developed and theorized in the

West by social scientists (WGSG, 1984; Bowlby *et al*, 1989; Mackenzie, 1989; Walby, 1990, 1994; McDowell, 1983; Moser, 1989). The regional variation of gender roles, relations and activities outside the West has been studied in geography with a series of empirical investigations from different parts of the world (Momsen and Townsend, 1987; Townsend 1990; Momsen and Kinnaird, 1992). From India Agarwal (1994) has discussed and analyzed in theoretical ways the gender inequality and command over property in South-east Asia, where there is a complex range of factors associated with these inequalities. To overcome this she discussed some policies and action which should be considered by the state.

2.7.ii. Women Studies in Bangladesh

There is a relatively small body of literature documenting urban and rural women in Bangladesh, their socio-economic status, "women in development" programmes, women's changing experiences, and the ways in which their disadvantaged position in society has been produced by long term social norms and institutions in a patriarchal society (Khan, 1984, 1988, 1990; Hussain 1989; Kabeer, 1988; Chaudhury and Ahmed, 1980; Islam, 1979; Adnan, 1988; Jahan 1975, 1989; Mannan, 1989). Schaffer (1986) postulated women's works and employment status in both urban and rural Bangladesh.

2.7.iii. Gender and Urban Research in South Asia

In Bangladesh, gender has long been absent from studies of the urban landscape. A little research has been carried out on urban women by BIDS and by individual academic researchers into the constraints on women's labour force participation, the dual role of married women and their adjustment to these newly acquired activities in public space

(Chaudhury, 1976, 1979; Salahuddin and Shamin, 1992; Majumder, 1986, 1988, 1992). Urban women in India in different classes, their labour force participation, gender division of labour in household activities and gender relations have been studied from anthropo-sociological points of views (eg Standing and Bandopadhyaya, 1985; Sharma, 1984, 1985). Harries and Watson (1987) demonstrated both how gender permeates society and economy and how specific the outcome may be by locality, cast or class in south Asia.

All of these studies on women and their socio-economic status, by feminist sociologists and economists using a similar conceptual framework, have linked the specific form of the sexual division of labour to women's position in the labour market and its causes.

2.7.iv. Gender: Work, Place, Space and Mobility

In Bangladesh, studies on women's spatial activities, the gender division of space and its changing patterns have long been neglected and gender studies in urban areas have until recently had little attention. Equally, very few geographers worked with women's traditional and changing activity spaces and mobility patterns in rural areas (Paul, 1992; Mahbub, 1992). But very recently, urban women in all classes have been the focus of attention by a few researchers in terms of their spatial behaviour, their accessibility to urban services and the impact of changing socio-economic conditions (Hussain, 1992; Chowdhury and Mili, 1992).

In western capitalist cities, women in urban landscapes have been well documented by an explosion of publications documenting women's unequal access to urban goods and

services, the constraints on women's spatial behaviour, their use of transport facilities, access to child care, shopping behaviour, spatial and temporal activity patterns (McDowell, 1983; Oliver, 1988; Mazey and Lee 1983; Tivers, 1988; Pickup 1988; Bowlby, 1990; Pratt and Hanson, 1988; Townsend, 1994; Stratigaki & Vaiou, 1994). Gender divisions of space are common in many societies and a group of anthropologists have shown that the patterning of space by gender and the restriction of women to private domains is a feature of rural and urban, capitalist and socialist societies (Ardener, 1993). Hemmasi (1994) has shown that the spatial mobility in Iran is gender based. He found that Iranian women do not travel alone and their migration decisions are associational, mostly with their husbands, rather than autonomous in type and, consequently, movement patterns by migration are similar for men and women with similar directions of flow.

2.8. Dhaka City: An Introduction

Dhaka SMA (Statistical Metropolitan Area), the largest single urban concentration in the country, is located close to the centre of the country and is relatively accessible to the rest of the urban system (Fig 2.1). The total area of Dhaka Standard Metropolitan Area (SMA) is 400 sq km (BBS, 1991). Dhaka City is a part of Dhaka SMA and has primacy not only in terms of its share of urban population but also in terms of its share in industries, commerce, administration, employment, finance, business, services, educational, and cultural institutions. Dhaka alone holds about 25% of the total urban population of Bangladesh (Islam, 1992c). All these make Dhaka a diversified city.

Hussain (1992) divided the historical growth of the city into five distinct periods; (i)

Pre Mughal period (before 1608), (ii) Mughal period (1608- 1764), (iii) British period (1764-1947), (iv) Pakistan period (1947-1971), and (v) Bangladesh period (since 1971). After 1947 the city, as the provincial capital, expanded rapidly, in both population and area. Growth accelerated during the Bangladesh period, now as the capital of a sovereign country. In the 1991 census, the total population of the city was 6 million and the sex ratio was 126.15 males to 100 females (BBS, 1991). Dhaka is now regarded as a mega city (Islam, 1992a). The population of Dhaka City is projected to be 9 million by 2000, 15 million by 2010 and over 25 million by 2025 (Islam, 1992c).

The city enjoys a fairly equable tropical monsoon climate, with an average temperature of 26° C and an average annual rainfall of 1970 mm (BBS, 1985). It may be noted that the households in this survey would have electric fans for cooling, but could not afford air-conditioning.

Dhaka Metropolitan Authority has divided the city into 75 municipal wards within 12 *thanas* for administrative purposes. The household survey for this research was confined to three localities, Azimpur, Mohammadpur, and Maghbazar (Fig. 2.1) within the Lalbagh *thana*, Mohammadpur *thana*, and Ramna *thana* respectively; the three localities include 5 wards.

2.9. Study Areas: A Brief Account

Data was collected in three areas, as mentioned above, of Dhaka city. These areas were selected by purposive sampling, taking into consideration their location, distance, type of settlement, variation in employment opportunities and the residential

concentration of middle-income women.

The reason for choosing Dhaka, the capital and the largest city of the country, as the study area, is that the phenomenon of recent socio-cultural change was first seen in this city and obviously influences the urban women. Modernization and western ideologies require urban women to reject or restructure society's traditional values. The women of Dhaka City have gone further down this road than women in other parts of the country, and were the pioneers in entering the paid labour force, breaking their traditional views in search of better standards of living. The finest muslin of exquisite delicacy produced during the Mughal period still remains a matter of wonder and in this sector, the texture and the design of the muslin were mainly contributed by the female labour force of Dhaka (Salahuddin, 1990). Since then, women's participation in the paid labour force in Dhaka has been higher than in any other part of the country.

2.9.i. Area one: Azimpur

Azimpur is located in the south-west of the city (Fig.2.1) within Lalbagh *thana*. First, government residential accommodation was built for workers in government service in Azimpur in 1949 (Azad, 1989) and later this government residential area was expanded. Most residents have long been classified as urban middle class (Azad, 1989) and the location offers high order urban services. Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Dhaka University and other educational institutes, the Central New Market, many offices, and other activities are in the vicinity. The survey was conducted wholly in government residential accommodation, all dwellings being flats. These are in buildings of two to four storeys, flats usually having two bedrooms and a small balcony and being grouped

into units of about four to eight flats; the roof is not used. All streets are surfaced in Azimpur.

2.9.ii. Area two: Mohammadpur

Mohammadpur is located in the west of the city (Fig. 2.1). It covers a much larger area and is much more diverse. The survey was conducted at sites such as Lalmatia, the Physical College, Asad Avenue, Tajmohal Road, and the Residential Model College areas of Mohammadpur. Before 1971 Mohammadpur was mostly occupied by Biharis, the Urdu-speaking Pakistani community; since liberation the residents have been mainly middle-class migrants from many parts of the country (Azad, 1989). The area is also characterized by a number of slum dwellers, as in many other parts of the city. In Lalmatia and Asad Avenue there are owner-occupied houses of two storeys with some tenants. Tajmohal Road and the Residential Model College area have both flats and owner-occupiers, while the Physical College area has government flats, which may be sublet to business and other non-government workers. Not all roads are surfaced.

Table 2.2:
Basic Statistics for Lalbagh, Mohammadpur and Maghbazar Thanas, Dhaka City.

Thana	House-holds	P o p u l a t i o n			Literacy Rate (over 5)			Married Women (15-44)
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
Lalbagh	43676	278760	160839	117921	45.3	52.3	35.2	40247
Moham-madpur	39074	232817	131294	101523	51.6	57.8	43.2	34996
Ramna	15122	111206	73914	37292	65.7	71.8	52.9	12993

Source: BBS, 1985

2.9.iii. Area three: Maghbazar

Maghbazar lies in the middle of the city (Fig. 2.1) within Ramna *thana*. This is the smallest of the three areas, both in population size and in household numbers (table 2.1). Although traditionally considered as predominantly middle-class, it may now be characterized as mixed as there many upper class families as well as many poor. The area is still dominated by middle class people. Flats and owner-occupiers are both found.

2.10. Limitations of the Study

While conducting the study, the researcher has encountered certain limitations which are as follows.

Defining the middle-income group should be based on complex calculations of various economic indices. The operational definition of middle-income group used in this research will have limitations and may not be totally acceptable to other scholars.

The acquisition of private information from respondents may be a really difficult task in a traditional society. No one allowed the researcher to use the tape recorder, as remarked earlier. The individual case histories used here may also have limitations.

The questionnaire survey was conducted during the Holy month of Ramadan in 1994 when most respondents were reluctant to spend time talking. Many said, "I am fasting and tired, better come another day after Ramadan", although none refused.

There are no Government statistics available on women's employment or educational

status or on urban women's socio-economic condition. Also, published data in one report does not always agree with other reports.

Finally, any generalization on middle-income women based on only 75 questionnaires cannot be a final statement on the real features of their lives. The problem of constraints of time and expense need hardly be mentioned. This also led to the selection of working women; it was felt that to consider housewives as well as working women would require a larger sample.

Despite the above limitations of this study, the researcher hopes that the study will provide a new direction to gender research in Bangladesh, and that more and more geographers will come forward to explore the field.

2.11. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis contains nine chapters in three sections; section one (chapters 1 & 2) includes the background information, section two (chapters 3 to 7) covers the data and their analysis, and section three (chapters 8 & 9) reviews the results. A summary of factual findings may be found in Appendix 3.

Women's overall position and the current level of gender research in Bangladesh have been explained in chapter 1. In chapter 2, the objectives and methodology of the research have been discussed. A brief account of the literature consulted has also been given in this chapter.

Some demographic characteristics and the socio-economic characteristics of the women studied will be discussed in chapter 3 and in chapter 4 respectively. In chapter 5, the nature and the characteristics of different types of women's activities in both private and public space will be discussed. The migration pattern, and the mobility of a middle-income woman at her different stages of life will be explored in chapter 6. Six case histories, two from each age-group studied, will be reported in chapter 7.

Chapter 8 will examine the overall changes in women's position and activity space over time. Chapter 9 will include the conclusion of the thesis.

Chapter 3: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

3.1. Introduction

The position of women in every cultural setting is strongly affected by a number of factors. Demographic characteristics such as dependency-ratios, age at marriage, and family size are important to women's position in society. In this section, selected demographic characteristics of the middle-income women studied in Dhaka city will be discussed under the following headings:

Mean Age of Respondents

Age at First Marriage

Marital Status

Household Size

Age of the Youngest Child

Relation to the Household Head

Household Types of Respondents

Conclusion

3.2. Mean Age of Respondents

As has been stated, the survey was of three specific age groups of working women, 1) 27 women under 30 years of age and unmarried, 2) 30 women from 30 to 50 and married, 3) 18 women over 50 and married; there will therefore be no discussion of the age distribution of respondents, but the mean ages are reported.

Table 3.1:**Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Demographic Characteristics	< 30 age group	30-50 age group	> 50 age group	All age groups
Mean Age	26.03	34.96	53.05	36.09
Mean Age at 1st Marriage	n/a	21.93	17.55	20.29
Average Household Size	5.15	4.00	3.88	4.43
Mean Age of Youngest Child	n/a	6.33	17.00	10.6

n: 75 * including non-resident members, n/a=not applicable

3.3. Age at First Marriage

Mean age at first marriage in this study varies with the woman's age, and is now higher than the national age of 18.2 years in 1991 (BBS, 1993). The rise of four years in the mean age at marriage, from 17.6 for the over fifties to 22 years for those aged 30-50 clearly supports the view that the mean age of marriage has increased. Currently, women are marrying later in Bangladesh, particularly in the urban areas; the impact of the urban social environment is attributed to the joint effect of education and modern life-style. In urban areas of Bangladesh, more women are educated and their lives are competitive while family support to marriage is less easily forthcoming than in rural areas (Chaudhury and Ahmed, 1980). Age at first marriage affects women's potential fertility (Chaudhury and Ahmed, 1980) so that there may be consequences for household size (section 3.5).

3.4. Marital Status

The marital status of the married women in this study differs from the national pattern. Nationally, divorces among women aged from 20 to 34 increased from 97,000 in 1974 to 190,000 in 1981 (BBS, 1991) but not a single divorced woman was found in the present study. All the 6 widows were over 50. The women studied have more marital stability than the national average, which may be related to their middle-income status. It may be that this group of women use all means to seek to adjust and continue their marital relation in a patriarchal society where a divorced woman is not easily accepted.

Table 3.2:
Marital Status of Married Respondents

Age group	Married %	Widowed %	Total %
30-50	(40.00) 62.5	0	(40.00) 62.5
> 50	(17.33) 27.08	(6.67) 10.42	(24.00) 37.5
Total n=48	(57.33) 89.58	(6.67) 10.42	(86.00) 100.00

() = % of sample, **bold** = % of total married women.

3.5. Household Size

In urban Bangladesh, the average family size is a good indicator of dependency ratios and socio-cultural status. The average household size (4.43) of all three groups of women studied (table 3.1) is smaller than both the national average (5.6) (BBS, 1993) and the average of 5.32 for the Dhaka Statistical Metropolitan Area (BBS, 1991), probably reflecting their urban, middle-income character. Chaudhury (1976) reported that, in Dhaka City, the household size of a half of all working women was 6 or more.

In the present study only one out of the 75, (3.11% of households) has 6 or more members, probably again because the respondents are of middle income.

In this study, the households of these urban, educated, married women under 50 are smaller than those of over 50. Nationally, the younger generations and career women usually have fewer children and planned families appear to be accepted (Jahan, 1975; Bartos, 1984). However, the respondents under 30 live in larger families than the older women (Table 3.1). Majumder (1992) also found more unmarried women to be living in larger households, of seven or more members, than married women. This is because unmarried women usually live with their parents, in households of the older generation where their mothers are simply housewives and families were larger.

3.6. Age of the Youngest Child

The dominant constraint on women's income earning activities outside the home in Bangladesh, as in the West, is assigned to women's responsibility for child-care (Pickup, 1988; Tivers, 1988; Majumdar, 1988; Bowlby, 1990). This type of gender-role constraint differs according to women's ages as well as their childrens' ages. The age range of the youngest child among the 30-50 age group of women was from 1 to 15 years while among the over fifties this figure was 2 to 35 years. The mean age of the youngest child among the 30-50 age group of women is 6.33 years whereas that of the over fifty group is 17 years (table 3.1). Chaudhury (1979) reported that 80.95% of working women in Dhaka city had children of under 6 years old. It can be assumed that most married women of 30-50 age group are facing the problem of child care maintenance during their absence at work, whereas few of the women over 50 have this

constraint.

3.7. Relation to the Household Head

Table 3.3 shows the pattern of household heads in the study. 84% of families are male-headed whereas the women headed households are 16%. Only 4% of them were single and self-headed, and they were living in the working women's hostel or sub-let houses. It seems they are self-headed because they are living separately from their families for the sake of their jobs but in practice they are subject to either their fathers or brothers. The national level of male-headed and female-headed households are 88.12% and 11.88% respectively (BBS, 1991).

The social tradition of Bangladesh is that before marriage girls should live with their father (12 respondents ie 44.44% of the single women in this study), brother (3 respondents ie 11.11%) or, in their absence, with other male relatives (3 respondents ie 11.11%). A woman's dependence changes after marriage, when she is subject to her husband or, after widowhood, to her son (Elahi, 1989). In this study, 81.25% of married women's families are headed by their husbands, 8.33% by their sons, all of the latter being widows over 50. There is no significant change in women's dependency, whether un-married, married, or widowed. Urban middle-income women are as vulnerable as rural women (Jahan, 1975) in needing male protection and shelter, as revealed by this study.

3.8. Household Type of Respondents

Figure 3.1 shows the household types of the respondents. Most of the married women

Table 3.3:

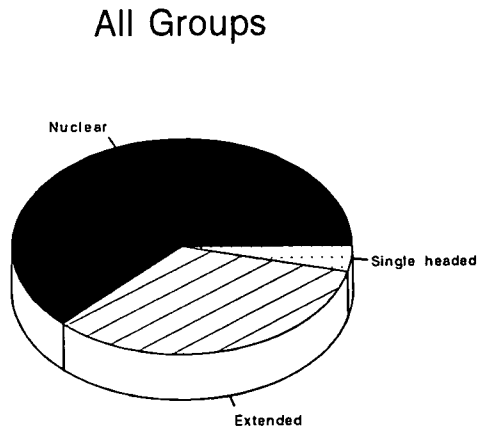
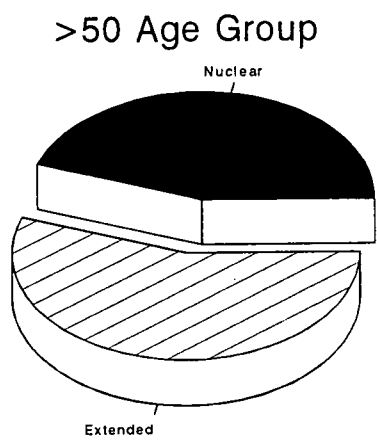
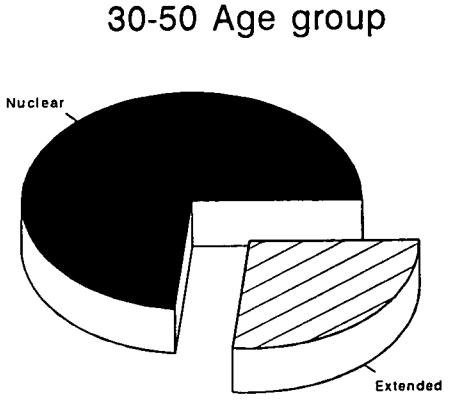
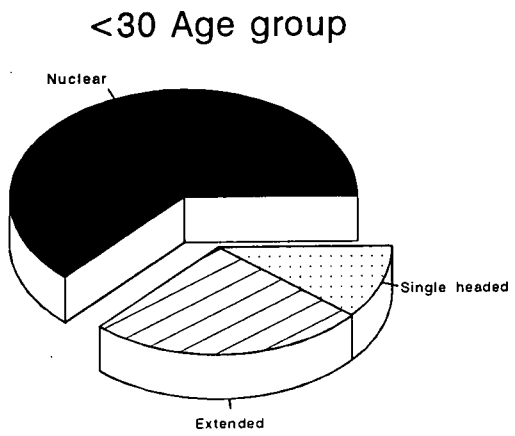
Respondent's Relation with the Household Head

Household Head	< 30 age group	30-50 age group	> 50 age group	All groups
Father	<i>12</i> (16.00) 44.44	0	0	<i>12</i> (16.00)
Brother	<i>3</i> (4.00) 11.11	0	0	<i>3</i> (4.00)
Husband	Not applicable	<i>27</i> (36.00) 90.00	<i>12</i> (16.00) 66.66	<i>39</i> (52.00)
Son	Not applicable	0	<i>4</i> (5.33) 22.22	<i>4</i> (5.33)
Relatives	<i>3</i> (4.00) 11.11	<i>2</i> (2.67) 6.66	0	<i>5</i> (6.67)
Respondent Herself	<i>3</i> (4.00) 11.11	<i>1</i> (1.33) 3.33	<i>2</i> (2.67) 11.11	<i>6</i> (8.00)
Mother	<i>5</i> (6.67) 18.51	0	0	<i>5</i> (6.67)
Sister	<i>1</i> (1.33) 3.70	0	0	<i>1</i> (1.33)
Total	<i>27</i> (36.00) 100.00	<i>30</i> (40.00) 100.00	<i>18</i> (24.00) 100.00	<i>75</i> (100.00)

Italic = total number, () = percentage of the total, and **bold** = percentage of that group only.

of 30-50 age group belong to nuclear families whereas most married women of > 50 age group live in extended families. Number of extended families among the < 30 age

Fig. 3.1: Household Type of Respondents



group is higher than 30-50 age group but lower than > 50 age group which indicates their close tie with their parents of older generations. 3 unmarried women who appear as single-person households are not significant since all live either in hostels or sub-let houses for their jobs. In the urban areas of Bangladesh 52.2% families are nucleated and 47.8% are extended (BBS, 1991) and in the present study these figures are 62.67% and 33.33% respectively, which may reflect their middle-income character.

3.9. Conclusion

On these selected demographic characteristics of 75 women in three groups, it is clear that their overall demographic position is better than the national level. For example, their mean age at marriage is higher and average household size smaller than the national figures. The older women still carry their traditional role in the extended family lives whereas the women of present and coming generations are more likely to be in nuclear households. It may be that their higher education and employment status make them more conscious of their identity and individuality. In Bangladesh, women of the present generation prefer to live in a nuclear family to avoid domestic conflicts (Chowdhury, 1992) sometimes created by women's traditional attitudes. Chaudhury (1976) found that 58.59% of women in paid work in the formal sector lived in extended families, a level almost double that in this study (33.33%). It is now agreed that during the last two decades traditional Bengali families have rapidly changed from the extended to the nuclear form of households. The conventional rules, rituals, social behaviour and attitudes in patriarchal Bengali society are changing with the expansion of education and employment for women, and urban middle-income women are actively involved in these processes of change.

Chapter 4: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1. Introduction

In any society various aspects of a woman's life influence her socio-economic position, whether she is educated or employed or not. Traditional gender stereotypes also differ according to women's socio-economic background. In this chapter the socio-economic status of the respondents will be discussed under the following headings:-

Educational Status of the Respondents

Educational Status of the Household Head

Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupational Status of the Household Head

Monthly Income of the Respondents

Monthly Income of Respondent's Household

Respondent's Contribution to Family Budget

Factors Behind Women's Entry into the Job Market

Encouragement for Working Outside the Home

Conclusion

4.2. Educational Status of the Respondents

Education is one of the first areas which attracted the attention of academic gender analysts because educational practices tended massively to reinforce gender stereotypes and greater formal education does tend to create a social climate favouring women's participation in economic activities outside the home (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990; Chaudhury, 1976; Momsen and Townsend, 1987). Women's educational status is

related to other influences such as class, income, and urban-rural residential background (Chaudhury, 1979). Table 4.1 shows the cross-relationship of the educational status of three groups of women studied with that of the heads of the households in which they live.

Levels of education contrast between these three groups¹ of women. The youngest is very highly educated: most of the 27 unmarried women under thirty are graduates, including more than half (15) of the 27 with postgraduate qualifications. In the next age range, 30-50, more than three quarters (24) of the 30 women are still graduates, with more than a third (11) having postgraduate degrees. Even among the older women, nearly half (8) of the 18 are graduates including 2 postgraduates. Among these middle-income working women, the percentage with higher education is notably high, and is increasing over the generations.

4.3. Educational Status of the Household Head

In Bangladesh, education has long been one of the most decisive factors in changing the attitudes of both men and women (Majumdar, 1992). The achievement of formal education by a woman within the patriarchal social structure primarily depends upon the attitude of her household head which is itself partly the outcome of his/her educational background.

Today, even older, uneducated household heads are changing their attitudes to higher

¹ In a broad sense it can be assumed that the >50 age group represents the first generation, the 30-50 age group represents the second generation and the <30 age group represent the third generation.

**Table; 4.1:
Educational Status of the Respondents and their Household Heads (No and %)**

Education Status of H. Head	Education levels, under 30 age group					Education levels, 30-50 age group					Education level, over 50 age group				
	Second -ary	Higher second	Graduate	Post graduat.	Total	Second -ary	Higher second.	Graduate	Post gradu.	Total	Second -ary	Higher second.	Graduate	Post graduat.	Total
Below secondary	0	0	1 3.70	3 11.11	4 14.81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary	1 3.70	1 3.70	1 3.70	2 7.41	5 18.52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Higher secondary	0	0	0	3 11.11	3 11.11	0	0	0	1 3.45	1 3.45	1 6.25	0	0	0	1 6.25
Graduate	1 3.70	1 3.70	5 18.52	6 22.22	13 48.15	0	3 10.34	4 13.79	2 6.90	9 31.03	1 6.25	4 25.00	3 18.75	0	8 50.00
Post graduate	0	0	1 3.70	1 3.70	2 7.41	1 3.45	2 6.90	8 27.59	8 27.59	19 65.52	1 6.25	1 6.25	3 18.75	2 12.50	7 43.75
Total	2 7.41	2 7.41	8 29.63	15 55.56	27 100.0	1 3.45	5 17.24	12 41.38	11 37.93	29 100.0	3 18.75	5 31.25	6 37.50	2 12.50	16 100.0

First row of each cell= Number of Cases, Second row of each cell= % of that age group

education for their young, unmarried daughters because the scope for jobs is so limited in the formal sectors that only higher education and skill can help a woman to get a high-ranked, well-paid job. It may be assumed that the educational level of an unmarried girl is highly related to the educational background of her family, particularly of her father, whereas the educational level of a married women is highly related to that of her husband: this is borne out by Table 4.1. It may be noted that the women in this survey tend to be more highly educated than the head of their household.

4.4. Occupational Status of the Respondents

A woman's expectations of a higher standard of living and employment, especially if she lives in a city, have become key factors in the way of life she desires. Recently the urban women of Bangladesh have seen great changes in both the nature and visibility of women's employment structure (Majumdar, 1986; Adnan, 1988; Mahmud and Hamid, 1990).

Traditionally, in Bangladesh most people want government jobs which are more secure and have many more marginal benefits than private services. Government service is thus the preferred form of employment. Government-gazetted officers are those class-one, elite, highly trained civil servants who passed the competitive examination (Enayet, 1979). Currently, however, non-government organisations (NGOs) are providing more and better paid jobs than are government services.

Table 4.2 shows the involvement of our three groups of women in different types of occupation. Successful completion of the challenging competition for government-

**Table 4.2:
Occupational Status of the Respondents and their Household Heads**

H.Head Occupat	Occupational Status of the Respondents, < 30 age group						Occupational Status of the Respondents, 30-50 age group						Occupational Status of R., > 50 age group					
	Gg	Gn	Pvt-sc	Pvt-se	NGO	Total	Gg	Gn	Gs	Pvt-se	Pvt-sc	NGO	Total	Gg	Gn	Gs	Bu	Total
Gg	3.70	0	3.70	0	0	7.41	6.9	20.69	10.34	0	3.45	44.83	44.83	0	12.50	12.5	5.3	31.3
Gn	0	11.11	0	0	0	11.11	0	6.90	3.45	0	17.24	17.24	0	0	0	12.5	0	12.5
Gs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.45	0	3.45	3.45	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bu	0	0	0	3.70	0	3.70	0	10.35	0	3.45	0	13.79	0	6.25	0	0	0	6.25
Pvt-se	0	3.70	0	0	0	3.70	3.45	6.90	3.45	0	3.45	17.24	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pvt-sc	3.70	0	3.70	0	7.41	14.81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NGO	0	0	0	0	3.70	3.70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.25	0	6.25
Hwf	3.70	0	3.70	3.70	7.41	18.52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Un	0	0	0	0	3.70	3.70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ret	11.11	11.11	0	7.41	3.70	33.33	3.45	0	0	0	0	3.45	3.45	18.75	18.75	18.75	0	43.8
Total	22.22	25.93	11.11	14.81	25.93	100.00	13.79	44.83	20.69	3.45	10.34	6.90	100.00	6.25	37.50	50.00	6.25	100

Gg = Govt. gazetted, Gn = Govt. non-gazetted, Gs = Govt. school teacher, Bu = Business, Pvt-sc = Private school teacher, Pvt-se = Private service, NGO = Non Govt. Organization, Hwf = Housewife,
Un = Unemployed,
Ret = Retired

gazetted jobs in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) by 5 (18.5%) of the youngest group, 4 (13.3%) of the middle group and 1 (5.6%) of the oldest reflects the trend towards a greater involvement of women in government administrative positions. 6 (22.2%) of the youngest, 14 (46.7%) of the middle group and 7 (38.9%) of the oldest are in the next BCS grade down. The older groups may have been less successful because their educational background and skills were less advanced than the women under 30 at the beginning of their careers. Among the 27 young, unmarried women, 7 (25.9%) are employed by NGOs, perhaps because most NGOs look for young, hard-working women. The involvement of women in individual enterprises like business is very insignificant, being only one (1.3%) person out of 75 (over 50).

There are differences between the groups aged 30 to 50 and those over 50. In both groups many teach, whether in government or private schools, but half of the over 50s and only a fifth of the 30-50 group teach in government schools. Teaching has traditionally been one of the most preferred and socially acceptable jobs for women who wish to maintain both professional and domestic duties (Enayet, 1979; Schaffer, 1986; Majumder, 1992). Hussain (1958) found that middle class Muslim women in the 1950s preferred the teaching professions, as also emerged among the women over 50 in the current research.

Some women of the 30 to 50 age group and more than half (53.33%) of the under 30s have taken up a second occupation such as private tutoring, making handicrafts, sewing, knitting, beauty care etc to earn additional income within their home. No women over 50 have a secondary occupation.

4.5. Occupational Status of the Household Head

An analysis of the relationship between the occupational status of the respondents and that of their household heads is shown in table 4.2. Among the under 30 and over 50 age groups, household heads are older and many (33.33% and 43.8% respectively) are retired. All those described as housewives in the survey prove to be older women heads of household with whom the younger group of women live.

The group of women between 30 and 50 tend to live in households where the head is their husband, who tends to be younger than in the other groups and in employment. These heads include a large number of government-gazetted officers (44.83%) and businessmen (13.79%), as against 7.41% and 3.70% respectively for the younger group and 31.3% and 6.25% for the older. The women aged 30 to 50, therefore, are the group which is financially better off, because of the highly graded occupational types of the household heads together with the women's own incomes.

4.6. Monthly Income of the Respondents

The respondents' mean monthly income is shown in figure 4.1. The mean total monthly income of the women under 30, the group 30 to 50 and the group over 50 are Tk.6037, Tk.5866 and Tk.6667 respectively. It seems that the older women earn more per month, after a long working life. Yet the younger group despite their shorter length of service actually earn more than the older women, even at this early stage of their career, because of their higher levels of educations, skills and job status.

4.7. Monthly Income of Respondent's Household

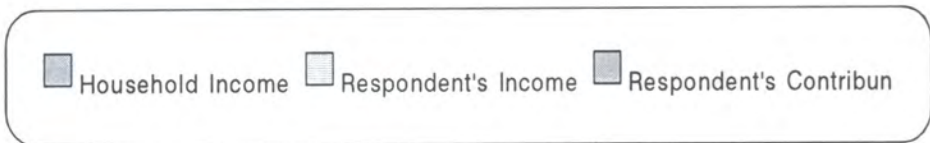
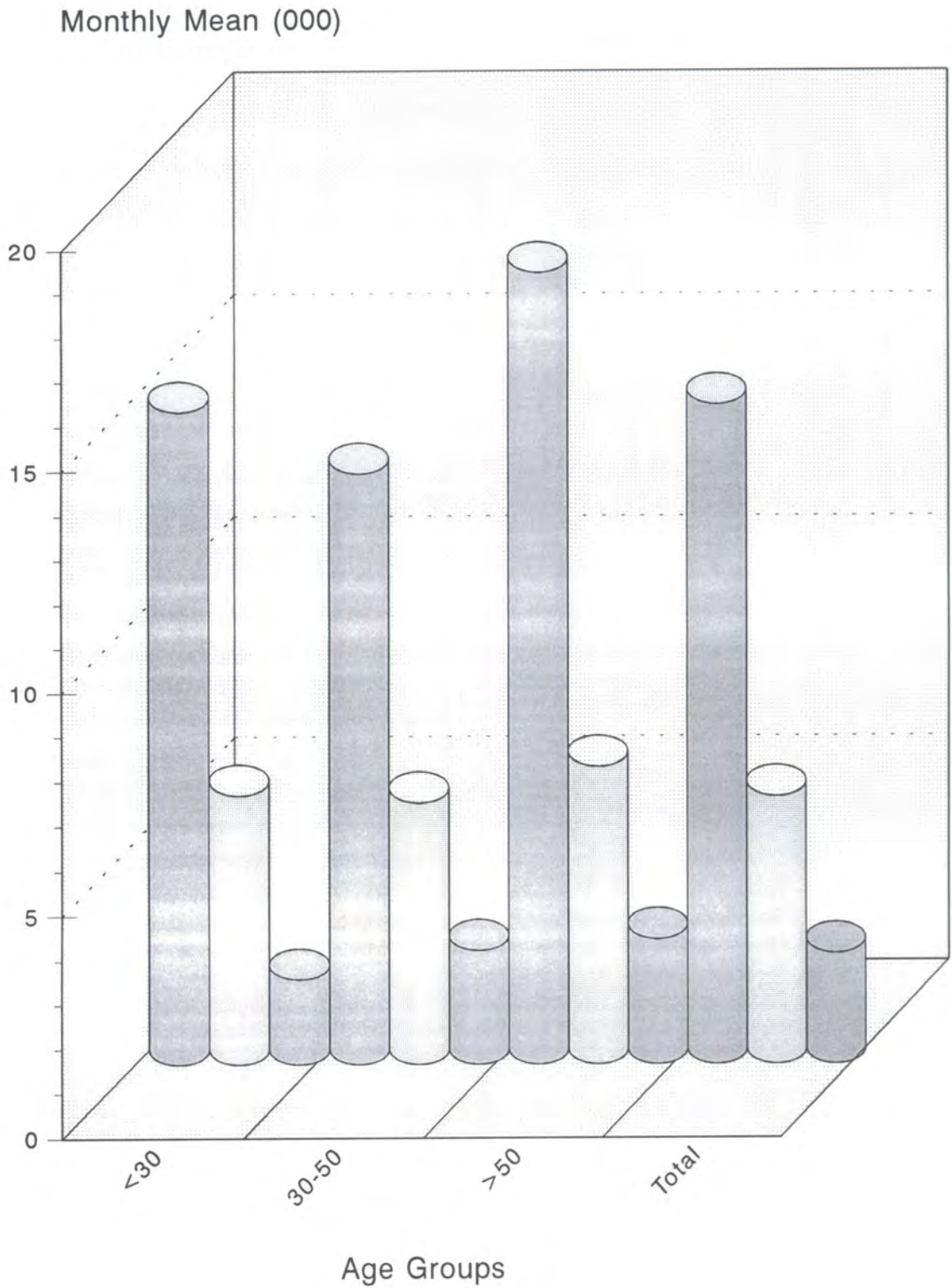
The monthly incomes of the respondents' households range from Tk.5000 to Tk.40000. The mean monthly income for the households of the young, middle and older groups of women are Tk.14676, Tk. 13285, and Tk. 17827 respectively, so that total household monthly incomes are higher for the groups where the respondents are younger and older than for the middle group.

Figure 4.1 shows a comparison of the mean monthly household income of the respondent with her personal income. It is very valuable for the understanding of the economic status of the households of middle-income women. Middle-income women over 50 earn, on average, only 37.39% of their family income whereas for the 30 to 50 age group and the under 30s these figures are 44.15% and 41.15% respectively. The higher proportion of family income earned by the young women may be in part because of higher number (33.33%) of retired household heads within this group. Businessmen have more income than civil servants. More household heads in business, 13.79% and 6.25% in the 30 to 50 age group and the over 50 age groups respectively. Their high earnings, Tk. 15000-40000 per month, contribute significantly to the average household income of these middle-income groups.

4.8. Respondent's Contribution to Family Budget

Traditionally Bangladesh had a gender-role stereotype that household economic responsibilities are borne by the male members of the family. Recently this concept of roles within the family has been changing due to the changing attitudes of both men and women, particularly among middle class families. Women, married or unmarried, are

Fig. 4.1: Respondent's Household Income, Individual Income and Contribution to Family Budget



Source: Survey Data

rapidly entering the competitive job market and sharing the economic responsibilities for their families with their men, and in the same ways (Standing and Bandopadaya, 1985).

The mean monthly income of the younger women contributes the highest proportion (45.44%) to their family income. The younger women drain 31.84% of their income to their family budget which is about 10% less than that of the women of 30 to 50 (43.81%) and over 50 (42.33%). But their contribution to their family total budget is not insignificant in comparison to other groups. It may be noted that these married working women appear to retain a larger proportion of their income for their own use than would be usual in the West.

The economic responsibilities of middle-income working women within their family budget can easily be seen from figure 4.1. Women of all groups are contributing a greater part to their family economy than in the past. But the involvement of younger, unmarried women in the family economy is a remarkable change in the social tradition. Most of the money of this group of women goes to their household heads (parents or brothers) until they are married; after they are married, as seen in the other two groups, the money drain shifts to her own family. Still some of the women after their marriage may contribute some money to their parents' family, as traditionally expected, and as their husbands do. 'The son is an investment of future family income'- this tradition is now gradually breaking down and middle income women, particularly unmarried women, are playing a vital role in changing this social norm. They are proving their success by contributing money to the family budget equally with their male counterparts. A woman can be an important breadwinner for her own family and her

parental family too.

4.9. Factors Behind Women's Entry into the Job Market

The family's balance of income and expenditure is one powerful and influential factor in a woman's choice to engage in formal or informal work outside her home. Urban married women enter into the labour market for economic reasons (Chaudhury, 1979; Majumder, 1992) as do middle-class urban women of Dhaka city (Hossain, 1958). The reasons given by the respondents for entering the labour market are shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.3:

Reasons Given by Respondents for Going Out to Work

Age groups	Support family income	Better living	Self dependency	Self identity	Passing time	Total
<30	5 6.67 (18.51)	8 10.67 (29.63)	9 12.00 (33.33)	3 4.00 (11.11)	2 2.67 (7.41)	27 36.00 (100.00)
30-50	7 9.33 (23.33)	12 16.00 (40.00)	6 8.00 (20.00)	5 6.67 (16.67)	0	30 40.00 (100.00)
>50	4 5.33 (22.22)	5 6.67 (18.52)	5 6.67 (18.52)	3 4.00 (16.67)	1 1.33 (5.46)	18 24.00 (100.00)
All	16 (21.33)	25 (33.33)	20 (26.67)	11 (14.67)	3 (4.00)	75 (100.00)

() = % of that group, *italic* = % of the total.

Majumder (1992) shows that only 3% working married women and 4% working unmarried women were engaged in the formal job market for income support and better living in Dhaka. The present study shows a quite different picture about the causes of the large scale involvement of women in economic activities. Of our respondents, 21.33% work to support their family income and 33.33% women for better family

economic life. This economic commitment is slightly higher for the married women than the unmarried. Larger numbers of unmarried women work to increase their self dependency and self identity (table 4.3) than other groups. A woman cannot achieve the test of self dependency and self identity unless and until she has her own economic status. This sense of self dependency and self identity has widely been accepted by urban middle-income women, particularly the present generation. A very few women describe themselves as engaged in paid work just to pass the time: these come from comparatively better off families where they have no family economic duties. But generally it can be argued that middle-income women are nowadays more aware of their family budgets and join the labour force to earn money to improve their family's position as well as to enjoy the test of self dependency and self identity.

4.10. Encouragement for Working Outside the Home

The prevailing system of gender roles and relations restricted women's activities and social life to their homes, as they were thought to be suited only to reproductive work. This demonstrates women's negative relationships with activities in public space and particularly with economic activities (Kabeer, 1988; Adnan, 1988; Paul, 1992). It is easier to change the physical features such as the building, furniture etc of a family than to change the attitude of the people living in that home. Encouragement from the people around her may be a very important influence in a woman's involvement in economic activities. Table 4.4 shows the sources of encouragement the women cited for doing their jobs.

It is interesting to see that a large number (44.44%) of respondents had no

encouragement from any of their relatives. They themselves decided according to their own determination. A few of the respondents, particularly from the 30 to 50 age group, reported that at the beginning of their career their work was not easily accepted by their family but, as soon as they started to contribute their income to the family budget, the family started to change their attitude and now their

Table 4.4:

Sources of Encouragement to Do Paid Work

Age group	Husband	Parents	In-laws	Brother-sisters	Nobody	Other	Total
<30	Not applicable	12 <i>16.00</i> (44.44)	Not applicable	4 <i>5.33</i> (14.81)	10 <i>13.33</i> (37.04)	1 <i>1.33</i> (3.70)	27 <i>36.00</i> (100.00)
30-50	8 <i>10.67</i> (26.67)	4 <i>5.33</i> (13.33)	1 <i>1.33</i> (3.33)	2 <i>2.67</i> (6.67)	15 <i>20.00</i> (50.00)	0	30 <i>40.00</i> (100.00)
>50	7 <i>9.33</i> (38.89)	3 <i>4.00</i> (16.67)	0	0	8 <i>10.67</i> (44.44)	0	18 <i>24.00</i> (100.00)
All group	15 <i>20.00</i>	19 <i>25.33</i>	1 <i>1.33</i>	6 <i>8.00</i>	30 <i>40.00</i>	1 <i>1.33</i>	75 <i>100.00</i>

Bolds= total number of respondent, () = % of that group, *Italics*= % of total.

work is well accepted. On the other hand a large number (44.44%) of women of the <30 age group were encouraged by their parents. Most of the married women got their encouragement from their husbands. For an unmarried women, support from her parents and for a married woman support from her husband makes her easy and confident about her professional success. Once it was difficult for a woman to break the family norms against working outside the home but now, because of the expansion of education and because of the economic necessity of the family, social attitudes towards

the stereotyped gender role of women are being transformed.

4.11. Conclusion

The socio-economic profile of the women studied which has been presented so far reveals that the overall family status, in terms of education and status of job is higher within the 30-50 age group. But the individual economic status of the respondent is higher for women under 30. In patriarchal Bengali society a woman is not supposed to work outside her home but rather to be an ideal woman, ie a good mother and a devoted housewife. Despite this rhetoric about the virtue of women's domestic role many women, particularly among urban middle-class families, are working away from the home and at the same time continuing their feminine roles as mothers and housewives. Breaking social norms, single women and wives have started to participate in the competitive, male-dominated job market and to share family economic responsibilities (Standing and Bandopadhyaya, 1985; Sharma, 1984). By definition the women studied are within the middle-income group but when their overall family status is considered then these groups of women mostly belong to urban middle class families where women are more open to the process of restructuring social norms and attitudes.

Young, unmarried women under 30 are not only involving themselves substantially in various NGOs and in government services, gazetted or non-gazetted, but are also more articulate about their jobs than the other two groups. They are increasingly entering and successfully performing their responsibilities in many non-traditional service sectors in jobs such as bank clerk, telephone operator, sales girls etc, which have traditionally been done by men. Due to the changes of attitude by both men and women, rapid

expansion of higher education among urban middle class families and the growing desire of a higher standard of living, urban middle-income women have entered a greater diversity of jobs which have expanded their mobility.

Chapter 5: GENDER AND ACTIVITY SPACE

5.1. Introduction

Evidence from a number of disciplines in the West shows that there, women's concept, experience, and use of space is different from that of men's (McDowell, 1983; Little *et al*, 1988). From the experience of that majority of women who are engaged in both productive and reproductive activities, feminist geographers have begun to formulate a new understanding of gender-based activities and social change. In the nineteenth century, the gender division of space in the West resulted in the interior of the home being assigned to women and other space to men. In the twentieth century, however, and in recent years in many Third World countries, women are involved in varied aspects of the productive and reproductive process, particularly in cities where new and more visible relations between women and space develop (Brydon and Chant, 1989). This chapter will seek to explore the activity space of middle-income women in Dhaka City and the uses they make of it. This will be discussed under the following headings;

Defining Activity Space

Activity Types and Space: The Social Norms in Bangladesh

Urban Form: the Private and the Public

Women's Activities in Private Space

Gender Relations in Private Space

Women's Activities in Public Place

Time Budgets in Private and Public Space

Activities in Public Places: Controls and Constraints

Conclusion

5.2. Defining Activity Space

Space is not a simple concept. Social identity is partly determined by the physical constituents of space, the built environment. That is to say: *space defines the people in it*; in turn, the presence of individuals in space determines its nature, that is, *people define space* (Matthews, cited in Ardener 1993). In anthropology, space has its own specific attributes. In relation to the control of space, three separate analytical levels may be identified. First, *physical* space or the built environment which consists of physical things in a particular ecology: human constructions such as streets, roads, bridges and so on, the layout of cities, the spatial ordering of family residences, and the divisions and allocation of space within the individual domestic dwelling. Second, *social* space which is concerned with traditional anthropological interests such as kinship structure, social and economic organizations, the division of labour by gender and generation, the domestic life-cycle, and so on. Third, *metaphysical* space which refers to the cosmology or world system, the moral and religious order and the belief structures which have developed through the historical and material conditions of a particular society and define its uniqueness (Callaway, 1993). In the West, the contemporary geographical concept of gender and space is mainly concerned with physical and social spaces. These have been divided into the *public* ie the outer space and the *private* ie the inner space, although this division is increasingly questioned (Little *et al*, 1988). Johnston (1986) defined activity space as "the space in which the majority of an individual's activities are carried out. It usually consists of distinct points, i.e. it is discontinuous, and can be mapped either as a point pattern or a time-space diagram". During a woman's life course, the area of her activity space increases through childhood and usually reaches its greatest extent during her productive years

(Mazey and Lee, 1983). The extent of women's activity space also varies by culture and region; women's productive work and the degree of urbanization greatly affect women's activity patterns within any culture.

5.3. Activity Types and Space: The Social Norms in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh 86% of the population are Sunni Muslim (BBS, 1991) and, as in any Muslim society, the presence of women in male space is generally considered to be both provocative and offensive (Mernissi, 1975). The practice of *purdah* and the patriarchal family structure have virtually prohibited women from going to public places. Women were permitted to move around within the indoor spaces of other households, but not to be seen out of doors. Public spaces represent the male sphere of economic, social and political life (Adnan, 1988; Paul, 1992; Ahmed, 1992). Such gender-based use of space has therefore also defined gender-based activities. Women perform a wide variety of tasks within their homes to reproduce and maintain the family while, according to Kabeer (1988) men monopolize the use of public space: *purdah* ensures that 50 percent of the population is confined to about 10 percent of the available space. *Purdah* also detaches women's productive labour from their control over its proceeds, thereby obscuring its value and enforcing women's dependence. Furthermore, housework and waged work in traditional Bengali society have formed conceptually distinct types of activity: the *sansar* (family) and the *chakri* (job) for women and men respectively. A gender division of labour emerged historically within this society in which men are associated with activities outside the home and women with those within it (Standing and Bandopadhyaya, 1985).

Bangladeshi society is an assimilation of Bengali culture into Muslim culture. Despite the existence of gender divisions of labour in Bangladesh, the use of space has not been as strictly divided between males and females as in other Muslim countries (Chahidi, 1993; Mernissi, 1975). In Bangladesh and particularly in its cities today, women are increasingly forced to seek employment outside the home to support their families and seek better standards of living. Age-old norms segregating and protecting women have been broken during the last two decades in Bangladesh (World Bank, 1990). This pattern has resulted in the expansion of female activity space, which had been severely restricted by tradition (Greely, 1983; Khandker, 1987; both cited in Paul, 1992).

5.4. Urban Form: the Private and the Public

A knowledge of the urban built environment is very important to an understanding of the degree to which space in an urban area is gendered. To explore the activity space of middle-income women in Dhaka City, four frames of physical space have been identified for discussion. These are i) the layout of the city, ii) the traditional lineage compound, iii) urban dwellings, and iv) women's private space and their reproductive role. The layout of the city is controlled by the state in both public and private places. The traditional lineage compound is the household unit (*basha*) but, very importantly, neighbourhoods (*pratibeshi*) are also regarded as private space. Urban dwellings usually contain either a nuclear or an extended family, most members of the household being patrilineal relations. (A woman's natal family may be nearby or very distant.) Women's private space and their reproductive role are located inside the dwellings of the neighbourhood. These dwellings are in most instances divided into different rooms which are arranged for separate purposes such as cooking, sleeping, sitting, the

entertainment of guests and so on (Fig. 5.1). Most of women's daily activities, married and unmarried, are confined to their own dwellings. (Servants, always female, do their work in all the rooms, and if they live in the house will sleep on the floor, sometimes in the dining space, sometimes in the sitting room or the bedroom of a single daughter). It should be noted that in very strict homes, men and boys will eat first, women and girls later. Also, the "dining room" may be a room or a dining area.

5.5. Women's Activities in Private Space

In Bangladesh, women's mobility and choice of activities are free in private space, within the inner, domestic units where they do most of their household tasks. These are differentiated according to their age, family economy, family educational background, household type, and the women's participation in the labour force. (There is no real difference in participation in the sample, all of whom are in paid work.) Women's most important tasks in private space are cooking, child care, washing clothes, housework and the entertainment of guests. Entertaining involves work but may also provide leisure.

Muslim women in Bangladesh usually do not go to the mosque but pray in their homes, often in their bedrooms, facing Mecca. It was not possible to discuss this with the women interviewed, but nearly all the 75 women interviewed were Muslim and probably followed this pattern.

In Bangladesh, childcare is not considered a separate activity to which time is devoted. It requires 24 hours a day, usually at the same time as other activities and often

Fig. 5.1:

The Use of Different Rooms in a House for Different Household Activities

	Dining Room + Servant sleep (Both Male and Female Members)	Bed Room + Study (Mostly Female Member, Sitting Female Guest, Children sleep)	
Corridor (Both Male and Female)			
Bed Room + Reading (Mostly Male member)	Sitting Room (T.V., VCR) (Male Guest, Male Member Female member and Guest, occasionally)		Stairs

overloading women, but women do not think of it as a distinct task. Childcare is a problem for working women, but does not occupy specific times. It is therefore not distinguished as an activity in the questionnaire.

5.5.i. Cooking

The preparation of meals at home is one of the daily domestic tasks which all married

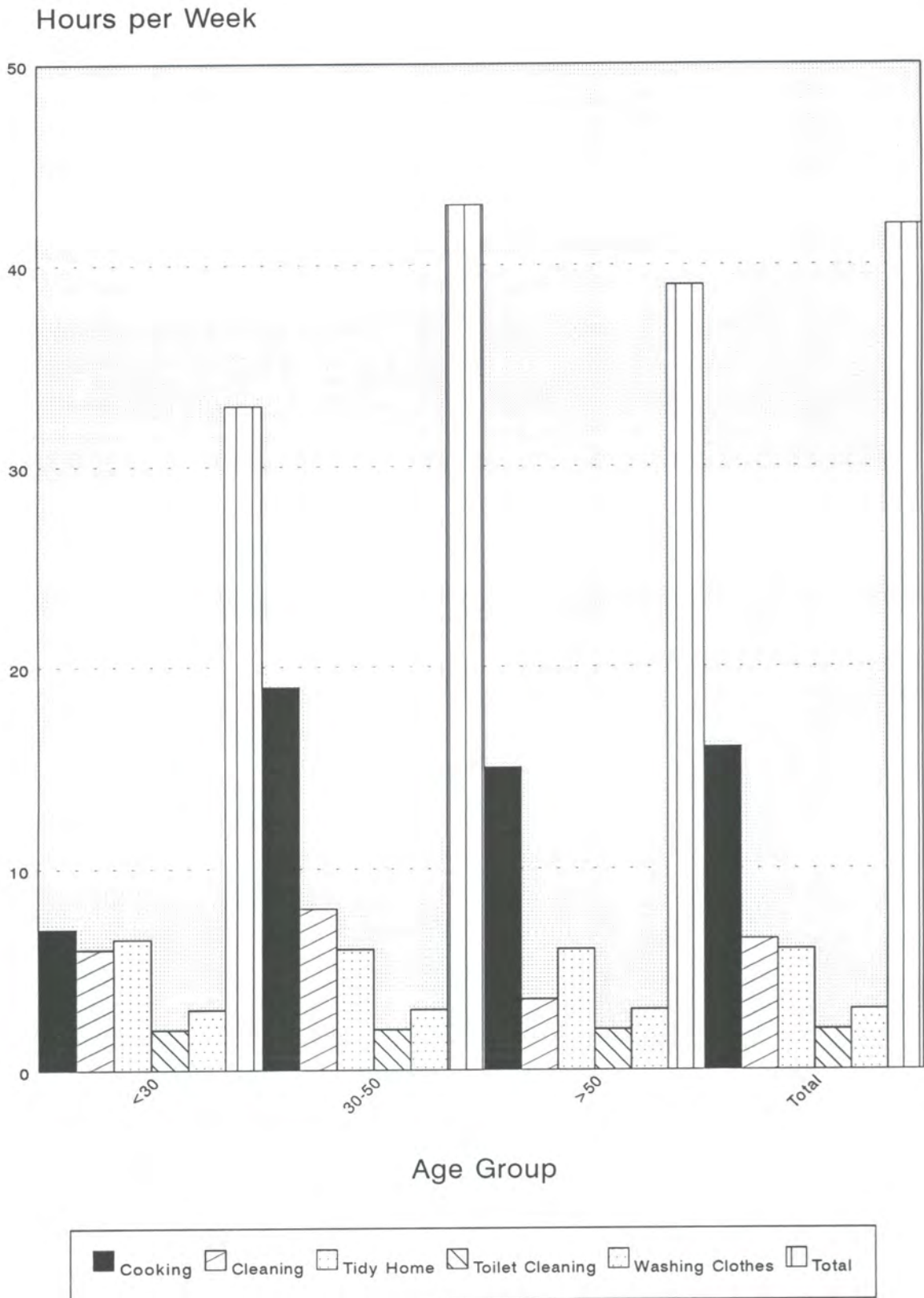
women in Bangladesh expect to do. The preparation of traditional Bengali dishes is a complex and time-consuming task. In this survey, it was found that 25 of the 33 married women (83.3%) aged between thirty and fifty cook on seven days in a week (table 5.1), all of them twice daily, so that they spend an average 20 hours a week just cooking (Fig. 5.2). Fewer women of the other two groups cook every day and their total hours are lower: unmarried women under 30 average 7 hours, married women over 50, 15 hours. In addition, some women of this thirty to fifty age group make lunches for their office-going husbands and school-going children to ensure quality food and to save some money. One woman of this group described how, "Each day, very early in the morning, I rise up from my bed and go into the kitchen to complete the cooking before going to my office. I have a domestic servant who helps me in cooking and other activities, but my husband does not like the servant to cook food for the family. So I have to cook myself twice a day and if some day there is a guest, on that day I have also to cook some special dishes." Hence, cooking is a daily routine for more than half the married working women, but the picture is different for unmarried women who usually assist their mothers in cooking: they cook occasionally but only a few (4 out of 27) as a daily duty. Cooking is undoubtedly a skilled, time-consuming household task and women who go out to work need to make some adjustment in this area to save time. Standing and Bandopadhyaya (1985) found that Bengali women in employment in Calcutta have developed some short-cut cooking techniques to save time. They also rotate cooking duties among those women of the family who go out to work. Sharma (1984) found that in North Shimla, India, middle-class working women cook to last the family for several days and store the food in the refrigerator to be taken out and heated as needed; this is also common in the West. In Dhaka the situation is rather

Table 5.1:
Number of Days in a Week Respondent Cooks

No of days in a week R. cooks	Age groups			All groups
	<30	30-50	>50	
None	15 55.6 (20.0)	1 3.3 (1.3)	7 38.9 (9.3)	23 (30.7)
One day	5 18.5 (6.7)	2 6.7 (2.7)	3 16.7 (4.0)	10 (13.3)
Two days	1 3.7 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)
Three days	2 7.4 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)
Four days	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Five days	0 (0.0)	2 6.7 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)
Six days	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 5.6 (1.3)	1 (1.3)
Seven days	4 14.8 (5.3)	25 83.3 (33.0)	7 38.9 (9.3)	36 (48.0)
Total	27 100 (36.0)	30 100 (40.0)	18 100 (24.0)	75 (100.0)

Bold = % of that group, () = % of the total

Fig. 5.2: Weekly Mean Number of Hours in Household Work



Source: Survey Data

different. Women are not yet very conscious of their domestic time-budget and do not take it very seriously; they have not yet developed any positive strategies to reduce the time they spend cooking. Male members of the family, usually a husband or son, only enter the kitchen to cook when illness prevents the women from doing so and there is no one to help or, sometimes, as a rare pleasure. Cooking is an area which men do not enter easily and thus the division of labour in cooking is strong, as in many other countries. Murdock surveyed 224 societies and found the gender division of labour in cooking to be exclusively feminine in 158 societies and exclusively masculine in 5 (cited in Wallace and Candida, 1991).

5.5.ii. Other Household Tasks

Apart from cooking, women in the survey spend the greater part of a day in many other household tasks. Many women do housework (other than cooking), particularly cleaning and tidying, every day of the week (table 5.2). Women of the 30 to 50 age group spend more time cleaning than do the other two groups (Fig. 5.2). There is no substantial difference in the pattern of activities between the three groups of women but, in general, it can be said that unmarried women aged under 30 and married women over 50 have lower workloads than married women aged from 30 to 50.

5.5.iii. Household Activities and Helping Hands

Save for refrigerators, labour-saving domestic devices are not common among the families of the women in the survey. Time-saving devices such as washing machines, microwaves, oven, food processors and so on are very expensive in Bangladesh, while at the same time domestic servants are rather cheap, and can help in a wide range of

Table 5.2:
Number of Days in a Week Respondent does Domestic Tasks other than Cooking

No. of days	Cleaning House			Tidy home			Washing Clothes			Cleaning toilet		
	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50
Nil	13 48.1 17.3	9 30.0 12.0	13 72.2 17.3	7 25.9 9.3	6 8.0 20.0	12 66.7 16.0	7 25.9 9.3	6 20.0 8.0	11 61.1 14.7	23 85.2 30.7	14 46.7 18.7	16 88.9 21.3
One	1 3.7 <i>1.3</i>	2 6.7 2.7	3 16.7 4.0	0	1 1.3 3.3	0	15 55.6 20.0	14 46.7 18.7	7 38.9 9.3	3 11.1 4.0	7 23.3 9.3	1 5.6 1.3
Two	0	3 10.0 4.0	0	0	1 1.3 3.3	0	3 11.1 4.0	2 6.7 2.7	0	0	4 13.3 5.3	
Three	1 3.7 1.3	3 10.0 4.0	0	0	0	0	1 3.7 1.3	3 10.0 4.0	0	0	1 3.3 1.3	0
Four	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 3.3 1.3	0
Five	0	0	0	0	1 1.3 3.3	0	0	1 3.3 1.3	0	1 3.7 1.3	1 3.3 1.3	0
Six	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 3.7 1.3	0	0	0	0	0
Seven	12 44.4 16.0	13 43.3 17.3	2 11.1 2.7	20 74.1 26.7	21 70.0 28.0	6 33.3 8.0	0	4 13.3 5.3	0	0	2 6.7 2.7	1 5.6 1.3
Total	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0

Bold = % of that group, *italic* = % of the total

household activities. In the survey, for all groups of women, domestic servants are all women (maids), usually middle-aged. Maids are the major helping hands for all kinds of household tasks (table 5.3), as also found by Chaudhury (1976). Only a little help comes from the male members of the family. For Indian society, Sharma (1984) stated that Indian man is by nature unfitted for housework, either having the wrong attitudes or not having been trained to do it by their mothers. This is also the case in Bangladesh. Only two women of the 30 in the thirty to fifty age group reported that (because they cannot afford a full-time servant) their husbands help them with the cleaning and the weekly laundry. Tivers (1985) found the same figure even in the Western society (Britain). Nevertheless, it was reported that, if there was no private tutor for children, male members of some families, usually the father, helped their children with their homework. This is the only task within the home where men have taken the responsibility in this survey. Many women feel strongly that men should share household tasks when the women are in full-time jobs. But there is a contradiction that these women on the one hand say they would like to see their men take some responsibility for domestic labour, while on the other hand the same women are likely to hold on to and to practice traditional feminine tasks such as good cooking, embroidery, knitting etc to maintain their qualification to be an ideal and successful woman in this society. This may reflect the social transition from traditional values towards more westernised, materialistic attitudes. In a traditional extended family, help in the house may sometimes come from other women such as sister, sister-in-law, mother-in-law or daughter-in-law. The normal division of labour within the household is not only between the men and women but also between the women and the maid or maids, whose help is very important to the married women aged between 30 and 50.

**Table 5.3:
Helping Hands in Household Activities**

Helper	Cooking			Cleaning			Tidy home			Washing clothes			Cleaning Toilet		
	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50
Mother	1 3.7 <i>1.3</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M. in law	x	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	x	0	0	x	0	0	0	0	0	x	0	0
Sister	1 3.7 <i>1.3</i>	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	0	1 3.7 <i>1.3</i>	0	0	7 25.9 <i>9.3</i>	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	0	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	0	0	0	0
S. in law	1 3.7 <i>1.3</i>	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	0	0	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	0	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Daughter	x	0	0	x	0	0	x	0	3 16.7 <i>4.0</i>	x	0	0	x	0	0
Husband	x	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	x	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	x	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	1 5.5 <i>1.3</i>	x	2 6.7 <i>2.7</i>	0	x	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	0
Servant	5 18.5 6.7	19 63.3 25.3	11 61.1 14.7	5 18.5 6.7	12 40.0 16.0	6 33.3 8.0	2 7.4 2.7	10 33.3 13.3	3 16.7 4.0	12 44.4 16.0	19 63.3 25.3	7 38.9 9.3	1 3.7 1.3	6 20.0 8.0	2 11.1 2.7

Bold= % of that group, *Italic*= % of total number ; x-Not applicable

Unlike India, middle-income families in their own homes in Dhaka do not employ sweepers to clean the toilet; sweepers would be employed by rich families, or in a factory or offices or university or in government accommodation. In these middle-income groups, children are not expected to help in the house. Girls will learn household tasks in classes at school, and from watching their mothers, but few, for instance, learn to cook before they marry.

5.5.iv. Rest and Recreation

Women in Bangladesh generally have no planned leisure time. Most rest when they have no household tasks to do and regard this time as their personal time. The world-famous *Nakshi Katha* hand-made embroidery is the product of village women in their "leisure" time. However, the rest and recreation of urban women are quite different than those of rural women. In the survey, the women get their recreation mostly by listening to the radio, watching T.V or V.C.R, reading a novel or magazine or playing with children, which is regarded as rest. Women aged over 50 recorded average leisure hours of 34 hours per week, as compared to only 19 and 21 hours respectively for women of the 30 to 50 and under 30 age groups. Some women reported that when they get long holidays, they then also practice their hobbies such as knitting, embroidery, or making decorations for the home and so forth. Women over 50 spend leisure time playing with their grand children.

5.6. Gender Relations in Private Space

In traditional Bangladeshi families, important family decisions are usually taken by the male household head (Chaudhury, 1976). Sometimes female opinions may be solicited

in arriving at the decision but the final decision is for the head of the family. This subordinate position of women stems not only from the patriarchal family but also from deep seated prejudices against women. Jahan (1975) found 70% of rural and 80% of urban men in Bangladesh to consider women to be inferior to them. Chowdhury (1992) in a study in Dhaka found that education and employment together do allow women to exercise their power in decision-making about the use and allocation of household income. Earlier Chaudhury (1976) found women in paid work in Dhaka to be more involved in family decision-making than women not in paid work.

The study of gender relations in women's private lives is of the first importance, but questionnaire surveys are not the appropriate method to explore this. This survey attempted only to measure women's autonomy in decision-making within the family (table 5.4). In this case, even among the women over 50 a majority speak of decisions taken jointly with their husbands, particularly with reference to the marriage of their children. Women aged between thirty and fifty claim both the greatest participation and the greatest autonomy in decision-making in the survey, perhaps from their married role. Indeed, most of them (from 46 to 85%, depending on the decision) reported deciding various family matters jointly with their husband, particularly the marriage of their children (27 out of 30), whether to have a child (26) or schools for the children (26). Yet even in this group not even shopping is decided upon primarily by the woman alone. Young single women do not appear to be more radical, for the majority of the unmarried women proved to depend on their household heads for decisions, except those about shopping and recreation. This is because most of these young women, under 30 years of age, are subject to their household heads and respect their guardians'

Table 5.4:
Gender Relations in Decision Making

Dsc	<30 age group			30-50 age group						>50 age group					
	Hh	Rh	Oth	Hh	Rh	Hus	Bth	S&D	Oth	Hh	Rh	Hus	Bth	S&D	Oth
Fb	14 51.9 18.7	7 25.9 9.3	1 3.7 1.3	3 10.0 4.0	5 16.7 6.7	6 20.0 8.0	16 53.3 21.3	0	0	1 5.6 1.3	8 44.4 10.7	0	5 27.8 6.7	4 22.2 5.3	0
Mo	6 22.2 8.0	2 7.4 2.7	2 7.4 2.7	1 3.3 1.3	0	2 6.7 2.7	18 60.0 24.0	0	0	0	2 11.1 2.7	0	1 5.6 1.3	0	0
Prg	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	2 6.7 2.7	1 3.3 1.3	27 90.0 36.0	x	0	x	x	x	x	x	x
Adm	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	2 6.7 2.7	1 3.3 1.3	26 86.7 34.7	0	0	0	1 5.6 1.3	0	5 27.8 6.7	1 5.6 1.3	0
Mrg	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1 3.3 1.3	1 3.3 1.3	27 90.0 36.0	0	0	0	2 11.1 2.7	0	13 72.2 17.3	2 11.1 2.7	0
Shp	2 7.4 2.7	25 92.6 33.3	0	0	16 53.2 21.2	0	14 46.7 18.6	0	0	0	9 50.0 12.0	0	6 33.3 8.8	3 16.7 4.0	0
Frn	17 63.0 22.7	8 29.6 10.6	2 7.4 2.7	0	6 20.0 8.0	3 10.0 5.6	21 70.0 28.0	0	0	1 5.6 1.3	7 38.9 9.3	0	7 38.9 9.3	3 16.7 4.0	0
Lst	14 51.8 18.6	11 40.7 14.7	1 3.7 1.3	0	5 16.7 6.7	3 10.0 4.0	22 73.3 29.3	0	0	1 5.6 1.3	7 38.9 9.3	1 5.6 1.3	6 33.3 8.0	3 16.7 4.0	0
Prt	11 40.7 14.7	14 51.8 18.6	2 7.4 2.7	1 3.3 1.3	8 26.7 10.7	0	21 70.0 28.0	0	0	1 5.6 1.3	8 44.4 10.7	1 5.6 1.3	5 27.8 6.7	3 16.7 4.0	0

Bold = % of the that group. *italic* = % of the total n/a = not applicable
 Dsc = Decisions, Fb = Family budget, Mo = Moving the House, Prg = Pregnancy, Adm = Admission of the children, Mrg = Marriage arrangement of the children, Shp = Shopping, Frn = Purchase costly furniture, Lst = Purchase the last costly article, Prt = Party arrangement;
 Hh = Household head, Rh = Respondent herself, Hus = Husband, Bth = Both wife & husband, S&D = Sons and Daughters, Oth = Other

decisions. Besides, in a traditional Bengali family, the relations between parents and children are such that children very rarely go against their parents' decisions. Change is taking place, for the children of women over 50 do sometimes play a role in family decisions, particularly if they are sons living with them. Marriage is often assumed by policy-makers to mean joint control and management of resources and similarity or coincidence of interests and goals (Young, 1992) and in Bangladesh this is the religious ruling. Nevertheless, as in most societies, theory can be very different from practice. Although the present study, like that of Chowdhury (1992), shows that middle-income married women are deeply involved in family decision-making as their employment and education have given them more power and autonomy, further detailed observation is needed to come to any exact conclusion on this issue. In general, however, it can be said that the pattern of power and autonomy in family decisions has been changing from more male domination towards a more egalitarian type of family.

5.7. Women's Activities in Public Places

Changes in gender roles and gender definition have been an insistent force in shaping social and economic life over the past two decades throughout the world. As women and men have transformed their activities, so they have reshaped their social institutions, personal relationships and self-definitions (Mackenzie, 1989). Women's general domestic role has begun to be explored, together with the relationships between changes in that role and in the urban structure (McDowell, 1983; Bowlby, 1984). Several studies in Bangladesh (Adnan, 1988; Chowdhury and Mili, 1992; Mahmud and Hamid, 1990; Chaudhury, 1979; Azad, 1989) have indicated that, in Bangladesh, women's movement and activities in public spaces, especially in urban areas, have been getting

much more important as women feel that they should enter these spaces. Public places which were historically offered as male spaces are now being redefined through the increasing number of female activities outside the home.

5.7.i. Women in the Work place

In Bangladesh, activity space is larger for a man than a woman, and larger for an employed woman than a housewife. Women's time in public space is largely determined by their occupational status. Women's public activities and uses of public spaces are also differentiated by employment. Full-time workers use public places much more than part-time workers. Bowlby (1990) has shown that in 1984 Britain had 46% part-time employed women. Young (1992) found that in Nigeria a woman goes every day to the farm as a farmer and spends more time than a man in the field. In Bangladesh there is little opportunity for part-time work. The present survey was conducted among full-time women and no significant differences were found between the three groups of women in using public places in the context of their employment pattern.

5.7.ii. Women in Markets

In South Asia, the market (*bazar*), where groceries are bought, was not accessible to either Muslim or Hindu women, especially for Muslim women observing *pardah* (Harriss and Watson, 1987). In Bangladesh, the *bazar* is a male dominated area, long informally prohibited for females, including young girls. Recently, particularly in urban areas, women have also become visible in these spaces. The women surveyed, apart from their work at home and at the office, sometimes also go to a market (table 5.5)

Table 5.5:
Number of Days for Different Outside Activities

Number of days	Shopping for groceries			Shopping for special items			Going out for change		
	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50	<30	30-50	>50
Nil	19 70.4 25.3	19 63.3 25.3	13 72.2 17.3	6 22.2 8.0	12 40.0 16.0	10 55.6 13.3	10 37.1 13.3	11 36.7 14.7	7 38.9 9.3
One	6 22.2 8.0	9 30.0 12.0	4 22.2 5.3	13 48.1 17.3	16 53.3 21.3	8 44.4 10.7	12 44.4 16.0	18 60.0 24.0	8 44.4 10.7
Two	2 7.4 2.7	1 3.3 1.3	1 5.6 1.3	4 14.8 5.3	1 3.3 1.3	0	5 18.5 6.7	1 3.3 1.3	2 11.1 2.7
Three	0	1 3.3 1.3	0	4 14.8 5.3	1 3.3 1.3	0	0	0	1 5.6 1.3
Total	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0	27 100.0 36.0	30 100.0 40.0	18 100.0 24.0

Bold = % of that group, *Italic* = % of the total

for groceries. Many said that they are reluctant to go to these *bazars* because of the overcrowding and the lack of hygiene. Some prefer to go to the New Market, *Kacha Bazaar*, where conditions are, comparatively, better; it may also be on their way to the office or close to their home, particularly if they live at Azimpur. A few women reported that their husbands cannot shop because they stay late at the office, working overtime. As these women have no refrigerator, they go to the *bazaar* for fresh meat, fish and vegetables on their way home from the office. It is clear that this traditionally male public place is now also being used by women when necessary, for the average time spent by each of the women in this survey in the market each week is over two hours.

5.7.iii. Women Shopping

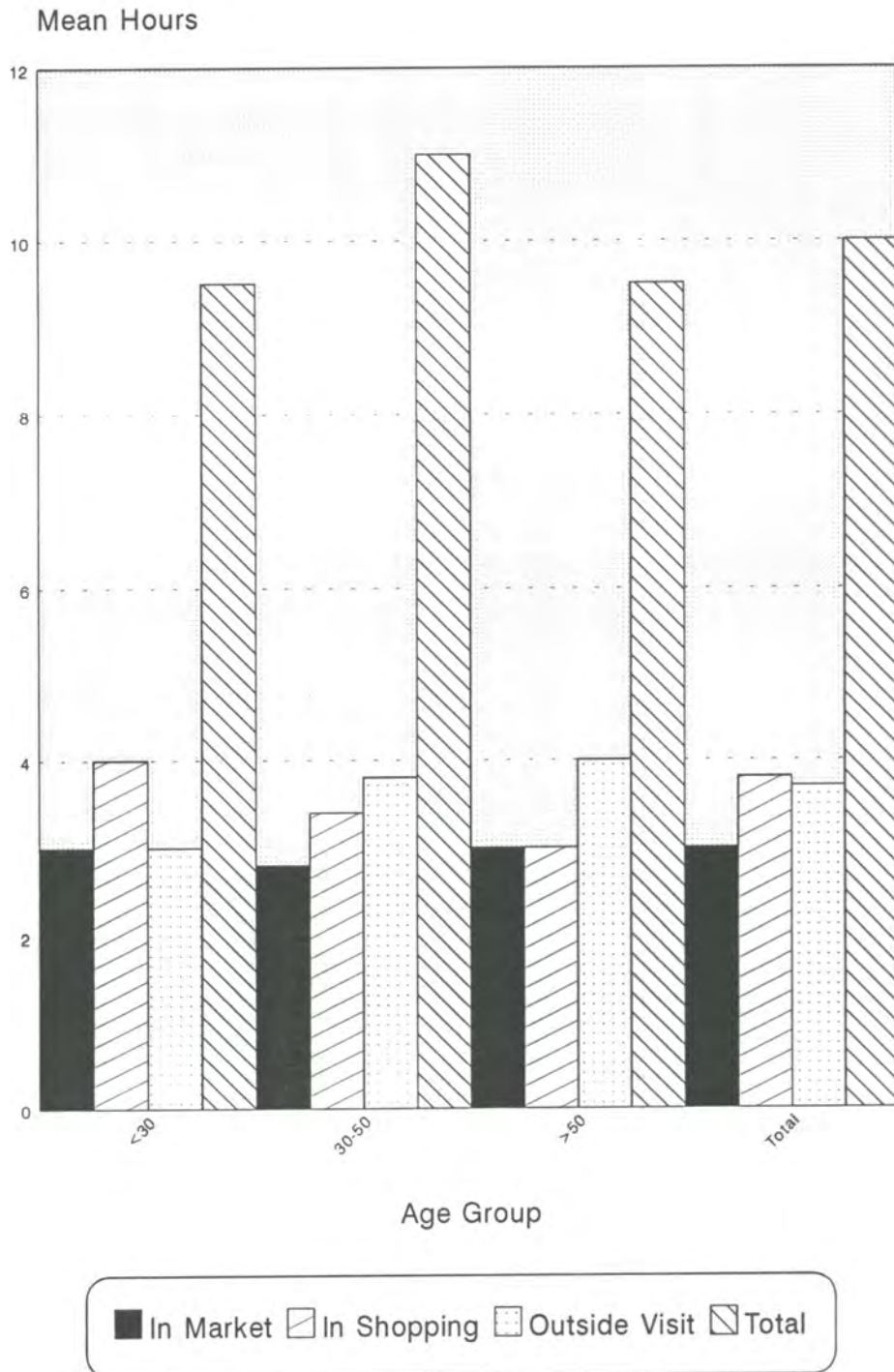
In contrast to market places, urban women in Bangladesh use shopping centres more frequently and spend longer in them. They prefer shopping centres to shopping streets because the centres are more compact and convenient, and away from the traffic, noise and dirt. Here, and to a lesser degree in other shops, they buy clothes, shoes, toys, and other personal and household articles. Women prefer to do this shopping themselves rather than ask the men to do it, as they will pay less, know more about the commodities and can make their own choice. When shopping for occasions such as religious festivals and marriage ceremonies, women are regarded as more appropriate than men. Some women also like to spend time in shopping centres to get ideas for their next real shopping. In this survey, women spent an average of over 3 hours per week in shopping centres and shops. More than half the women from each group go to the shops at least once a week (table 5.5) and even those who go less than weekly still go

sometimes. Only a minority of the women over fifty shop at all, although more go out "for a change". Women of the younger generation have a tendency to spend more time in shops than women over 50, indeed, four of the 17 young unmarried women shop as much as three days a week. This may be because they have no other household burdens, unlike the married women, so they have more time to spend in shops. Young women spend an average 4 hours in a week shopping (Fig.5.3). Shopping areas such as New Market, Gausia Market, Mauchak Market and the Elephant Road Shopping Complex are particularly used by the women studied. With the expansion of urban spatial structures the number and area of shopping complexes are also expanding. As a result more urban women are now visible in such public spaces and recent change is remarkable.

5.7.iv. Going Out for a Visit

Mazey and Lee (1983) found that the women of California spent more time in social visits than men. Sharma (1984) found that in Shimla, north India, women in every cool season met socially at a community meeting point. This survey sought to identify where the women go outside the house other than to the office. Most said that they are keen to keep up social relations with their relatives and visit them whenever they have time. More than 60% went out at least once each week for social visits, spending an average of 3.7 hours a week on this (Fig.5.3). Women tend to go to other private spaces such as the homes of neighbours, relatives or friends' homes rather than public places such as parks, clubs, cinemas, restaurants etc because they do not see these public places as safe. They fear kidnapping of themselves or their children, robbery from the person, sexual molestation or being physically or verbally harassed by men. About half the

Fig. 5.3: Weekly Mean Number of Hours Outside



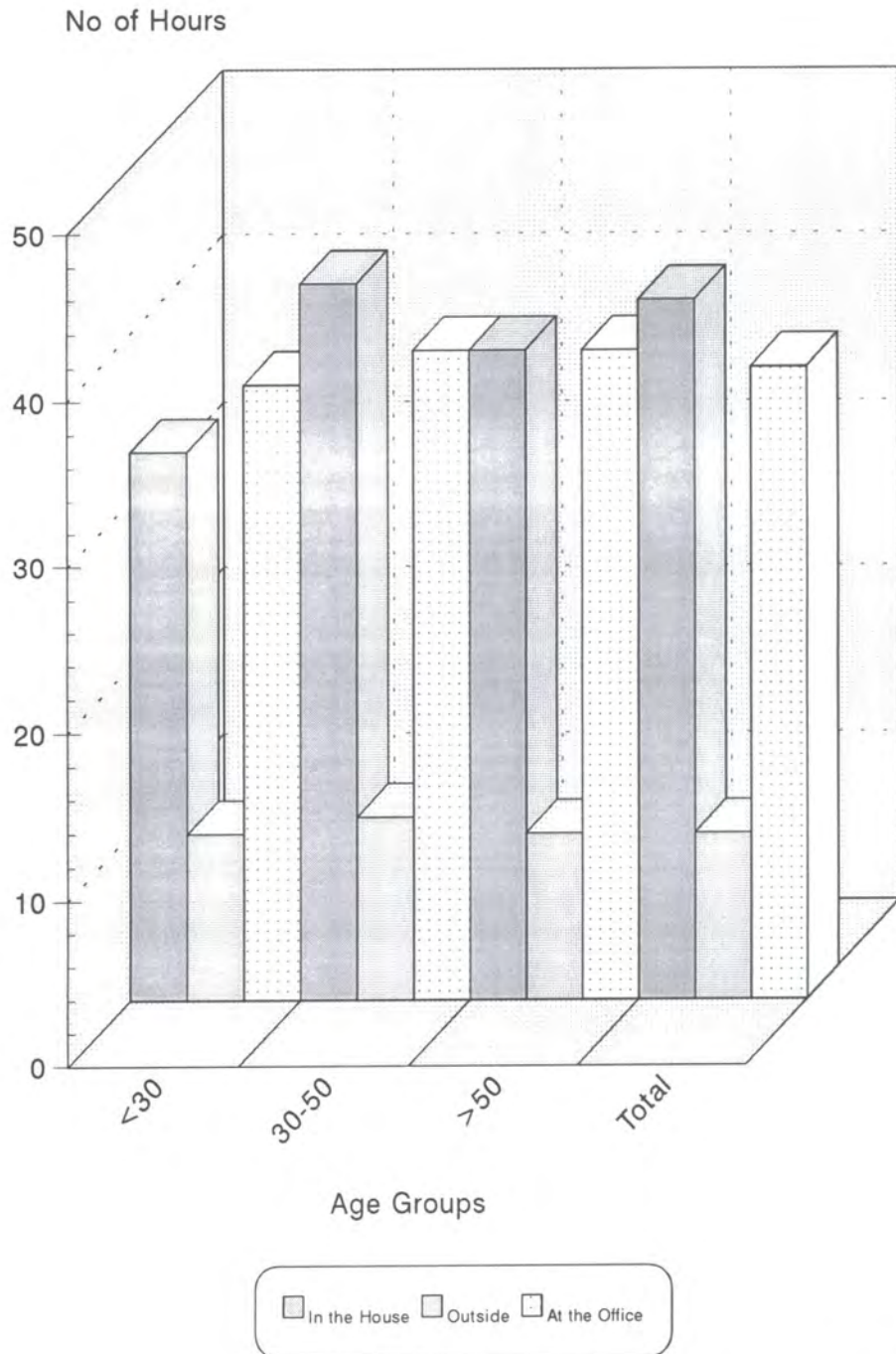
Source: Survey Data

women only go to these public places with relatives, colleagues or friends. Women also visit friends and relatives in hospitals or nursing homes. Thus, these middle-income women are not confined within their own home territories. They do go out, mainly for social visits rather than individual recreation. For social visits, they take their children, but not to the market, shopping centre or hospital.

5.8. Time Budgets in Private and Public Space

The concept of 'time geography' (Momsen and Townsend, 1987) can be applied to understand the time budgets of women in private and public space. Carlstein (1982) and Majumdar (1986) have suggested that the major problem in conventional time-budget analysis is to classify activities which are sometimes parallel or overlapping. Childcare, for example, may be combined with food preparation and other work. Women commonly do a number of domestic tasks simultaneously. It is, therefore, difficult to estimate the daily workload of a woman. Despite this difficulty an attempt is made here to measure the weekly time distribution pattern of the women studied in different kinds of activities, both inside and outside the home. Figure 5.4 shows that the weekly mean total of hours worked in the house is almost the same as that at the office, while household tasks outside the home take considerably less time. The women between thirty and fifty actually spend even more time in household tasks in the home than in paid work at the office. The weekly workload of the women studied is on average more than 80 hours in a week in household and office tasks together, and another 10 hours in other activities outside the home. It is therefore apparent that these middle-income working women use their time and space very intensively, as also documented by Majumdar (1986) for Dhaka. Khuda (1984) found women in a

Fig. 5.4: Weekly Mean Number of Hours Worked; Inside and Outside the House



Source: Survey Data

Bangladeshi village spending over 80% of their time in household tasks. The study of one urban and six rural areas by Farouk and Ali (1977) showed that both urban and rural women in Bangladesh worked longer hours in the home than did men in total. Caldwell *et al.* (1980) found the weekly working hours of an adult woman in household tasks in urban areas in Bangladesh to be 50 hours, as compared for 33 hours for a man's work. In the present study, in which all the respondents are women from middle-income families in Dhaka City, it proved that, irrespective of women's ages, education or grade of employment, their household activities are still their main work and these are strongly located within the private sphere. Therefore, it can be said that save for their workplace women are still confined to their home territories where they are supposed to stay at most stages of their lives. It is usual for girls in middle-income households in Dhaka not to go out alone: even when they are small, there is the risk of kidnapping, and after puberty they will still be taken to school and to visit their friends. Only mature, usually married, women may go out in the daytime alone, as in these cases they must to go to work.

5.9. Activities in Public Places: Controls and Constraints

In the West, there have been abundant studies of gender inequality in access to both public and private space (WGSG, 1984). In Bangladesh, little effort has been made yet in geography to investigate the inequalities of access between men and women or between women of different classes (Paul, 1992; Hussain, 1992). This study shows women's time in public places and their easy movement to these places are strongly controlled by a number of physical and social constraints.

5.9.i. Child Care

From a number of studies in Bangladesh (Chaudhury, 1976; Majumdar, 1986, 1988) and in Western societies (Tivers, 1985, 1988; Pickup, 1988; Bowlby, 1990) it can be seen that child care here is the most important practical restriction on women's activities in public space, particularly that of entry to the paid labour force. This is determined by culture and economy, for Nigerian women and others commonly take their children along when they work on the land or in the market (Spiro, 1987). In China, workplace creches have been traditional under Communism. In the UK today, some employers offer creches to their women workers, for which they are allowed tax relief. Cultural ideologies of motherhood attribute the care of children to women (Tivers, 1988), who alone can bear and breastfeed them, although often the carer is not the mother but an older daughter, a relative or a servant so that there is no biological basis for this. This constraint varies with family structure as well as with the family socio-cultural background. In Dhaka, despite many difficulties members of an extended family, particularly the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, may look after the children while their mother is out at work; after the servant, the mother-in-law is the most important source of child care (Chaudhury, 1976). The problem is very different and difficult for nuclear families. In this study, it was found that 17 women (56.7%) of those between 30 and 50 face problems of child care when they go out to work (table 5.6); all live in nuclear families. In Bangladesh the concepts of child minders and baby sitting are still unknown. There is still no government or private provision to care for children while their mothers are at the office. Each working mother copes with this constraint in her own way, often preferring to leave her children to the servant which is not always safe. The servant may physically abuse the children, inflicting pain to control them, or even

permit kidnapping.

5.9.ii. Carrying out Household Duties

Men's attitudes towards women's exposure outside the home may affect household discipline because women's prime duty is to do household tasks and maintain the

Table 5.6:
Home Constraints on Going Out

Age group	Look after children	Household activities	Nothing	Total
< 30	0	0	27 100.0 <i>36.0</i>	27 100.0 <i>36.0</i>
30-50	17 56.7 <i>22.7</i>	3 10.0 <i>4.0</i>	10 33.3 <i>13.3</i>	30 100.0 <i>40.0</i>
> 50	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	1 3.3 <i>1.3</i>	16 88.9 <i>21.3</i>	18 100.0 <i>24.0</i>
Total	18 24.0	4 5.3	53 70.7	75 100.0

Bold = % of that group, *Italic* = % of the total

household (see report of women in Bangladesh civil services, 1986 for detail). Majumdar (1992) states that even when middle-class women are working outside home, their marital responsibility still ties them to their conventional role as a good housewife and mother and thus limits their use of places outside the home. This survey again demonstrates women's high workload within the home, but in this case 4 women of the 75, only 3 (10%) of the aged 30 to 50, 1 woman (3.3%) of the aged over 50, and none

from those under 30, consider household tasks to be a constraint in their use of public space (Table 5.6). Women over 50 tend not to have young children of their own.

5.9.iii. Social Attitudes

One of the important constraints on women's use of public space in Bangladesh is the long-enduring social attitudes which restrict women in all classes. Women were traditionally prohibited from activities in public space and this was perpetuated by both religious and personal attitudes. Women are at risk of kidnapping, and, some years ago, might have acid thrown at them; sexual assaults also occur widely (Jahan, 1988). More than 40% of the women studied said that they have no security outside their home (table 5.7). Usually very few women go outside at night, so that a woman's use of public

Table 5.7:
Social Constraints on Going Out

Age group	No security	Unfriendly Stares	Religion	Insufficient transport	No comment	Total
<30	11	5	1	3	7	27
	40.7	18.5	3.7	11.1	25.9	100.0
	<i>14.7</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>36.0</i>
30-50	12	3	2	6	7	30
	40.0	10.0	6.7	20.0	23.3	100.0
	<i>16.0</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>8.0</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>40.0</i>
>50	10	0	4	1	3	18
	55.6		22.2	5.6	4.0	100.0
	<i>13.3</i>		<i>5.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>24.0</i>
Total	33	8	7	10	17	75
	44.0	10.7	9.3	13.3	22.7	100.0

Bold = % of that group, *Italic* = % of the total

places must shrink at night. Women's free movement and presence in public places is overwhelmingly constrained by pick-pockets, professional musclemen and many kinds of violence. 5 women (18.5%) under 30 said that they are harassed by men by word or look when they visit a variety of public places such as parks, shops or markets. Men may even throw rubbish at women. Some women reported discriminatory treatment at the office (table 5.8) although constitutionally each citizen has an equal right to all activities irrespective of age, gender or race.

Table 5.8:
Problems Faced at Office as a Women

Age group	As a woman ¹	No sep Toilet	No privacy	Promotion	Recreation	Nothing	Total
<30	7	0	1	2	1	16	27
	25.9		3.7	7.4	3.7	59.3	100.0
	<i>9.3</i>		<i>1.3</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>21.6</i>	<i>36.0</i>
30-50	5	1	0	9	4	11	30
	16.7	3.3		30.0	13.3	36.7	100.0
	<i>6.7</i>	<i>1.3</i>		<i>12.2</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>14.9</i>	<i>40.0</i>
>50	4	0	2	7	1	4	18
	22.2		11.1	38.9	5.6	22.2	100.0
	<i>5.3</i>		<i>5.3</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>24.0</i>
Total	16	1	3	18	6	31	75
	21.3	1.3	4.0	24.0	8.0	41.3	100.0

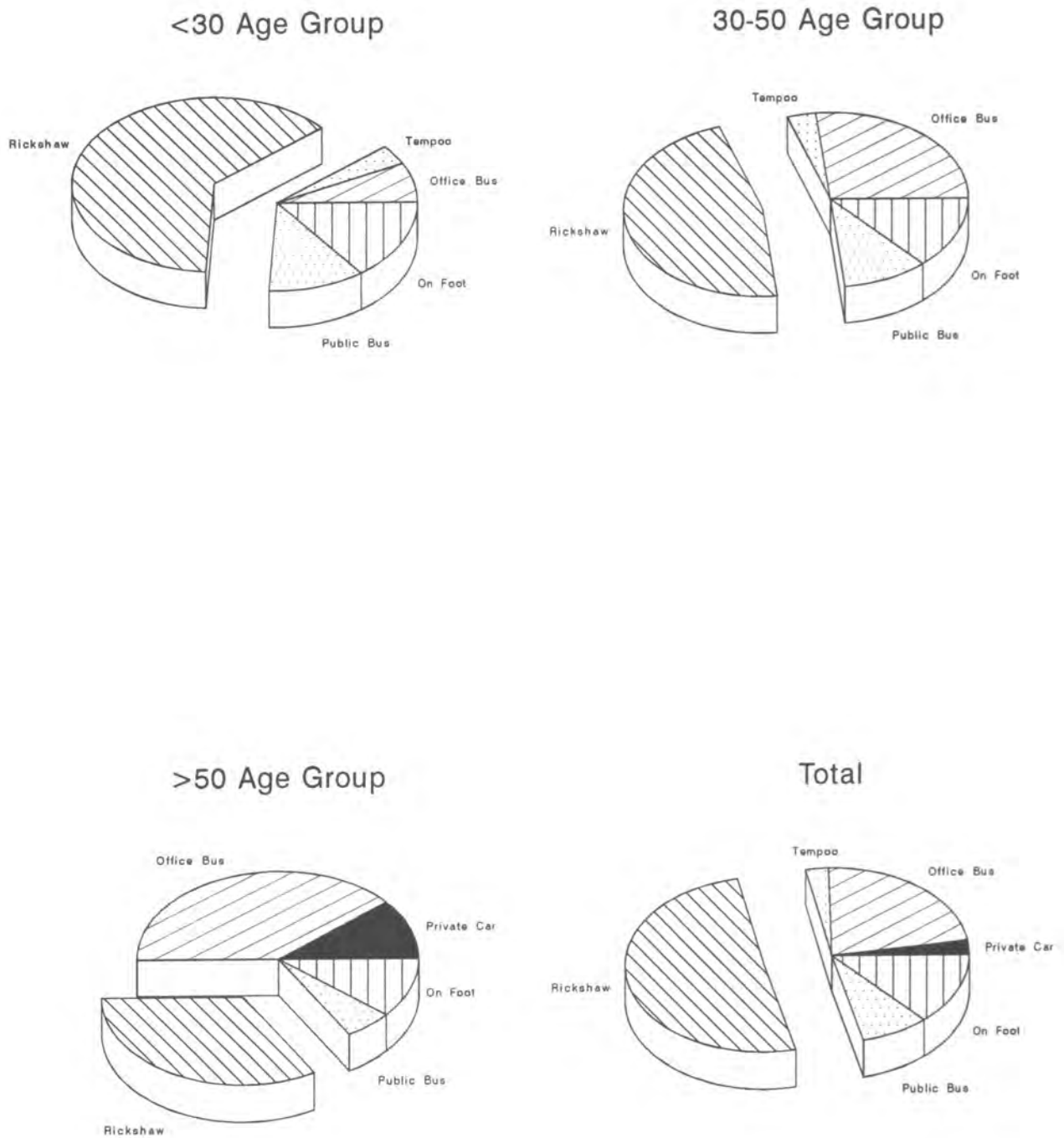
Bold = % of that group, *Italic* = % of the total ¹ getting less attention

Some respondents feel that less attention is paid to them because they are women and that they have less chance of promotion. Others recorded a lack of privacy or of facilities such as a separate toilet or common room. For middle-income women, however, sexual harassment at the office is not usual.

5.9.iv. The Urban Transport System

In many Third World countries, women's mobility and use of public space are controlled and constrained by insufficient and inadequate transport (Levy, 1992)). In Bangladesh, the urban transport system is very poorly developed and thoroughly inadequate (Islam, 1992b). Women are more vulnerable to such inadequate and insufficient transport facilities. The cycle rickshaw is the most popular form of transport for short distances in Bangladesh, but women are very vulnerable in a rickshaw, particularly in narrow alleys, because the sides are open; they may be robbed of their ornaments or touched by men. In a big traffic jam, vehicles are very close to each other and women are exposed to being touched in a rickshaw or tempo (see below). In the present study, the majority of women in all three groups use cycle rickshaws (Fig. 5.5) to get about, because of the insufficiency of state and privately owned public transport. Besides, a cycle rickshaw is more private, readily available and can get into narrow roads and alleys. A few women (2 out of 18) aged over 50 in this study have access to a private car but unlike the other two groups, none of the older women travel by tempo, which is an open-sided motor vehicle, cheaper than a rickshaw but more crowded and with very limited space, taking eight people at most. The poor availability of motorised public transport is a serious problem, particularly in the rush hour. One woman from Azimpur described this well: "I had a well-paid, salaried job in the Gulsun area. I had to change type of transport and then walk a few minutes to my office. Most days traffic jams made me late getting home from my office, sometimes even 8 o'clock at night. It was not safe for me to be so late. So I changed my job and though now my salary is not handsome but the job is convenient to get to". (She had to use both a bus and a rickshaw.) The present study, therefore, shows that the lack of a systematic,

Fig. 5.5: Transport Types Used



planned transport system in Dhaka City has restricted women's activities and mobility within the city.

5.10. Conclusion

It has been observed in the preceding discussion that middle-income working women of Dhaka City are heavily overloaded with household tasks. In public places their activities and freedom of movement are also drastically limited by a number of family and social constraints. The gender division of labour within and outside the home still exists, even for middle-income women who go out to work. Despite these difficulties, the attitudes of both men and women in this urban area are gradually changing due to the expansion of education and as well as their changing needs. Changes in activity patterns, both indoor and outdoor, have been observed among the three groups of women. Setting aside office time, the women over 50 like to spend more time at home while unmarried women under 30 go out more. The traditional family structure is gradually breaking down from the extended to the nuclear family type and thus the chance of help for household tasks from other members of the family is being reduced. Middle-income women are now under stress, carrying the double responsibility of tasks inside and outside the home. Most of these families cannot afford time-saving devices, and servants are found to be the most useful helping hands for the women. Maids may be considered as a manual household device, parallel to mechanical time-saving equipment. Married working women between thirty and fifty proved in this study to be more stressed than unmarried younger women or older married women in trying to fulfil their roles in domestic and public space. It may be concluded that social attitudes towards women's activity and movement in public places are still patriarchal. Despite

this, attitudes are gradually changing and now more women are seen in public places than in the recent past.

Chapter 6: GENDER AND MOVEMENT PATTERN

6.1. Introduction

Changing gender-related differentials in mobility and activity space have long been studied in social science, particularly by geographers (Momsen and Townsend, 1987; Brydon and Chant, 1989). This chapter will explore the mobility patterns of middle-income working women in Dhaka, which determine their activity space. Different kinds of mobility will be discussed, from life-time travel, whether migration or tourism, to everyday movement. Migration is a form of spatial mobility to which geographers have devoted particular attention, but it is only one form. "Mobility" is a rather broader term, as it covers all kinds of territorial movement, whatever the distance, duration or degree of permanence; within migration, some authorities distinguish circulation, a term given to short-term, repetitive or cyclical movements (Johnston, 1986). In this chapter, activities will be discussed under the following headings;

Migration

Patterns and Causes of Migration

Everyday Mobility

Pattern and Sequences of Daily Mobility

Lifetime Range

Marriage and Travel

Conclusion

6.2. Migration

Migration involves a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence by an individual or group (Johnston, 1986). Migration has been enormously influential in cultural and social change at all scales. Research has concentrated on both empirical and theoretical aspects of the economic and social causes and consequences of migration. There is, however, no comprehensive theory of migration, although attempts have been made to integrate migration into economic and social theory, spatial analysis and behavioural theory. In the late nineteenth century E.G. Ravenstein formulated 11 types of migration (see Johnston, 1986) which have been modified by subsequent research rather than fundamentally disproved.

6.3. Patterns and Causes of Migration

The study of pattern and causes of migration is an essential component of the geography of gender as it is an indicator for observers of life options at different places (Momsen and Townsend, 1987). The patterns of female migration rates and causes vary significantly from region to region and over time (Wilkinson, 1987). Fawcett *et al* (1984) for instance, identified the regional variation of female migration in South-East Asia and East Asia. Women, like men, may migrate alone, or as a part of family migration; they are more likely than men to engage in marriage migration (Momsen and Townsend, 1987).

6.3.i. Marriage Migration

Marriage is an important component of migration in both Africa and South Asia. Sharma (1984) in a study in Shimla found that marriage was the most important factor

in women's moves from rural areas to the city. In Muslim society women are usually spatially restricted by their cultural setting and do not easily migrate or even travel alone (Paul, 1992; Mahbub, 1992; Mernissi, 1975; Brydon and Chant, 1989). Due to the usually low participation rate of Muslim women in the labour force, their migration is primarily related to the institution of marriage rather than to direct economic pressures and attractions. In Bangladesh, as in many other Muslim societies, marriage is the most important event through which women have physical mobility (Elahi, 1989). Almost every marriage here is patrilocal, i.e., after marriage the bride moves to the groom's home, and most marriages are endogamous i.e. within their own religion. Thus, there is a steady movement of young women from their natal to their grooms' homes for marriage purposes. Hussain (1995) has indicated that 77% of female migrants to Dhaka City are married. In the present survey, nearly half (47.9%) of the married women had migrated to Dhaka City (table 6.1). Although these two studies were conducted in two different groups, one of lower-income and one of middle-income women, marriage migration is considerable in both cases. Previous studies (Mahbub, 1992; Hussain, 1992) have characterized Dhaka City women's marriage migration as rural-urban migration whereas in the present study both rural-urban and urban-urban migrations were recorded. How far women migrate for marriage varies from culture to culture, family to family. In India the distance of marriage migration may lead to the extreme isolation of the bride from her female kin (Harriss and Watson, 1987). The present study found the distance between the bride's natal and married home to vary from 1 mile to 200 miles. The women aged thirty to fifty tended to move longer distances at marriage than did women of over fifty. Nowadays closeness seems to be of less significance in arranging a marriage and distances of marriage migration are

gradually becoming longer than in the past. Many of the unmarried women of the under thirty age group do not expect the location or the distance of their future in-laws' home to be a problem for their marriage.

6.3.ii. Migration due to Transfer of Household Head

In Muslim societies, female migration patterns are largely determined by the migrational behaviour and patterns of their household heads, fathers or husbands. Hemmasi (1994) has shown that 80% of women migrants in Teheran followed their parents' and husbands' migration. The present study also found a considerable number of women migrating to Dhaka city as a result of the transfer of place of work of their household head. Out of 27 unmarried women, 7 (25.9%) had migrated to the city because their parents did and 4 women of 30-50 age group (13.3%) had migrated to join husbands who had transferred to the city (table 6.1). The general feature of such migration is a male-dominated migration stream. Married women, even when employed, usually migrate to join husbands who are already living or have moved to the city. The flow of such migration is dominantly one-directional, from female place to male place. One woman over 50 had travelled some 2000 miles to join her husband in Karachi (Pakistan) when he was posted there.

6.3.iii. Migration for Higher Education

Scope for higher education has not expanded widely in Bangladesh. Only 11 government universities, 6 private universities, 13 government medical schools, 4 engineering colleges and 4 private medical colleges (BBS, 1993) are available for higher education and most are located in the urban areas. Dhaka University plays a vital role in educating

young men and women, and in this study a considerable number of the educated women had graduated from this university. Because of its location, 6 unmarried women

Table 6.1:
Causes of Respondent's Migration to Dhaka City

Causes of Migration to Dhaka	Age groups			Total
	under 30	30-50	over 50	
Born there	10 37.0 <i>13.3</i>	4 13.3 <i>5.3</i>	3 16.7 <i>4.0</i>	17 22.66
Parental transfer	7 25.9 <i>9.3</i>	3 10.0 <i>4.0</i>	1 5.6 <i>1.3</i>	11 14.7
Husband's transfer	Not Applicable	12 40.0 <i>16.0</i>	11 61.1 <i>14.7</i>	23 30.7
Education	6 22.2 <i>8.0</i>	4 13.3 <i>5.3</i>	0	10 13.3
Job posting	4 14.8 <i>5.3</i>	3 10.0 <i>4.0</i>	0	7 9.3
Own Transfer	0	4 13.3 <i>5.3</i>	3 16.7 <i>4.0</i>	7 9.3
Total	27 100.0 <i>36.0</i>	30 100.0 <i>40.0</i>	18 100.0 <i>24.0</i>	75 100.0

bold = % of that group, *italic* = % of total

(22.2%) of the under 30 age group and 4 women (13.2%) of the 30-50 age group had to migrate to Dhaka for their higher education. Such migration to the city helped them to become familiar with the scope of the job market within the city and finally to get a job after their education.

6.3.iv. Job-seeking Migration

In developing countries like Bangladesh, scope for a wide range of available jobs is mostly centred in the big cities, particularly in the capital. This economic attraction stimulates the more qualified men and women in rural areas or small towns to migrate into the city. In Africa, urban migration used to be male-dominated but patterns are changing: in Lesotho and Tanzania, the increased flow of independent women to town is evidenced by the growing proportion of female urban migrants due to the growing female involvement in the urban labour market and has increased with the length of full-time education. About 49% of Lesotho women moved to town for economic reasons (Wilkinson, 1987). Patterns are different again in South-East Asia, but Renard (1987) found that a large number of village women in Northern Thailand had moved to urban areas to find work. Even in a Muslim society, Young and Salih (1987) postulated that a large proportion of young Malay girls have become migrants, residing away from the direct control of the family and earning wages to help support their families. In the present study, however, only 4 women (14.8%) of the under 30 age group and 3 women (10%) of the 30-50 age group have migrated to the city to find work, all when unmarried.

Women's migration and independent movement within Dhaka City have increased considerably during recent years, which is changing the social climate. Females migration patterns are still largely determined by the migration of their household heads and the institution of marriage. This type of female migration can be classified as **associational** migration. Economic causes, such as seeking a new job, a posting for a new job or a transfer for an existing job, are also influential in female migration,

particularly among the young and unmarried women. This type of female migration may be classified as **autonomous** migration. Among the middle-income working women of Dhaka City, women's associational migration is gradually changing towards a more autonomous type. Even so, within the life cycle of an individual woman, when she is single, higher education or work might involve autonomous migration, but as soon as she marries, her migration pattern will probably be closely related to her husband's job posting and again become associational. Such associational migration is male-dominated and in only rare cases does the husband choose to transfer his posting to where his wife has already been posted.

6.4. Everyday Mobility

The female activity space and daily mobility pattern of any society is largely reflected by the overall socio-cultural background of that society. In Muslim societies, like Bangladesh, women are not as frequently seen in public places as are men. Women's movement is traditionally confined within their household territories. Unlike men they usually go outside only when it is unavoidable and necessary. The geography of female daily mobility patterns here has hitherto been completely unexplored. Gender-based, spatio-temporal variation of daily mobility, particularly within urban areas, has great potentiality for geographical investigation.

6.5. Pattern and Sequences of Daily Mobility

What then are the characteristics of the daily mobility patterns of the women studied here, at different stages of their lives?

6.5.i. When at School

In Bangladesh, schooling is two-staged; primary school from age 5 to 9 and secondary school from age 10 to 14. Primary schools are gender-integrated and more densely distributed. Secondary schools are generally gender-segregated and in practice the spatial segregation of the two genders starts at this stage, at or before puberty. The daily travelling pattern and maximum activity space of a schoolgirl depends on how far away her school is located. The number of girls' schools were so few in the 1940s that the women of the over 50 age group had no choice, and no chance to select a better school and had to travel a long distance. The school journey was the highest daily distance they travelled. With the later rapid expansion of education the number of girls' schools has increased considerably. The women of the 30-40 age group, and particularly the under 30 age group, had the chance to choose better schools. Many of the women of these two groups travelled further to attend a better school than the nearby local one and, as a result, the average distance and the range for all age groups remain nearly the same (table 6.2). Expansion of female education, the choice of better, more distant schools and better transport facilities have made it easy for schoolgirls to expand their daily mobility patterns and activity spaces in urban areas beyond those of a few decades ago.

Table 6.2:
Daily Distance Travelled at Different Stages of Life (in miles).

Age groups	School life		College/uni. life		Professional life	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
< 30	1.3	1-3	3.2	1-20	3.2	1-9
30-50	1.4	1-5	2.3	1-9	3.3	1-9
> 50	1.2	1-2	1.5	1-5	3.1	1-6
Total	1.3	1-5	2.4	1-20	3.2	1-9

6.5.ii. At College and University Life

With the admission of more women into higher education, each is changed not only in terms of her attitude towards life but also in her daily mobility pattern. A woman with higher education usually has more freedom of daily movement and enjoys more autonomy in deciding her daily movements. A girl's daily activity space is greatly expanded as soon as she is admitted to either college or university. She now has less family restrictions than when she was in school. The average travelling distance between her college/university and place of residence is 2.4 miles and is determined both economically and socially. One woman of the under 30 age group (3.7%) had to travel 9 miles daily from her home to the college because her parents could not afford to keep her in the college hostel. Similarly 2 women of the 30-50 age group (6.7%) travelled daily 8 miles to college. In Dhaka University the scarcity of accommodation in halls of residence forces students to arrange private accommodation outside the university campus. The introduction of university bus services throughout the city and even beyond the city has expanded the daily travelling pattern of many women students. Of the under 30s, 3 women (11.1%) travelled everyday from Tongi to the University (about 20 miles) - and travelled twice a day or more. The level of higher education has expanded not only the daily travelling distance but also the frequency of travel.

6.5.iii. Professional Life

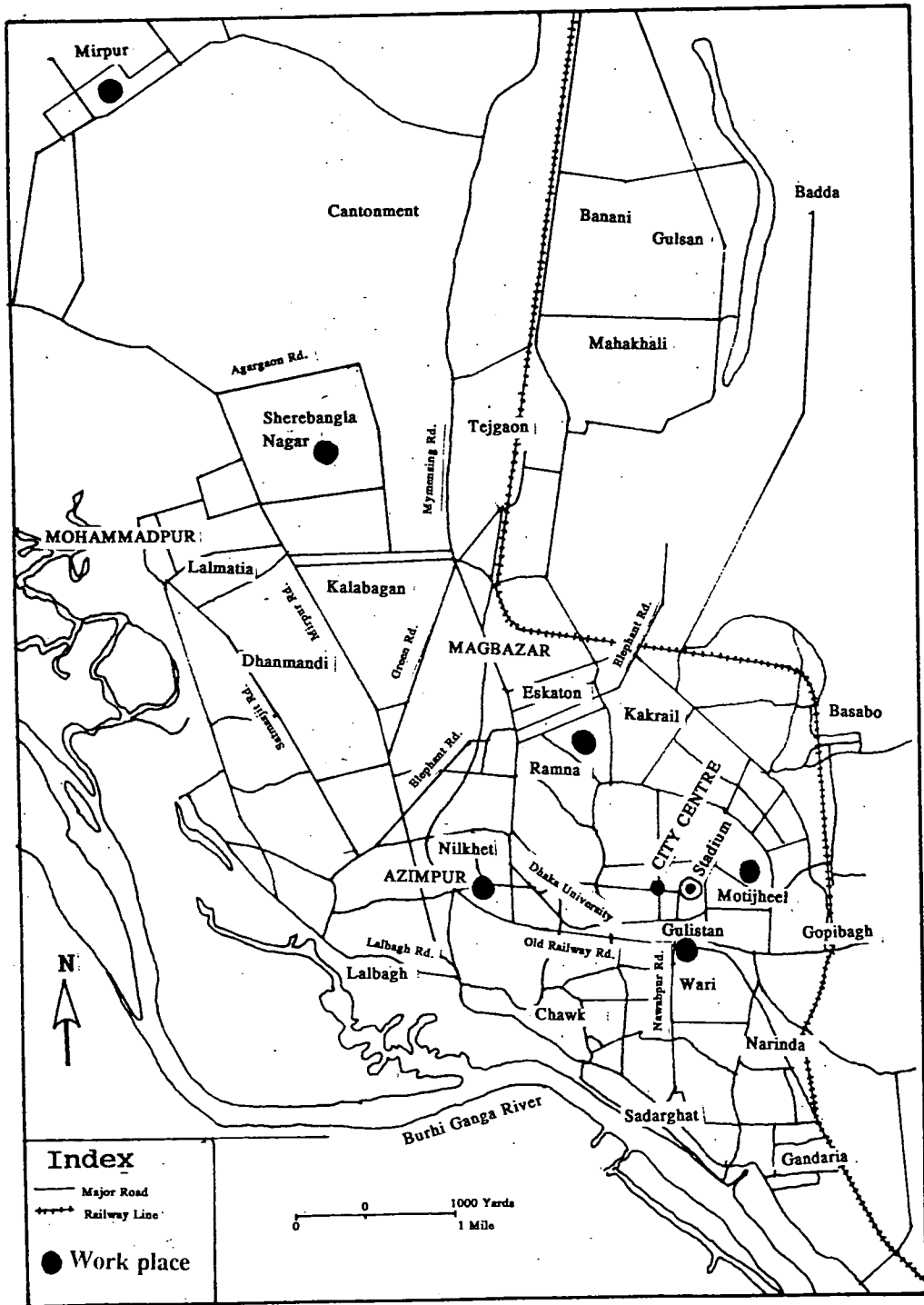
A woman's daily travelling pattern relates to her work as well as to her education. Women working in NGOs have very mobile duties. In this study, the average distance travelled daily by the women overall was 3.2 miles, the range being from 1 to 9 miles

(Table 6.2). Women's participation in various services extends their activity space in the city. Mahbub (1992) reported that the low mobility of rural women is primarily rooted to their low participation in economic activities other than in the home. In the present study it is seen that the working places of all the 75 women are widely scattered throughout the city, as in the following places; Motijheel commercial area, Tupkhana-Segunbagica area, Gulistan-Fulbaria area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area, Azimpur-Nilkhet area, Mirpur area and other areas (Figure 6.1).

6.6. Lifetime Range

Besides the daily travelling pattern, it is also important to understand the maximum distances travelled by the women studied at different stages of life. Figure 6.2 shows that at school the average maximum distance travelled by the women of 30-50 age group and the over 50 age group are nearly the same, 146.6 and 145.1 miles respectively. For the women of under 30 age group this figure is significantly smaller, 101.8 miles. After the division of Bengal in 1947 many people, Hindu and Muslim, migrated; relatives of many families still remain on the other side of the political boundary with India. One woman of the over 50 age group reported that she occasionally visited her grand-parents in Calcutta with her parents when she was of school age. Because of such travel with other members of the family the average figure is higher than for the under 30 age group. During college/university life the average figure is higher for the 30-50 age group, 353.5 miles, than for the under 30 and over 50 age groups, 234.1 and 216.7 miles respectively. Women of the under 30 age group show considerably higher average maximum distance travelled in their service life, 565.8 miles compared to 291.5 and 107.3 miles for the 30-50 and the over 50 age

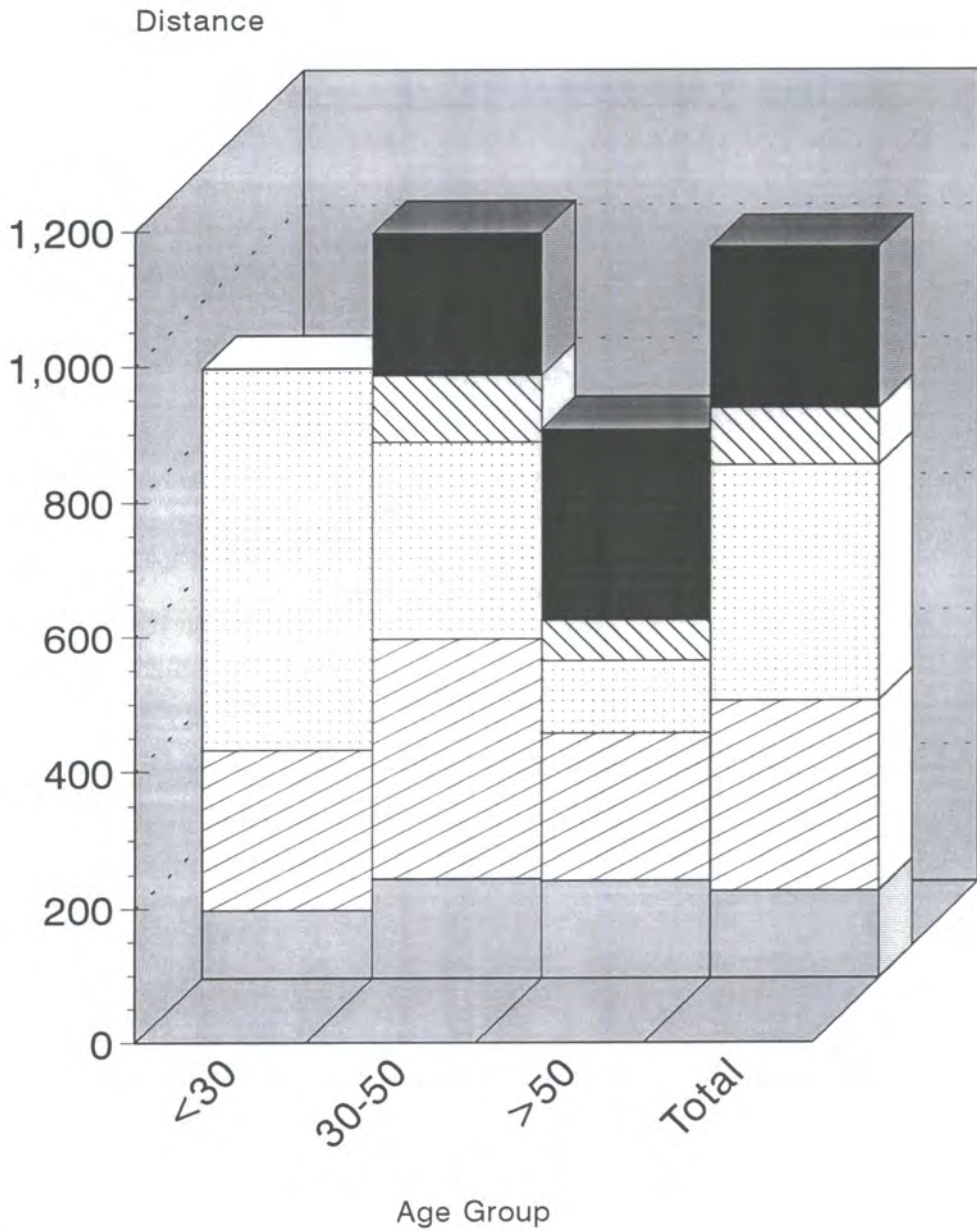




6.1 Dhaka City Showing Respondents' Working Places

Fig. 6.2: Maximum Distance Travelling Pattern

Mean Distance by age group



Source: Survey Data

groups respectively. One woman of the 30-50 age group had travelled to four SAARC countries, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka during her university life as part of a study tour. 16 women (21.33%) visited Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamathi as part of their study tour during higher education. In her professional life one woman of the under 30 age group had travelled to London (about 5000 miles) and one to Japan (about

Table 6.3:
Respondent's Travelling Pattern by Occupation (in miles)

Occupational status	Service life (daily)		Service life (maximum)		Life time (maximum)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Govt. gazetted	4.1	1-9	1673.3	15-7000	2312.0	50-7000
Govt. non-gazetted	2.9	1-9	70.6	15-400	541.5	12-4000
Govt. school	3.4	1-9	112.6	3-300	537.1	150-2000
Private school	2.0	1-5	8.3	4-20	474.0	200-1000
Private farms	3.1	1-7	10.1	5-50	314.3	200-400
NGOs	3.3	1-6	234.4	12-400	344.4	100-500

6000 miles) for training purposes. In the 30-50 age group one woman had travelled to London for the same purpose. Within the country 3 women (4%) travelled about 400 miles for training purposes. The present study, therefore, shows that the pattern of long-distance travel by middle-income working women in Dhaka is both associational and autonomous. The distance travelled during school and in some cases during college life is associated with the travelling pattern of other members of the family. But during

university life and service life their long distance travelling pattern is associated with some assignments such as study tours or training.

6.7. Marriage and Travel

The spatial mobility of a newly married woman in Bangladesh is closely associated with the socio-cultural location of her in-laws' family. The social attitude, educational level and occupational status of her husband will also play a significant role in the expansion of her activity space. Due to overall changes of social attitude in recent years, especially in urban areas, marriage is not as powerful in every case as in the past in dictating women's activity space after marriage. The present study of 48 married women shows differential mobility patterns in different age groups. Women of the 30-50 age group had a more extensive activity space than those of the over 50 age group in their first month of marriage. The average daily and average maximum distance travel of women of the over 50 and the 30-50 age groups in the first month of marriage were 1.8 (daily), 61 (maximum), 2.5 (daily), and 98 miles (maximum). Within one year of marriage women's travelling pattern become nearly normal and after that factors (as discussed earlier) other than the marriage are more influential. Daily travelling patterns between the first month and the first year of marriage is nearly the same for both groups, 3-4 miles.

6.8. Conclusion

Movement patterns and their causes clearly differ between these three groups of middle-income working women in Dhaka city. For the women over 50, the pattern of travel has less variety and is largely associational. Women under 50 have a higher educational

and employment status than those over 50, which is allowed to lead to greater mobility. Marriage as a factor determining women's movement was more strongly influential in the past than it is today. Movement by single women under 30 is more frequent, more extensive, mostly autonomous and significantly controlled by employment components. For working, middle-income women in Dhaka City, movement patterns clearly differ between the generations, as a result of both social and economic causes. Patterns for housewives remain to be explored.

Chapter 7: CASE HISTORIES

7.1. Case one: Eshita of the under 30 Age Group

Name:¹ Miss Eshita Haque. Age: 29 years. Educational status: M.A (economics). Occupational status: Assistant Commissioner. Home District; Bogora. Present address: Azimpur.

Eshita was born into a traditional Bengali Muslim family. She grew up under her family's religious discipline and her freedom of movement was strictly controlled. She completed her school and college life in Bogora. She was only allowed to study in a girls' school and girls' college and hardly left the city at that time. Just once, she went on a picnic from the college to Natore, about 50 km from Bogora. During the winter holidays she went several times to her grandparents' home with other members of the family.

Eshita was a brilliant student. She decided to seek higher education and her father agreed to send her to Dhaka University. This was the first time she had travelled a long distance, about 250 km. Her attitude towards life was greatly changed after her admission to the university. She said **"I become very ambitious about my life and since then I take my own decisions about my career"**. At the university, she was studying alongside the men students which helped her to understand their attitude about women in society. She said **"I had very good relationships with them (boys) and sometimes we had long discussion on women and women's development. I think, they also realise the problem"**. She was deeply influenced by her participation in various seminars

¹ For the privacy of the respondent a different name is used

on women. Her paper "Issues of women's development in Bangladesh" came top in a competition held by her residential hostel (like a college at Durham). She thinks that the spread of opportunities for education and employment among women can be very effective in developing their confidence about life and their autonomy in society.

Eshita's movement pattern has also changed since her university life. She can now go freely alone to markets or shopping centres; but she prefers to go with her friends. During her university career she visited Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Rangamati on study tours. To participate in international rangers' camps, Eshita also visited Bombay in India and Kathmandu in Nepal.

For two years Eshita has been an Assistant Commissioner at the Ministry of Flood control and Rehabilitation. She now lives in the Dhaka Ladies Hostel for Working Women, where she must herself do all her own chores such as cooking, cleaning and laundry. Each month she sends Tk 1000 (about 25% of her salary) to her parents. She contributes to the family budget and now has a considerable influence on family decisions, particularly about the education of her younger brothers and sisters. She said **"I think my parents will not decide my marriage without my consent"**.

Eshita thinks that society's attitudes to women are gradually changing. Women can now bear official responsibilities very efficiently and effectively. It will take some time to work on equal terms with men but the process has already begun. She argues that it is very difficult for a woman to combine both office and domestic work effectively and that man should share some of the household chores. She said **"If both wife and**

husband are in employment, then it is better to share the household tasks before and after office hours. It could save the wife from being overburdened and the couple's life could be more peaceful".

Eshita believes that family attitudes in society are also changing. Many families now have women who work outside. She said "I think we are now much better than our mothers and grandmothers".

7.2. Case Two: Laboni of the under 30 Age Group

Name; Miss Laboni Khan, Age; 28 years, Educational status; M.A (sociology) Occupational status; Field supervisor in an NGO, Home district; Dhaka, Present address; Moghbazer.

Laboni was born in Dhaka, the third of a family of five. Her father works on a private farm and now they live in a rented house at Moghbazer. She works as a field supervisor in an NGO. This Dhaka-based NGO has some ongoing projects all over Bangladesh. Her responsibility is to supervise the project activities in different parts of the country. She, therefore, has a very mobile job. She said "Except the Chittagong Hill Tract, I have travelled to most parts of the country in the last year of this job". Her father does not like this job because she becomes very tired when she travels long distances. He is very worried about her safety, particularly in new places. But Laboni likes the job. She said "I enjoy new places, new people and their culture. But in the rural areas it is very difficult to work. Rural people do not like to see a woman work freely and openly. Sometimes I ride a motorcycle in the villages as part of my job, which is very surprising to those people. Some of them are very angry with me". She took the competitive examination for the Civil Service but did not pass. She said

"I will continue in this job until I can manage a better government job. But I like this job because I am getting a very handsome salary here."

She does not need to contribute any money to the family budget as the family is supported by her father's and brother's incomes. She still occasionally spends money for the family when she wishes. She said **"Last month I gave TK 15,000 to my father to get a new telephone line. We now have a telephone and I can talk to my family when I am in the field"**. Laboni is making her own selection for marriage, having chosen an engineer. No-one in the family knows this yet. She said **"Some time next year we will get married and I shall tell my family just before. I think my family will approve"**.

Laboni does not mind going to the market for groceries. But she said **"I have no time to go there."** When she has time, she enjoys going to the Newmarket (rather better *bazaar*, and shopping centre) or the Gausia or Elephant Road shopping complexes or other shopping centres to buy clothes and other things. Like Eshita she believes that social attitudes are gradually changing. She said **"We have some problems over safety, but I think a woman can do all kinds of work. I am very happy that my male colleagues are very helpful to me"**.

7.3. Case three: Shabnam of 30-50 Age Group

Name; Mrs Shabnam Chaudhury, Age; 36 years, Educational status; M.Sc (geography), Occupational status; Computer officer, Home district; Khulna, Present address; Mohammadpure.

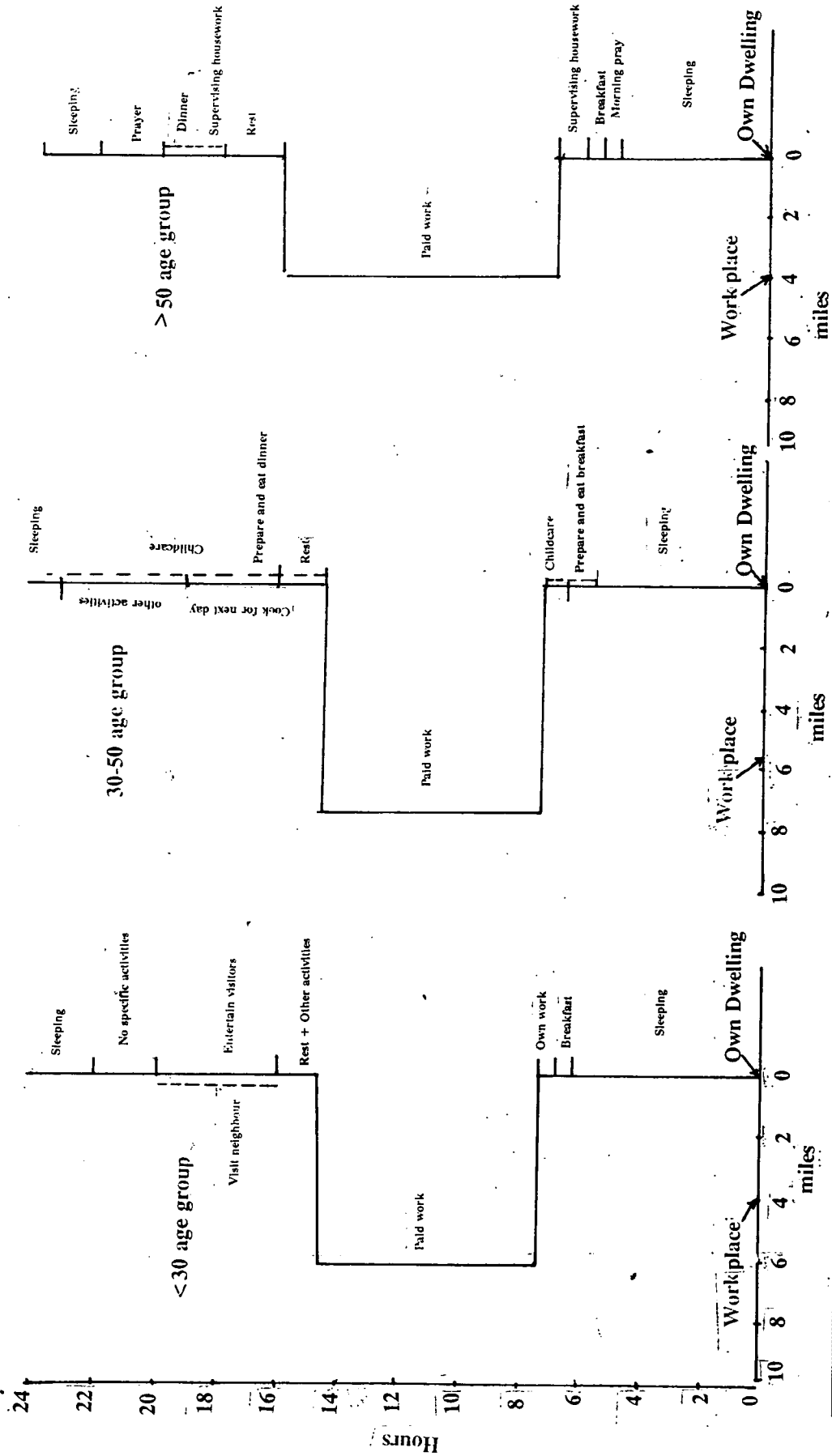
Shabnam was born in Khulna City, into a not very restrictive middle-class family. All

her four brothers and sisters are highly educated and she took her M.Sc in geography from Dhaka University. Her husband is a businessman and they have one son aged two.

Shabnam has had some family problems since her marriage. Her in-laws family wanted her to be a full-time housewife which she did not like. She spent the first year of her marriage living with her in-laws, in difficulties with them and mentally very distressed. She said **"As an educated woman how could I be at home full-time without doing any money-earning work? So I decided to go to Dhaka for a job."** She left her two-year-old son with her husband and mother-in-law and came to her sister's home in Dhaka, from where she began to take some computer courses. She got a job in an NGO as a computer operator, but the salary was too poor and she sought another, better job. She could not apply for government service because she was more than 30 years old. She said **"I was always worrying about my son. I had no mental peace and was gradually becoming frustrated. But I am lucky that finally I get this job in a semi-government office as a computer officer and my present salary is good"**. Shabnam is happy now. She is now thinking of bringing her son, husband and mother-in-law to Dhaka. She said **"I think if my husband can shift his business to Dhaka he could do better. Besides, my son will get a better education here than Khulna"**. She is now looking for a house to rent near her new office.

Shabnam was good at school sports. She participated in many local, regional and national competitions and won many medals. Her family had no problem with this, but other people did not like it. She travelled to many parts of the country and also abroad to places like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. She said **"If you visit**

Fig. 7.1: Everyday Activity and Space in a Working Day by Age Group¹



¹ The time-geographic approach offers the potential of dealing with women's activities in space and time so that complex interconnections become visible. Time-geography within a branch of cultural geography was developed under Tomten Hagström's leadership. He designed a way of looking at interconnections between space, time and peoples' actions (Fritberg, 1993). There are obvious advantages in the use of a time-budget approach to show activity patterns. Despite, the methodological problems posed by the use of space-time budgets in research are formidable. Tivers (1985) mentioned problems of a time-space diagram; it is very hard to collect answers that correspond to reality with degree of accuracy because people often do more than one thing at a time. This study found the same problem and none of the women use a diary. Case studies, for example, did help the researcher to build up an idea of the daily activities, space and duration. Time-space diagrams have been reconstructed for each age-group from this information.

different places, talk with different people, then you can realise yourself. I think a woman should not confine herself to household tasks. She should realise that she is quite capable of working in parallel to a man".

7.4. Case four: Pallabi of 30-50 Age Group

Name; Mrs Pallabi Ahmed, Age; 34 years, Educational status; M.Sc (political sciences), Occupational status; Government school teacher, Home district; Bogora, Present address; Azimpur.

Pallabi Ahmed was born into a very simple, middle-class family in Bogora, but was lucky in marrying into a very good family. Her husband is an engineer of the Bangladesh Planning Commission in Dhaka, her mother-in-law is the headmistress of a girls' high school in Bogora. Despite being a woman of the older generation, her mother-in-law has a very progressive attitude about women in society. One day she said to Pallabi **"I would like to see that you have smoothly completed your university education and I advise you not to get pregnant now"**. Pallabi was a 2nd year student in political science at Rajshahi university when she married, but in her 3rd year she had an unexpected pregnancy. Her mother-in-law took the responsibility of the newborn baby and encouraged Pallabi to continue her studies. She said **"I was staying at the university hostel but my heart was always with my son. I became very hard and finally I completed my B.A and M.A in political science. During this time, my mother-in-law looked after my son"**. Having completed her education, Pallabi got a job in a government high school but was posted to Pabna District. She was not willing to lose the company of her son again, so she decided not to take the job. But her mother-in-law encouraged her and advised her to take it. Pallabi said **"My husband is a silent man. He never says anything against his mother's decision. So I joined the**

school. I was there for two years." She had a very hard time there, for she could neither see her son nor her husband. Most of the time she was very depressed, but finally she was able to transfer to a job in Dhaka, under the government act: 'Wife and husband can work in the same place under a special concession'. The first four years of her married life was not very smooth. Now she is well settled and last year she gave birth to another baby. Beside her office hours she is very busy with child care and other household activities. She has a part-time servant who helps her in household chores. Her mother-in-law has sent a teenage boy to look after and play with her children. Pallabi's husband sometimes helps her in housework, mostly in tidying up. She said "Now I am very happy but I think I could never have got here if my mother-in-law had not encouraged me".

7.5. Case five: Dillara of the over 50 Age Group

Name; Mrs Dillara Khatun, Age; 55 years, Educational status; I.A., Occupational status; Government school teacher, Home district; Kustia, Present address; Moghbazer.

Dillara is the head teacher of a government primary school. She was born in Kustia and passed a greater part of her life there with her in-laws family. Her husband was a doctor and is now retired. Dillara first came to Dhaka with her husband in 1969. During 1971 the city was very unstable due to the liberation movement, so she went back to Kustia. She said "We walked two weeks from Dhaka to Kustia with three children. I never walked such a long distance in my life. We were always in anxiety about Pakistani army on our journey." After ten years of independence they again came to Dhaka in 1981 and have been there ever since. They bought their house at Moghbazer in 1985. Dillara has four daughters, two of whom are married. She was

promoted to head teacher in 1990.

Dillara had a heavy load of household work load in the early stages of her marriage, when she lived with her in-laws in a joint family. Now her household workload is very light. She has two servants, one full-time and one part-time. Usually, she stays at home and she does not approve of the free movement of women. She said **"I think the society is gradually going towards worse things than the past. Women have lost their *haya* (shame). They do not practice *pardah* and crimes related to women have also increased"**.

Dillara has good control over family decisions and chose their present house. She said **"My husband does not interfere with me in any family decision. My two daughters were married by my own selection"**. She thinks women should primarily concern themselves about family domestic decisions and their husbands with outside decisions. She said **"I don't mind if a woman works outside; I am also working. But she must perform the *pardah*. I don't allow my daughters to go outside without *pardah*."**

7.6. Case six: Zinat Ara of > 50 Age Group

Name: Mrs Zinat Ara Begum, Age; 54 years, Educational status; B.A. (pass), Occupational status; Government school teacher, Home district; Dhaka, Present address; Azimpur.

Zinat Ara was born in 1941 in Dhaka and lived there ever since. She married when she was only 15 years old. She said **"In our time parents always tried to arrange marriage of their daughters at an early age. If any girl was not married by 20 then**

that was not easily accepted by relatives and neighbours". Her husband was a government officer, now retired. They have three daughters and one son and have lived in this area for 15 years. Zinat was married just after leaving school and completed her university education later. She said **"My husband always encouraged me to further study."** After graduation she joined a school as a teacher. The school was then private; now it is run by the government. She said **"In our time it was not very difficult to get a job because at that time very few women were educated and willing to work outside"**.

Zinat Ara's movement was very limited at the early stages of her life. She hardly ever went to other parts of the city alone. Her husband was transferred to Karachi (then west Pakistan) and she was there for two years. That is the greatest distance she has travelled in her life. Sometimes she visited her in-laws in Comilla District, but always with her husband. At present her activity space is greatly expanded. She said **"When I was at your (the researcher's) age I could not move as freely as you. Nowadays, sometimes I go alone to shopping centres to shop, but these places are very crowded and unsafe. I don't like the noise."**

Zinat Ara has seen many changes in society and says that a woman's life has been greatly changed during last two decades. She said **"Twenty years ago society was more rigid and orthodox. Then women had no freedom and autonomy. Now, my daughter can move more freely. But I don't like her to stay outside the home after sunset because it is not safe"**.

Zinat Ara has very little housework, having one servant to help her. Her daughters also help in household tasks. Her elder daughter is married and has one son; Zinat likes to spend time with her grandson. She said **"My grandson is my love. When I have time, I go to my daughter's home (in the same city) with my husband and play with our grandson. Our life is at its end. But we like to see our daughters happy"**.

Chapter 8: CHANGING PATTERNS: A DISCUSSION

8.1. Introduction

The study of social change and its effects, together with its measurement, and theory had long been the field of the sociologist. Recently, human geographers have become interested in studying socio-spatial change and more recently gender geographers have examined such change in the context of gender and gender relations. In the present chapter, changes in the position of women over time in Bangladesh will be explored under the following heads:

Women's Education

Women's Employment

Women's Activity Space

Conclusion

8.2. Women's Education

The social norms of no society are absolutely static. They are subject to change either slowly and constantly or rapidly and catastrophically. Bangladesh has experienced considerable change in many of her social norms and traditions during the last few decades. During the present decade, perhaps, the change is everywhere in society and its consequences are also, perhaps significantly, everywhere. The expansion of education is one of the most important factors in changing social behaviour toward a better way of life. The light of education was the first step towards women's modernization in Bengal. During the period of Muslim Nawabs and Subahdars some sporadic social reforms occurred, mostly in urban centres such as Calcutta and Dhaka,

which brought some change to women's lives. However, for a long time men did not recognize a need to educate women. Murshid (1983) postulated that after the establishment of British rule in 1757, a slow but appreciable social change occurred around women's education. J.E.D. Bethune, a former brilliant student of Oxford University, established the first girls' school, the Victoria Girls' School, in 1849. Before this, elite women were educated privately at home by their parents, brothers, or husbands. This type of private education known as *zenana* education gradually became popular in traditional society.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries female formal education was considered forbidden in Bengali society. A few social reformers played an evolutionary role in changing this situation. In the early 20th century Begum Rokeya (1880-1932), the daughter of a Muslim landlord and the wife of a civil servant, through her short stories and essays portrayed a caricature of *purdah* and the sufferings of the women of Bengal. Another contribution of hers was the establishment of a girls' school in 1911. Her two-front attack against women's illiteracy and *purdah* laid the basis for gradual but deep seated changes in the position of Muslim women.

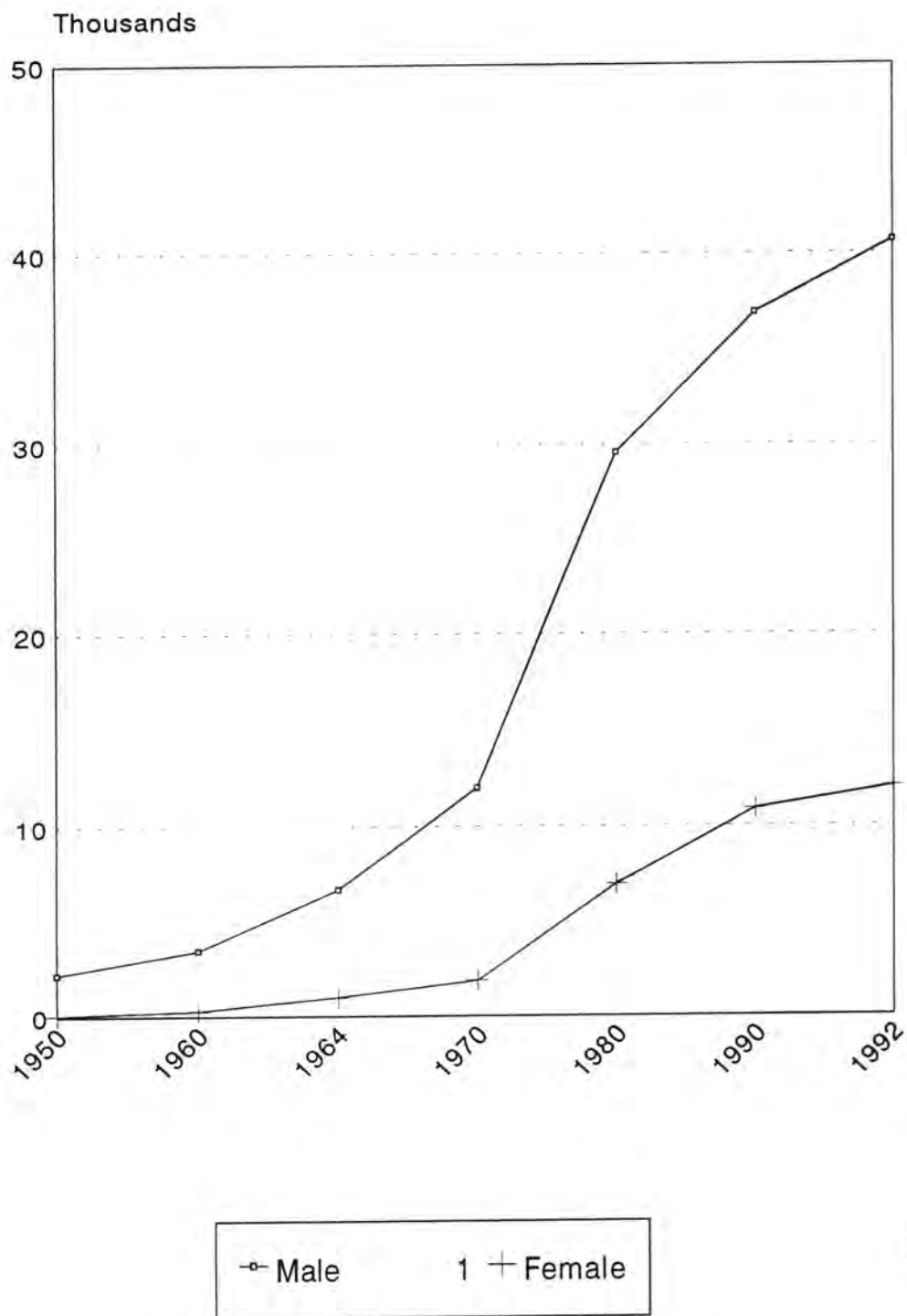
Under the rule of Pakistan (1947-1971), female education was severely restricted and on several occasions attempts were made to close female schools and colleges (Ahmed, 1985). On 28th November 1948 the Provincial Chief Minister issued a statement saying "It is highly disrespectful for young Muslim girls to go parading on the roads" (cited in Ahmed 1985). In 1950s social attitudes were against higher education for women, mainly because institutes of higher education such as universities, medical colleges etc

were not gender segregated and it was not acceptable for a Muslim woman to sit and talk together with a male student. Salahuddin (1990) mentioned that during 1955-65 very few women had the opportunity to gain higher education which was only for urban middle class or upper class families. In the present study, the proportion of higher education among the women over 50 is considerably lower than in the other two groups.

In the late 1960s, the attitude towards female education started to change rapidly. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 this changing process accelerated. Social attitudes towards women are now changing rapidly and female education is greater at present than in the recent past. Also, between 1961 and 1981 the male literacy rate fell from 31.4 to 31.0 per cent while the female rate rose from 10.7 to 16.0 (BBS, 1991). Comparable trends in the absolute and relative growth of female students are observable in the institutions of higher education including the general Universities (in Bangladesh general Universities have all general subjects except engineering and agricultural subjects) where women accounted for 20.0% of all students in 1984-85 compared to 17.9% on 1980-81 (Adnan, 1988).

Women's participation in higher education has also increased considerably during the Bangladesh period. Figure 8.1 shows the expansion of female higher education since 1950. Unlike the women of only half a century ago, women of the present day come to universities/colleges for higher education with far less social and family resistance. In the present study, women under 30 received encouragement from their families to enter higher education.

Fig. 8.1: Number of University Students by Sex
1950-1992



8.3. Women's Employment

During the 18th and mid 19th century women being paid for working outside their home was unthinkable in Bengal. The only paid women workers were maidservants, (illiterate) midwives and prostitutes. Only these illiterate, socially neglected and deprived groups of women had their own independent incomes. None of the *bhaddra* (noble) Bengali families would have liked to see their women at work outside the house. Most of the women characters of the popular Bengali (male) novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee who had their own income, such as Rajlaxmi or Sabitri, were depicted as either prostitutes or maidservants. None of the educated *bhaddra* women in his novels had any paid work, even if they were in desperate poverty, such as Kiranmaye in the novel Charitrahin (characterless). Women of working-class families "helped" their male relations by doing work such as feeding and milking domestic animals, husking rice and doing the kitchen garden etc. They played a significant economic role in the family whether they earned money directly or not. But there was a strong prejudice against any economic activities done by women of middle-class families (Murshid, 1983).

Due to the spread of female education, to some changes in social attitudes, and to increased economic pressure, a few women had started to take jobs, preferably in teaching, in the second half of the 19th century. Murshid (1983) stated that possibly the first known case of women of a *bhaddra* family accepting a paid work was that of Radharani Debi of Dhaka. (She was a student of the Dhaka Female Normal School and was offered a teaching position in early 1866 by the Sherpur Strishiksha Bidhayini Sabha, a female school, at a monthly salary of Rs.30).

Attitudes towards women's economic activities started to change at the beginning of this century. In 1930s some social reformers played vital roles in changing social attitudes towards women's employment. Rabindranath Tagore, the writer, was well known for his progressive ideas about women and women's freedom but unfortunately none of his principal characters was a working women. Since the beginning of the 20th century a major change came gradually as government positions with handsome salaries became available to women, as inspectors of schools or superintendents of female colleges. Hossain (1958) stated that in the middle of the 20th century the only professions within the reach of middle-class Muslim women were teaching, nursing and medicine. Before then, although there was some change in attitude towards women's work, there was no significant change in the participation rate of middle-class women. The major changes have come since the 1950s.

Social attitudes towards women's employment have shown rapid change since Independence. The scope for better jobs, government policy to encourage women's employment, the rapid increase in women's education, and the demand for better standards of living for the family have been the most powerful factors in increasing women's participation in economic activities. Besides, since Independence, unlike the Pakistani regime, the national political and social atmosphere is not controlled and dictated by religious fanatics. The government is now led by a woman Prime Minister and within Parliament the leader of the opposition is also a woman.

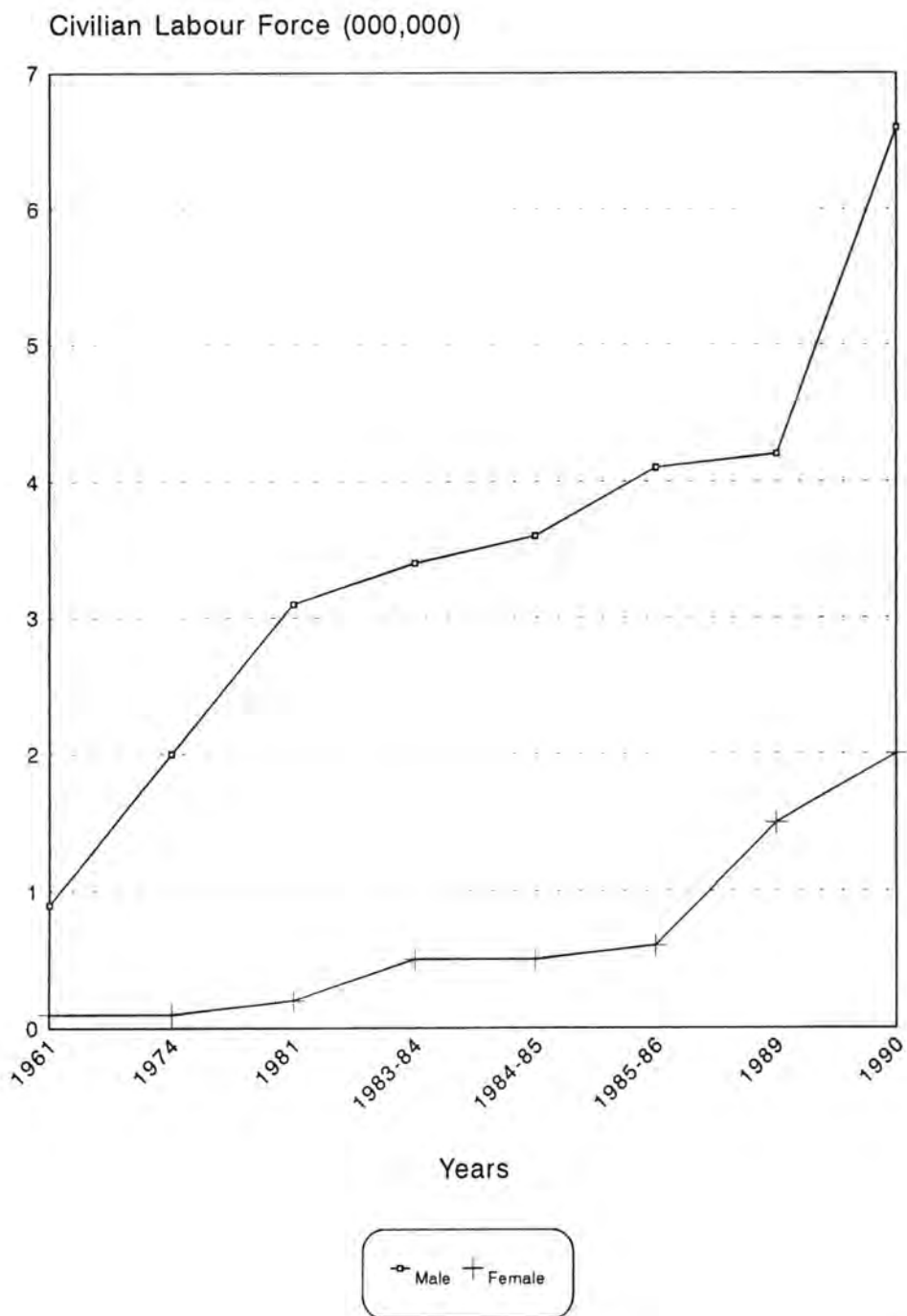
Like a number of recent studies (Chaudhury, 1979; Majumdar, 1986, 1988; Chowdhury and Mili, 1992) the present study also found that women are now entering various

occupational sectors (see table 4.2). Figure 8.2 shows the changing size of the urban civilian labour force by gender between 1961 and 1990.

Between 1981 and 1990 the average annual increase in the (recorded) female labour force was 0.2 million, to 2.1 million in 1990. Labour force growth rates for females from 1974 to 1984 were especially high in urban areas, averaging 17.5 percent. Men comprised 88.5% percent of the total professional and technical occupations compared to 11.5 % for women. In administrative and managerial occupations, men were 98.7% of the labour force and women 1.3%. Service work (teaching, nursing etc) was the only occupation in which women's share (54.8 %) was more than men, (45.2%) (BBS, 1993).

Women's attitudes towards employment and their personal objectives have changed considerably during the last two decades, particularly among educated urban women. Such a woman now wants recognition as an individual in her own right apart from her family roles. A growing number of educated women are entering the various types of government jobs and other formal job markets, as seen in the present research. There has been a substantial change in society through the changes in education and occupation over the generations. The social position and the mobility of younger women is better than those of their mothers and grandmothers, and the present generation of women have more higher education and a better occupational status as working women than their mothers and grandmothers (Chowdhury and Mili, 1992). The report of Bangladesh Civil Service Commission (1993) shows that in the last two BCS examinations women performed well and acquired, for Bangladesh, a significant proportion (8.4 %) of the

Fig. 8.2: Civilian Labour Force by Sex 1961-1990



Source: BBS 1991, 1993

total posts through competition on merit, which exceeded the fixed quota reserved for woman. The present study shows that working, single women under 30 have better education and jobs than even their male head of household (mostly their father). Many women in this group now become government gazetted officers while their fathers work/worked in lower ranked services. Women's attitude to job selection has also changed in recent years and many women now hesitate no more in taking any kind of jobs than their male counterparts.

Breaking out of purdah and having an independent earning capacity, women have undermined some of the basic premises of patriarchal control upon them. The proportion of such women is still relatively small; it provides a demonstration case to remind us what is potentially possible. Indeed it is now at least possible, in principle, for women at large to question their inferior status, as well as the social restrictions imposed upon them, in ways that were inconceivable even a generation ago.

8.4. Women's Activity Space

In Bangladesh, women's level of education and participation in the labour force are the strongest factors in determining women's use of space, whether public or private. Elsewhere, social attitudes sometimes favour women's use of all space simultaneously and equally to men, as in western society. In the western industrialised countries, irrespective of education or role as housewives, women can use most spaces (although not at all times) because there is no rigid religious or social prohibition against women going out, except fear (Valentine, 1989). But in conservative Muslim societies, like Bangladesh, women do not have the same opportunity to go out of the house as do men.

The present author does not believe that religion itself is a constraint on women going out, but rather social traditions. That is, traditional Bengali families of other religions such as Hindu or Christian are equally reluctant to see their women going outside the house. Because of wrong interpretation of *pardah* by so called *mullahs* and its observance, society has been misled and a gender division therefore exists in the use of space: private space for women, and both private and public for men. A Muslim woman can do all kinds of work outside the house and can use public space without breaking Islamic principles of modesty and decency. The observance of *pardah* should not be a constraint on the use of public space provided orthodox traditional social attitudes are changed and her social relations outside should be guaranteed. Women's use of public space is not a religious but a socio-cultural issue. Haifa Jawad (1994) advocates that Muslim women have the same right to education and to go out to work as men. Recently in many Muslim societies, like Bangladesh, women's entry into higher education and the labour force outside the home has created a new path for women's greater visibility in public space and public spaces.

Women's changing activities and spaces first came to western society through social revolution and afterward diffused to other societies (Murshid, 1983). McDowell and Massey (1984) found that there had been enormous change in British traditional attitudes toward middle-class women in many areas of economic and social life. In Bangladesh the mixed Muslim and Bengali culture and customs for long created a division of labour and of activity space in society. Early in the last century women had no public rights alone (Murshid, 1983); when the necessity arose they went to public places with the full protection of some male relatives. Women's commitments in married life were only

to carry out their household duties and child-bearing and -rearing responsibilities.

In the present century Bangladeshi women started to come out of their houses and their use of public spaces also has changed, particularly since Independence. The present study found the use of public spaces by women under 30 to be radically greater than was that of women now over 50, when they were that age. It is now a common sight to see a group of women workers, particularly from garment industries, returning home from work late in the evening entirely unaccompanied by men. Even a decade ago, it was virtually inconceivable for young women to move around in the city without a male guardian at such hours. The combination of economic necessity, process of urbanization, growth of social mobility, and changing individual attitudes has led to these trends of socio-environmental change. Women from all classes are now trying to earn an income and as a result their use of public spaces is much wider than the recent past.

8.5. Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that women's position in Bengal, in terms of education, occupation and mobility outside the home, has experienced a considerable change in course of time. In each political regime, whether British, Pakistani or now Bangladeshi, social attitudes towards women had been reflected by the policy of the respective government. During the British period a few reformers played progressive roles in the improvement of women's position in society. It was the men who were imbued with western ideas who took step to educate and modernise their wives. Murshid (1983) stated that such attempts to uplift women were not for the benefit only

of women; rather, those husbands tried to educate their wives to maintain their high profile in public life and also to turn them into better wives and mothers. However, the idea of women's welfare and freedom, practically, has been rooted since then in Bengal. During the Pakistani regime government policy was not totally in favour of women's development and freedom. The situation was rapidly changed after the evolution of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign country. Despite a number of socio-political constraints, such as tradition, the present government's policy is to ensure women's involvement in education and economic activities, on an equal footing with men.

Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to begin the exploration of the changing activity space of working, urban, middle-income women in Bangladesh. The field research was conducted in Dhaka City, using questionnaires, informal discussion and selected case studies with working, middle-income women of three age-groups (under 30, 30-50, and over 50 years) in three areas: Azimpur, Mohammadpur and Maghbazar.

By national standards, these working, middle-income women proved, predictably, to be privileged in many ways. Internationally, feminists see paid work, education, late marriage and small families as potential advantages for women. (None of these is necessarily an advantage, nor is the Western urban pattern regarded as in any way ideal). In this study in Dhaka, a remarkably high proportion of the women are highly educated: even among the older women nearly half are graduates and two are post graduates, while among those under 30, most are graduates and half have post graduate degrees. Significant numbers, especially of the youngest, are in high-status, well-paid jobs in the Civil Service or NGOs. They marry late (and progressively later over the generations). Their families are small and their marriages stable. Arranged marriages are usual, but some young women are choosing for themselves. Nuclear families are increasing (for better or worse).

Many of these features appear to reflect a Western-style modernization of Dhaka. But nearly all these women are Muslim and have grown up in a society where women's place was, and for many still is, in the home. In contrast to the West, a women's place

is not merely with her children, but literally in the home: in the early twentieth century, when it was rare for married women to go out to work in England, most single women were expected to go out to work and did, while in Bangladesh going out to work was equally unacceptable for both groups. A married English women had an overriding duty to be at home for her husband and children; her husband was the breadwinner and she was the symbol of his success. For a Bangladeshi women, married or single, the first duty was to keep *purdah*, a duty directly reflecting her sexuality, not her marital status or her role as a mother.

Economic need and increasing aspirations have led these women to go out to work: literally to go out, to breach the rules which kept women out of public space. In the past, many families found this behaviour difficult to accept, but came to welcome it for the extra income. Now, families encourage first education and then employment. Children are still part of the equation, and although many of these women have servants, childcare is a common problem while they are out at work or even shopping, as they do not take young children. Other problems, however, are also serious: social attitudes, feelings of insecurity outside the home, the risk of verbal or physical harassment, kidnapping, even violence, the difficulties of transport and even problems at the office. The women necessarily travel to work alone, but otherwise usually prefer to shop, to patronise restaurants or to visit friends or relatives with a companion and in daylight. They are more comfortable visiting in their immediate neighbourhood. Younger women spend much more time in public space than older women did at their age. Another change over the generations is that women increasingly participate in household decision-making, but they still decide very little alone.

Walby (1990) has described the change in femininity in Britain over the last century as the change from femininity as motherhood to femininity as the capacity to attract men. She does not see this as progress and, if this is Western 'modernization', it would hardly appeal to any Muslim society. This would be a very heavy price to pay for the freedom to use public space.

Not all the new features are Western. None of these women contribute all their income to their families, and most retain more than half for their own use. Going 'out' other than for work is normally to shop or visit, not for individual recreation; none will go out merely 'for a walk' and most prefer modern, controlled shopping centres as places to go.

Not all aspects of these women's lives are positive. Whatever their job or salary, their main work is still in the home and nearly as many hours are spent in housework as at the office-more, in the case of those aged 30 to 50. **The average work load of home and office tasks together is over 80 hours a week.** The change over the generations from extended to nuclear families may reduce intra-family stress between different generations of women, but it also increases the burdens of childcare and housework for the mother in the family.

Everyday activity space has changed radically for these working women (although less radically than in the West), but lifetime activity space has changed too. Higher education itself usually expanded the women's physical as well as mental worlds and may even have involved study tours or athletic opportunities in other countries. Work

and training themselves have meant extensive travel within Bangladesh for a few.

This study comes very early in the development of the geography of gender in Bangladesh. It draws on only a small sample and there is much still to learn, but it displays both gains and losses from the changes over the last two decades. The potential scope for the exploration of gender roles, relations and issues in Bangladesh is wide, particularly as regards gender and activity space. Such studies have potential in terms of time and space, inter-spaces and intra-spaces. The successful completion of further research on gender in Bangladesh will inform the making of policy. It is now the responsibility of the geographers of Bangladesh to familiarise and expand the concept as a research field in geography, and to develop it for the women and men of Bangladesh, not import it from the very different societies of the West.

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Appendix 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

MIDDLE-INCOME WOMEN IN DHAKA CITY; GENDER AND ACTIVITY SPACE

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 England

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Name of the Interviewer.....
 Date.....

Name of the Area.....
 1st/2nd/3rd generation.....

A. Personal Information

1. Name.....2. Age..... 3. Education Level.....4. Marital Status..... 5. Age at Marriage time.....
 6. Occupation7. Religion.....8. Present Address.....9. Permanent/ Birth place Adders
 10. Official Address.....11. Original Home (District).....

B. Family Information

Serial Number	Relation with the Respondent	Sex	Age	Educa-tion Level	Occupa-tional Status	Occup. Type ; Part/full Time	Marital Status	Distance of Work-place	Monthly Income
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									

C. Occupational Details

1.

Occupations	Occupational Status	Part/full time job	Location of work place	Distance of work place	Transport for going to work	Daily Working Time	Working Hours per day	Monthly Income
1st								
2nd								
3rd								
Past								

2. *Why are you in service/business?*

Maintain family/ better life/ independent/ personal identity/ pass time/ hobby

3. *Did you face any resistance for your service/business?*

yes/no. If yes from whom?

1. 2.3.

4. *Who encourage you for service/business?*

1.2. 3.

5. *Please mention three problems at your job (orderly)*

1..... 2.3.

6. *Did you face any problems from the family for the job?*

yes/no. If yes what? 1. 2. 3.

D. Household Activities

Type of Tasks at Home	Household Tasks done		Last week (No of working Days)	Working Hours/week	Helpers	
	Yesterday Y/N	Day Before Yesterday Y/N			Any Hel-pers Y/N	Who
Cooking						
Cleaning						
Tidying						
Toilet Cleaning						
Washing Cloths						
Child Care						
Bring Child to School						
Doing Market						
Shopping						
Children's Homework						
Guest Entertainment						
Ironing						
Stitching						
Nursing						
Make Reserve Food						
Go Outside						
Rest (indoor)						
Recreation (outdoor)						
Other						

E. About the House

1. *How is the type of your house?*
Flat/ bricked/ bribed with yard/ other.....
2. *Ownership of your house*
Self owned/ govt./ tenant/sublet/ hostel/ mess/cooperative/ other.....
3. *Details of your residence:*
No of rooms/ no of bathroom/toilet / no of balcony/ rent/ total floor space / area of the land
4. *What you has to save your time?*
Freezer/ washing machine/ iron/ oven/ electric kettle/ gas burner./ swing machine/ T.V./ V.C.R/ phone/ car/ motor bike/ other.....

F) Men-Women Relation:

1. *Who decide for the following works ?*
 - a) Shifting residence; yourself / husband / both / other.....
 - b) For pregnancy; yourself / husband / both / other.....
 - c) Admission of the children; yourself / husband / both / other.....
 - d) For selecting marriage partner of sons/daughters; yourself / husband / both / other.....
 - e) Shopping and recreation; yourself /husband /both / other.....
 - f) To purchase costly furniture; yourself / husband/ both / other.....
 - g) To buy last costly household article; yourself / husband / both / other.....
 - h) Family invitation or party arrangement; yourself / husband / both / other....
2. *Do you need any permission from anybody to go outside?*
if yes who? husband / Father / Father-in-law / Mother / Mother-in-law / other.....
3. *Who decide the family budget?*
yourself / husband / both / other.....
4. *How much is the monthly budget of your family?*

5. How much money you contribute to your family budget?
6. Contribution to the family budget (in percentage).
yourself..... husband..... other.....

G. Information about Movement

1. How often you go outside?
daily.....times; weeklydays; daily.....hours; weekly.....hours
2. What are the transport (orderly) you use?
rikswa /tempo / bus / scooter / private car / on foot / other.....
3. What are the main causes (orderly) to go outside?
office work / children to take school / market / shopping / social visit / moving around / other.....
4. Does anybody of your family dislike to go outside?
yes/no; if yes who?.....
5. As a women is there any social problem for you to move outside?
yes/no; if yes what?
6. How did you come to Dhaka?
7. How is the movement pattern in different stages of your life?

Stages	School life	College/uni versity life	Service life	1st month of marriage	1st year of marriage	Lifetime
Every day distance						
Maximum distance						
Where?						

8. Who accompany you when you go outside?
Nobody / husband / servant /children / brothers / other

H. Concluding Questions;

1. What are the main characteristics of activities of middle-income women?
2. How the activity pattern is changing?
3. How the family responsibility of women are changing?
4. How women's social life is changing?
5. As a middle-income women how would you evaluate your life?
7. What is your comments about the lives and activities of middle-income women of Bangladesh?

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Appendix 2: Photograph Showing Different Types of Transport



Public Bus (Top left), Office Bus (top right), Rickshaw (Middle), Tempoo (Bottom left), and Schotar (Bottom right).

Appendix 3: SUMMARY RESULTS

1. Demographic Characteristics

i. The mean age at marriage of middle-income working women found in this survey in Dhaka City is higher than the national average 18.2. The mean age (22) at marriage of the 30-50 age group (2nd generation) was higher than that of (17.6) the over 50 group (1st generation).

ii. These middle-income working women of Dhaka City have more marital stability than the national average.

iii. The average family size of these middle-income working women in Dhaka city is smaller than either the national or the Dhaka SMA average.

iv. Women of 2nd generation (30-50 age group) in this survey mostly belong to nuclear families whereas women of 1st generation (over 50 age group) and 3rd generation (under 30 age group) live in the extended families of the older generation. The percentage of nuclear households among those of the 75 women in the survey is 10.47% higher than the national figure.

v. Some 16% of the women surveyed live in woman-headed households whereas the national figure is 11.88% (BBS, 1991).

vi. The overall demographic position of these middle-income working women of Dhaka city is better than the national level.

2. Socio-economic Characteristics

i. Among these middle-income working women, the percentage with higher education (graduate and postgraduate) is notably high, and is increasing over the generations.

ii. The achievement of formal education by a women primarily depends upon the attitude towards education and the educational background of her family.

iii. Woman's occupational status is largely dependent on her educational levels and skills. In this survey, the achievement of government-gazetted jobs in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is highest in under 30 age group (18.5%) followed by the 30-50 age group (11.3%) and the over 50 age group (5.6%). The level of government-nongazetted jobs is highest in the 30-50 age group (46.7%) followed by the over 50 age group (38.9%) and the under 30 age group (22.2%). Teaching is the most preferred job, particularly among the women of the over 50 age group.

iv. Respondents' average mean family income and mean monthly income are Tk.17,000 and Tk. 6,000 respectively. Women of the 30-50 and the over 50 age groups contribute a higher proportion of their income to the household, 43.81% and 42.33% respectively, than the under 30 age group (31.84%). Even after marriage, some women have continued to contribute to their parents' household, although that was traditionally the duty of the sons of the family.

v. These women participate in the labour force for basically economic reasons, to

earn money and to improve family's economic position. Social reasons are secondary, such as the search for autonomy/self dependency and self identity, particularly among the younger women.

vi. Many of women of the 30-50 and the over 50 age groups were not readily acceptable to their families at the beginning of their careers but, as soon as they started to contribute to the family budget, the family started to change their attitude and their work is now well accepted. On the other hand a large number of women of the 3rd generation have not faced such family opposition; on the contrary, they were encouraged by their parents.

vii. The overall family status, in terms of income, education and status of occupation, is higher within the 30-50 age group but the individual status is higher for women of the under 30 group.

3. Activity Space

i. Irrespective of women's education and grade of employment, their household activities are still seen as their main work and these are strongly located within the private sphere.

ii. Cooking is the most important task for women in their private space, particularly the 30-50 age group. Women of this group spend an average 20 hours a week just cooking, followed by the over 50 age group (15 hours) and the under 30 group (7

hours).

iii. In Dhaka, the middle-income working women interviewed are not yet very conscious of their domestic time budget and they have not yet developed any positive strategies to reduce the time they spend cooking.

iv. The division of labour in cooking is strong and the male members of the family enter the kitchen only occasionally or in emergencies.

v. Domestic servants are the major helping hands in most families of the studied women who can help in a wide range of household activities. Male members of some family, usually the father, helps their children with their homework and this is the only household task where men have taken the responsibility.

vi. Middle-income women of Dhaka city have no planned leisure and pleasure time; they get their rest and recreation, within the home, when they have no household task.

vii. Middle-income married women of Dhaka city, particularly the 2nd generation, are deeply involved in family decision-making as their employment and education have given them more power and autonomy. Majority of unmarried women of the under 30 age group depend on their household heads for decisions.

viii. Market (*Bazar*), the traditionally male public place, is now also being used by women when necessary. Recently many women have become visible in markets to buy

groceries.

viii. Middle-income women, particularly the 30-50 age group, prefer to do shopping themselves rather than ask the man to do it. Women of the under 30 age group have a tendency to spend more times a week in shopping centres than other two groups.

ix. The studied women are not confined within their own home territories. Beside their working place, they do go out, mainly for shopping or social visits rather than individual recreation.

x. The weekly workload, household and office tasks together, of the women studied is on average more than 80 hours. The weekly mean total of hours worked in the house is almost the same as that of office; the 30-50 age group actually spend even more time in household tasks.

xi. For married women, particularly those who live in nuclear families, the problem of child care is the most important constraint to go out to work. The second problem is the inadequate urban transport services. Women's high work load within the house is not considered to be a constraint in their use of outside spaces.

xii. Social attitudes towards women's activity and movement in public places are still patriarchal. Despite this, attitudes are gradually changing and now more women are seen in public places than in the recent past.

4. Movement Pattern

i. Females' migrational movement patterns are largely determined by the migration behaviour and pattern of their house hold heads. The studied women have settled in Dhaka city either by associational migration such as because of their marriage or transfer of their household head's work place, or by autonomous migration such as because for higher education or for job.

ii. Daily travelling pattern at school life is nearly the same and not very expanded for women of all ages. As soon as a girl is admitted to either college or university for higher education her daily travelling pattern is greatly expanded. At service life the daily movement pattern of under 30 age group is more frequent and widely expanded than the other two groups.

iii. The life time longest distance of a women is travelled either at university life (for study tour) or at service life (for training purpose).

vi. Marriage as a component for women's movement pattern is not very strongly today as it was in the past.

5. Summary

The present study clearly reveals that the 75 investigated middle-income women in Dhaka city have overall better life status than the national level. During the last two decades traditional Bengali families have changed greatly, as also women's lives and gender relations. Women now have strong role in family budget and family decision. Their outside movement patterns and the uses of public places are also expanded.

Higher levels of education, and status of employment are two strong forces to give a women more power and autonomy in family decisions, to expand her daily movement pattern, and to increase the use of public spaces. On the other hand, irrespective of education and employment, the middle-income women are heavily overload with household activities within the private space. Rapid changes of extended families to nuclear type have reduced the chance of helps for household tasks from other members of the family, and also have resulted new constraint such as the child care to women's easy movement for outside work. Middle-income women are now under stress, carrying the double responsibilities of tasks inside and outside the home.

