

kind was kept stable during the high-price period, their income at that time was in fact higher than the income for male day laborers. Over a time period of three seasons, only a few female employers changed the rate of payment in kind. Although all the women knew that rice prices had gone up, they could not see any connection between higher prices for rice and the rate of payment for day laborers, because they are not very market oriented. This example points up the importance of asking complex and more abstract questions carefully enough to avoid misleading answers from the interviewees, who are not in a position to answer such questions appropriately.

These examples clearly illustrate the difficulties

facing researchers who are unaware of the specific conditions in developing countries when they try to employ the normal research procedures used in industrialized countries. This is especially true if closed questions are used in the questionnaires and interviewers are operating independently of the researcher.

It would seem necessary that researchers working in a new cultural and social environment allow themselves a very thorough pretesting and general study phase before the actual topic is investigated. It is not necessarily the quantity of figures that reflects how good a study is, but rather a very careful interpretation of all results.

Women in Rice Cultivation: Some Research Tools

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The primary goal of the project described here is to document in detail the role that women in India play in rice cultivation—as agricultural laborers, supervisors in their family-owned fields, employers of labor, and participants in the agricultural decision-making process. In addition, for laboring households, we attempt to obtain detailed data on the extent to which female earnings provide for the basic household economy—that is, to document the relative proportions of male and female earnings that go for food, clothing, and other household expenses.

This project derives from our previous research on agriculture, rural social structure, and the development process in rural areas in South India. During our earlier work, we were impressed by the ability of rural women, even illiterate ones, to provide us with detailed and accurate data about their recent and past participation in agricultural activities. In planning for the present project, two strategies were available to us. We could have limited the study to a few villages, relying on one another to collect the data with part-time local assistants. The alternative strategy, which is the one we chose, was to undertake a more extensive study and to ask local women to help us in collecting data about themselves.

For landowning households, we are asking a few

literate women to keep diaries of all activities pertinent to agriculture, including buying pesticides, discussing questions of land use and labor with their husbands, supervising work in the fields, paying the laborers in their own house compound, and so on. We have already experimented with keeping diaries in several villages and have found the response to vary considerably from village to village. In some cases, women understood our request immediately and were eager to keep a diary; in others, they were somewhat shy and hesitant. Some women had difficulty understanding why we wanted this information. It soon became clear that it is necessary to devote a good deal of time talking to women and explaining to them in detail not only about the project, but also about why their help is so important. Although both landowning and laboring women are used to being interviewed, being asked to do something themselves requires a great deal more explanation. We usually have to explain our project to their husbands, as well as to the women themselves.

We are also asking a few women who say that they do not participate in rice cultivation to keep diaries nonetheless, so that we can check their assertions. We have greater trouble convincing husbands of these women that there might be some point in

their wives' keeping the diaries, and only a few have agreed. Our previous experience suggests that such women often participate a great deal in discussions about agricultural matters.

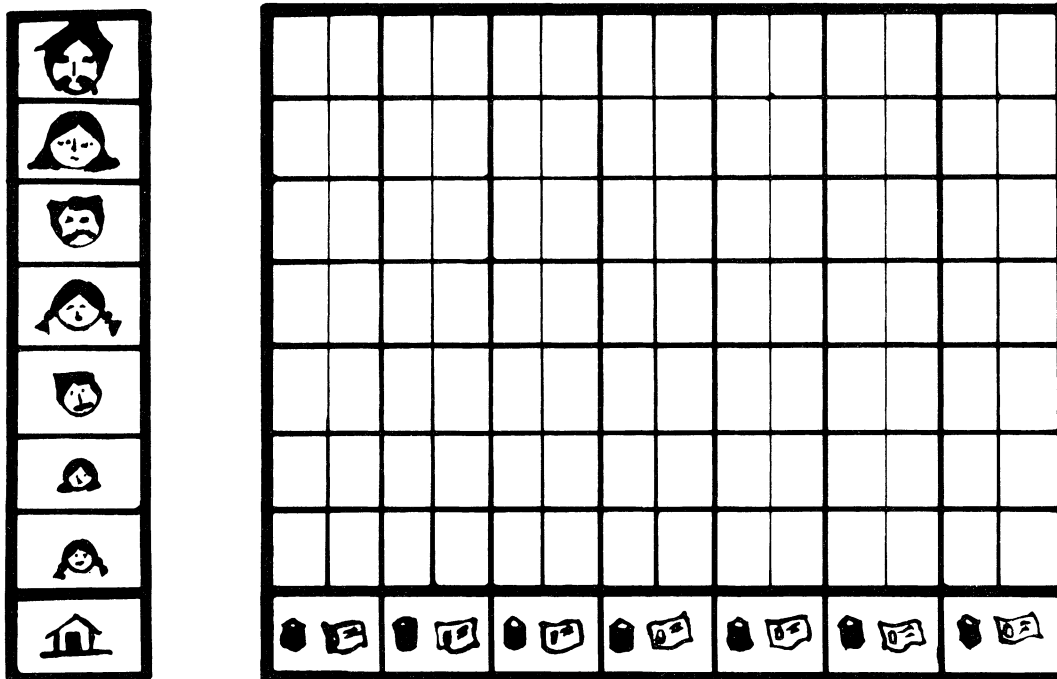
The most innovative part of our study, which we would like to make available to other researchers, is the charts we distribute to illiterate women who work in the fields (either their own or other people's fields). A sample of both charts accompanies this article. Each woman marks two charts each day for the entire week. On the household income chart (below), the women are asked to fill in sources of income or food brought to the house each day. The first figure on the bottom represents a standard local measure of paddy; the depiction of a rupee note represents cash payment. In many areas, people are paid a certain number of local measures for a day's work. We want to know how much is brought into the house each day by the woman herself, by her husband, and by other household members. Amounts are indicated by vertical strokes, with one stroke equal to one rupee. Our hypothetical family consists of no more than seven working people, including four adults and three children or adolescents. This may not be completely adequate for every household, but according to our household-composition data for Kerala in 1975-77 and for Tamil Nadu in 1970-71, this allowance will fit more than 95 percent of the households.

On the agricultural operations chart (pp. 410-411), she indicates what agricultural tasks she performed (if any) on a given day—in the morning (in the column headed by a picture of the rising sun) and in the afternoon and evening (in the column with a dark box under the sun). The final two spaces are left blank to allow women to enter any agricultural operations not depicted. When the charts are collected, the women are asked to name any operations they have added. In testing the charts in January 1979, we found that women had no difficulty recognizing the pictures of the various operations. In a few villages, we have enlisted the help of local educated males to instruct and guide the women in the beginning.






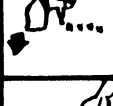
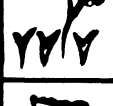
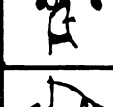


We hope to have each woman keep the charts for five or six months. So far, the women who have been asked to fill in the charts have been interested and curious. When we explain that very little is known about what women actually do, they all agree. The fact that we are women has helped us in collecting the information.

Obviously, there are many questions about how accurate this approach can be. One method of checking for accuracy, which we use each time one of us visits a village, is to discuss the charts at length with the women who are keeping them. In the course of a long informal interview with each woman (which is spread out over four visits), we also check, without

The household income chart



The agricultural operations chart

	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞	☞ ☞
								
								
								
								
								
								
								
								
								
								

looking at the chart that the woman has kept, the information entered on each chart for the previous week. In this way, we hope at least to have a check for one week on how carefully the chart was filled in.

We are also employing one literate woman in each village for about six months. She will visit households with women agricultural laborers and

collect similar information in a diary to be kept for each house. We propose to have each woman collect data from a total of 16 households, visiting 4 each day and returning again to the same 4 households every four days. The 16 women to be visited in this way will be different from the women filling in the charts. The local woman will also help those keeping charts by going once a week and collecting that week's set of

charts and distributing a new set. Along with spot-checking the charts, we will also spot-check the work done by the village assistant by independently checking the data she has been collecting at two or three different time periods.

Obviously, in spite of all the checks, there will still be room for error. However, having looked at the way census materials are collected, as well as the vast

majority of sample surveys, and having seen the kinds of errors that creep into any type of data collecting in India in which a number of research assistants or interviewers are used, we are convinced that there may not be greater errors using local women than one finds in much other material. From our preliminary use of these materials in three Tamil Nadu villages and one Kerala village, we find that, while

there might be a considerable difference in the amount of time needed for different women to learn how to fill in the charts, and while women might stop keeping them if they are not picked up weekly, on the whole women have not taken to filling in charts incorrectly. The charts are either filled in correctly or left blank. We now hope that using the village assistants to distribute the charts each week will help to keep up their interest. We have also devised a better method for teaching the women how to fill in the charts, which we hope will add to their accuracy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS The project reported on here is titled "Women and Rice Cultivation: A Comparative Study in Four Rice Regions of India—Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Orissa." It is being financed by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The funds for Ms. Mencher's participation are being provided by the Research Foundation of the City University of New York and by the Smithsonian Institution.

Research on Women by Women: Interviewer Selection and Training in Indonesia

Hanna Papanek

Interviewers play a crucial role in social research. In large surveys, they are the only contact between researcher and respondent. Their success in reaching out to people affects what is said in response to questions and how much people are willing to reveal about themselves. But interviewers are often the most neglected members of a research team, paid little, trained less.

Between 1973 and 1975, a group of Indonesian and US researchers—all women—collaborated on a study of urban women in the middle strata of Jakarta's population.¹ These women were neither very poor nor very rich, and, although they were long-term residents of Indonesia's capital, what we learned from studying them has broader implications. We wanted to examine a wide range of questions with relatively few women; we therefore chose a stratified sample (146) of married women with children, some employed in paid jobs outside the home, some not. We conducted long, in-depth interviews

with these women, seeking to understand some relationships between selected demographic and socioeconomic factors. In particular, we wanted to learn something of the women's ideas and feelings about themselves, their children, and family life.

Even among these urban women, there was little in their everyday lives to make them familiar with the techniques of survey research, much less with the in-depth probing we wanted to do. But for populations, such as women, that have not been well studied in the past, such detailed studies are needed to displace the often unwarranted assumptions that have found their way into theories and methods of social science and into popular beliefs.

We began our study convinced of the importance of field interviewers in this kind of research, and with several basic assumptions about the need to match interviewers and respondents as closely as possible so they could talk freely with each other. First, we took it for granted that only women could develop the desired rapport with female respondents and that they should be married or of marriageable age in a study of married women. We knew that it was unusual for mothers and daughters in Indonesian middle-class families to discuss sexuality, contraception, or husband-wife relationships. We therefore expected that young, unmarried women would not be suitable as interviewers; as it turned out, we did recruit a few for special cases. We also felt that the experiences of childbearing and rearing would be discussed more freely between women who had shared them.

¹Initial findings have been reported in Hanna Papanek, Mely G. Tan, T. Omas Ihromi, Yulfita Rahardjo, Ann Way, and Pauline R. Hendrata, *Women in Jakarta: Family Life and Family Planning*, Report to the Interdisciplinary Communications Program (Washington, D.C., 1976, xeroxed) and in *Cultural Factors and Population in Developing Countries*, Occasional Monograph No. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Interdisciplinary Communications Program, 1976), pp. 129-166. An Indonesian translation of the condensed report appeared in *Masyarakat Indonesia* 5, no. 2 (December 1978): 217-259; a translation of the full report is in progress. See also Hanna Papanek, "Jakarta middle class women: Modernization, employment and family life," in *What Is Modern Indonesian Culture?*, ed. Gloria Davis (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), and Hanna Papanek, "Development planning for women: The implications of women's work," in *Women and Development: Perspectives from South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Rounaq Jahan and Hanna Papanek (Dacca: University Press, 1979).