

FROM GIRLS TO THE POOR UNDERSTANDING CHANGES IN A CONDITIONAL
CASH TRANSFER EDUCATION STIPEND PROJECT IN BANGLADESH

By

ALISON HORTON SCHAEFFING

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D. Asher Ghertner

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From girls to the poor: Understanding changes in a conditional cash transfer education

program in Bangladesh

By ALISON HORTON SCHAEFFING

Dissertation Director:

D. Asher Ghertner

This dissertation critically examines the history and administration of the Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP) in Bangladesh, a conditional cash transfer (CCT) education stipend program targeted at female and poor students in rural Bangladesh. Based on ten months of ethnographic field work within the Ministry of Education in Dhaka, and supplemented with interviews and discourse analysis from Sweco Consultants in Copenhagen and the World Bank in Washington D.C., this mixed-methods multi-sited institutional ethnography demonstrates that international discourse surrounding ‘best practices’ and technologies of development interact with local development processes in complex and transformative ways, which may foreclose more democratic development possibilities. I trace the history of the program alongside a directed intervention into the complex development history of Bangladesh, demonstrating how particular processes and conjunctures produced openings into which development expertise, technical assistance, and international financing intervened. I demonstrate how these international development practices and discourses have altered the trajectory of this project in consequential and, I argue, problematic ways. This work emphasizes the

need to reconsider the notion of preconceived best practices in development, as I demonstrate the inherent flaws in approaching development interventions with pre-designed technologies. I argue that the World Bank's relentless pursuit for and proliferation of best practice technologies of development, and the corresponding reporting practices, are part of an ongoing need to remain legitimate, elite, and relevant. This work also demonstrates how this particular expert-led technology of development has reconfigured state power, and altered how participants and non-participants understand and enact their agency and engagement with the state.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of contents	iv
List of tables	vii
List of illustrations/figures	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1. Overview	1
2. Development practice, CCTs, governmentality, and policy mobility	3
3. The shift away from female-focus	8
4. Outline of dissertation	9
Chapter 2: Historical development of Bangladesh	19
1. Introduction	19
2. Historical Development of Bangladesh: Leading up to 30 Years of Development	
Experimentation	24
2.1 Pre-independence: Nationalist industrialization	25
2.2 Post-independence: Agrarian decentralization	30
2.3 Illiberal democracy: Neoliberal alignment	48
3. The Growth and Relative Strength of Civil Society	55
4. Patronage Politics: Local Influences Within the Administration of National Policies	60
5. Conclusion	68
Chapter 3: Development and technologies of development	71
1. Development	71

2. Best practices and technology of development	80
3. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs)	86
4. Conclusion	111
Chapter 4: Bangladesh education stipend project as case study	113
1. Introduction	113
2. Methodological and epistemological framework	113
3. Mixed methods research on the stipend project within DSHE offices	116
4. Mixed methods research within Sweco Offices and the World Bank	120
5. The original project: Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FSP)	123
5.1 Early history	125
5.2 Consistency in procedure across programs	131
5.3 Four institutions, one program	138
5.4 Female students as bankers	147
5.5 Praise for the FSP	151
6. The new project: Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP)	156
6.1 Key differences between institutions' approaches	157
7. Changes in program create new problems on the ground	164
7.1 Shift away from female-focus	164
7.2 Complications in targeting scheme	169
7.3 Complications in cash transfer	174
7.4 Production of new development subjects	178
8. Conclusion	184
Chapter 5: The work reporting does	187

1. Introduction	187
2. Bangladesh as the World Bank's hotbed for development	191
3. Gaps in understanding 'female empowerment'	195
4. Measurability	201
5. Performance of local reporting – Dhaka-based Pathmark evaluates FSP	206
5.1 The case for case studies	211
5.2 Patriarchy threatened	225
6. Performance of international reporting - the World Bank and Sweco evaluate FSP	230
7. The Change to a CCT: The power of numbers, discourse, and technologies of development	245
Chapter 6: CCTs as patronizing: Concluding thoughts and future research	251
Bibliography	258

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Female Secondary School Stipend Amounts by grade, 1994-2007	132
Table 4.2: Monthly Stipends as Percentage of Total Monthly Household Income	132
Table 4.3: Stipend Values for Grade 9, 1994-2007	135
Table 4.4: Stipend Projects by Organization, Name and Geographic Coverage	139
Table 4.5: Evolving objectives of FSP projects	143
Table 5.1: SSC Results from 1996-2005	235

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS/FIGURES

Figure 3.1: World Bank Map of Conditional Cash Transfers in the World, 1997 and 2008	88
Figure 5.1: Visual Rhetoric from the World Bank	194
Figure 5.2: World Bank Map of Projects in Bangladesh	234

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Overview

This dissertation critically examines the history and administration of the Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP) in Bangladesh, a conditional cash transfer (CCT) education stipend program targeted at female and poor students in rural Bangladesh. Originally created by two small local NGOs, this project now operates as an internationally-recognized nationwide CCT, having been transformed by a confluence of local and global NGOs, the state, international development institutions, and patronage politics. Based on ten months of ethnographic field work within the Ministry of Education in Dhaka, and supplemented with interviews and discourse analysis from Sweco Consultants in Copenhagen and the World Bank in Washington D.C., this mixed-methods multi-sited institutional ethnography demonstrates that international discourse surrounding ‘best practices’ and technologies of development interact with local development practices in complex and transformative ways, which may foreclose more democratic development possibilities.

To explore how the small-scale, originally female-focused Female Education Project (FSP) developed into an internationally recognized pro-poor CCT (the SESP), I trace the history of the project through governmental manuals and consultancy reports from 1982 to 2016. This I couple with a directed intervention into the complex development history of Bangladesh, demonstrating how particular processes and conjunctures produced openings into which development expertise, technical assistance, and international financing intervened. I demonstrate the particular ways in which these international development practices and discourse have altered the trajectory of this

project in consequential and, I argue, problematic ways.

I further interrogate the role of international development institutions by examining the work that reporting does in constructing truths about project performance, success, and future plans. Towards this end, I utilize discourse analysis to unpack reports from local, national, and international project-evaluating entities. My findings demonstrate that the decisions surrounding the construction of evaluation and reporting practices themselves have material consequences upon how projects are understood, and how they are carried forward. This dissertation reveals that typical CCT reports, which rely on quantitative measures of success, produce and reproduce particular discourses, which shape both local and global understandings about how development should happen. In arguing that international development institutions' discourse and reporting practices have consequential impact upon the trajectory of development projects, this dissertation asserts the importance of critical qualitative and ethnographic research and analysis of best practice technologies of development, especially the CCT.

Findings from this work emphasize the need to reconsider the notion of preconceived best practices in development. By analyzing discourse, interviews, and policy documents from Sweco Consultants and the World Bank, I demonstrate the inherent flaws in approaching development interventions with pre-designed technologies. I argue that the World Bank's relentless pursuit for and proliferation of best practice technologies of development, and the corresponding reporting practices, are part of an ongoing need to remain legitimate, elite, and relevant. While best practice ideals and approaches can and should remain useful to an extent, my findings indicate that this pursuit can overtake and undermine more organic processes, thus circumventing more

responsive, democratic, and place-based development trajectories.

This work demonstrates how this particular expert-led technology of development has reconfigured state power, and altered how participants and non-participants understand and enact their agency and engagement with the state. Through the administration of the CCT, local elite and school headmasters are transformed into extensions of the state, and participants are reproduced as development subjects as they align with the program's behavioral requirements. In these ways, by utilizing a governmentality lens, this study demonstrates how technologies of development that are designed to 'empower the poor' may in fact patronize them, reorienting participants along program expectations, leaving room for only a weak degree of agency and citizenship. This dissertation demonstrates how this particular large-scale technology of development has been both constructive of and resultant from development discourse, and continues to realign with and reproduce development truths and best practices.

2. Development practice, CCTs, governmentality, and policy mobility

In the administration of the current SESP, the development apparatus is targeting and defining the stipend recipients as "poor." This requires that households demonstrate and perform poverty in certain ways, continually meeting certain criteria in order to maintain eligibility for the cash transfer. Students are required to meet minimum attendance requirements and testing standards. In defining these certain metrics, qualities, goals, and expectations, the state program is encouraging particular forms of behavior, and denying potential entitlements to those who do not perform as they are expected. This may be the state's attempt to capture the most vulnerable citizens, absorb them into the development institution, and make them more governable. Or, it may simply be a

symptom of false targeting, or the application of international targeting techniques that do not have the intended biopolitical effects in a country lacking rigorous population statistics. This process may also deprive girls and their families who previously benefited from a gender-based development program of the forms of agency, self-determination, and voice they once enjoyed. I will trace the ways in which the program's targeting and governing of "the poor" may dictate their positionality and subjectivity, and foreclose opportunities for more transformative democratic possibilities. To do so, I draw on governmentality approaches to understand the various ways in which CCT program produce new subjectivities within participants' agency and citizenship.

I evoke Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, seeking to understand the ways in which governing rationalities, of which state practices are just one part, produce subjectivities. This includes the organized practices through which citizens are governed (Mayhew 2004), and the techniques and strategies by which a society is rendered governable (Foucault 2002). In approaching the concept of subjectivity, I rely upon Rose's (1990) work, examining the forces that come to bear upon the subjective existence of people, and the various powers constituting and reshaping their existence.

While the stipend project may provide a child and family with valuable substantive benefits, in the form of the financial transfer and the corresponding attainment of education, I claim that in doing so, the state, or development practice apparatus, is exercising a complicated form of governmentality over its citizens. By attaching conditions, defining goals, and requiring that families meet certain criteria, the state or NGO is managing citizens' agency, which may foreclose future political possibilities.

In her assessment of development programs to improve livelihoods in Indonesia, Li (2007) takes a critical stance of development technology schemes, seeking to expose the limits of expert knowledge, and expand future possibilities for understanding what development might do. She draws on Foucault (1991) and Escobar (1995) to define and theorize the limits and purposes of governmental programs of improvement and the power inequalities they perpetuate. Li asks how programs of improvement are “shaped by political-economic relations they cannot change, how they are constituted, that is, by what they exclude” (4). She explains that within development practice, experts devise technical interventions that often obscure structural injustices. Invoking Foucault’s central emphasis on problematization, or how problems are defined and bounded so as to exclude alternative definitions, Li claims that a central effect of governmental programs is to “render technical” complex political matters.

Here, she draws on Ferguson (1994), according to whom development “may also very effectively squash political challenges to the system” by continually reframing political questions in technical and expert terms. Ferguson (1994: xiv), building on research in Lesotho, explains that development institutions generate their own discourse, which constructs particular objects of knowledge, and creates a structure around that knowledge. Interventions are designed on the basis of this structure, outside the place of intervention, and have complicated effects on the ground. Especially relevant to my project, he explains that citizens’ involvement in development programs may provide certain immediate benefits, but institutional conditionalities inhibit other forms of organization, and tend to depoliticize more substantial political possibilities. Rose (1999) describes this moment as a “switch point,” during which a government program is

absorbed into the realm of expertise, avoiding critical scrutiny, and turning an opening into a closure. Such broad de-politicizing effects are made possible to the extent that subjects become governable through them: that is to say, when subjects, such as poor women in Bangladesh, adopt the same problem definitions advanced by expert development discourse, they themselves participate in governmental programs without requiring direct state intervention.

Karim (2008) draws on this in her thorough account of microfinance in rural Bangladesh. She explains that since neoliberal trends have shifted social service provisioning away from the state and onto the private sector and civil society in Bangladesh, the questions of poverty and inequality now rest on technical management of development institutions. She argues that these questions belong in the public political arena, alongside justice and citizenship, but are instead defined, measured, and controlled by non-state actors and institutions. Her work demonstrates that this may leave the poor, and especially women, excluded from political action and deprived of the capacity to articulate their own claims to citizenship.

Kabeer's (2005) work further interrogates the opening and closing of political possibilities through NGO interventions in Bangladesh. She explains that the widespread practice of NGO service delivery has created a culture of dependency between civil society organizations and their marginalized constituencies, which "diverts the energies of both away from their larger goals of transforming society and democratizing the state" (183). She argues when that poor and marginalized are engaged in NGO provisioning, they are also deprived of independent voice and agency. Otherwise, they are excluded altogether. Her case study focuses on one particular NGO, Nijera Kori, which is

purposefully positioning itself outside of this exchange. Nijera Kori attempts to avoid creating dependency and instead facilitating the attainment of intangible resources, such as information, ideas, and knowledge, which could build the collective capabilities of the poor, and “their ability to mobilize as rights-bearing citizens on their own behalf” (190).

Hickey (2009) evaluates recent attempts within policy circles to respond to the claims that development has been universalizing and technocratic, obscuring the essentially political nature of many development problems. In response to such criticisms, international development institutions claim they are working to ‘get the politics right,’ and undertake systematic research to understand the local and national politics surrounding interventions (Chhotray et al 2009). Hickey (2009: 474) explains that the IMF and the World Bank (2005) claim that their intervention strategies have become increasingly pro-poor, and do not impose externally devised policy agendas. Instead, their interventions actively support national governments in developing their own strategies as a means of embedding a pro-poor focus within national political processes. This claim is in contrast to my case study, which traces a homegrown Bangladeshi program that was drastically reworked to align with the World Bank’s favored development scheme.

In understanding the ways that the program central to my case study, and technologies of development more broadly, move from one context to another, I point to recent frameworks around policy networks and mobility. Ball (2015) traces the ways that education reform in India is reflective of new trans-national spaces of policy, demonstrating how policies achieve and experience mobility. His argument points to the need to rethink frameworks and scales of policy actors, including from discourses, agendas, and solutions. In so doing, he extends our understanding of policy as a space of

mobility. I follow this framework, understanding the ways that a technology of development, the CCT, has moved between nations through circuits of truth, knowledge, practice, and expertise.

3. The shift away from female-focus

Mahmud (2003) and others note the incredible achievements of the FSP related to female empowerment and gender equality, considering that rural Bangladesh society is understood to be patriarchal, and places value on women's seclusion from public spaces. The institutional shift away from this important female-focused agenda could have had far-reaching effects on perceptions and practices of female empowerment. There is centuries-old reliance on marriage and extended family cohabitation as the social structural backbone of rural Bangladesh, and the FSP appears to have been contributing to a widespread shift away from forms of what scholars refer to as the "extreme patriarchy of rural Bangladesh" (Kabeer 2003).

There is evidence of this subtle yet profound shifting towards a more equitable society in ethnographic impact studies of the FSP throughout the early 2000s, but the program abandoned the female focus in 2007. Given the widespread understanding of the FSP as innovative, successful, and transformative towards gender equality, this dissertation asks: why, in 2007, did the program undergo a complete change in target populations and administration practices? Towards this end, the dissertation first provides an overview of the development context within which this change took place, and then draws on concepts of governmentality and citizenship, especially within development programs, to provide a framework through which the subjectivity of the stipend recipients may be understood.

4. Outline of dissertation

Chapter 2 weaves together a directed intervention into the development history of Bangladesh in order to synthesize a more comprehensive portrayal of Bangladesh that captures the politics of development within which today's intervention decisions are made. I highlight key changes in how international development institutions, especially the World Bank, have influenced Bangladesh development policy and practice.

Specifically, in pointing to such key conjunctures, I demonstrate the extent to which international development ideas were taken up or rejected in different phases of Bangladesh's development history. I demonstrate how an evolving range of opinions and sentiments about nation politics combined with international influence and nation crises to shape development ideas. I highlight these moments of realignment as key conjunctures in which foreign influence over Bangladesh development changed. These moments demonstrate the deeply-rooted conditions that contributed to Bangladesh's ready acceptance of the World Bank CCT doctrine by the late 2000s.

Since 1971, as Bangladesh has been building itself as a nation with varying degrees of international influence, leading to the current moment within which my case study is situated. Previous periods within which Bangladesh was most heavily influenced by mainstream development institutions were precipitated by specific domestic crises: fiscal, political, and natural, which led the government to be open to and accepting of outside influence. Later, Bangladesh shifts from this reputation as a "basket case," and earns an image of development innovation and experimentation. Despite this, and a strong NGO and independent civil society sector, the stipend program's 2007 shift to a standardized pro-poor CCT model was yet another moment of close alignment with

international “best practice.” Rather than relying on its own strengths and abilities to do things the “Bangladesh way,” the Ministry of Education fully adopted the international technology of development, changing their homegrown program in very fundamental, and I will argue, problematic ways. Unlike previous moments of influence, however, this was not a result of a crisis or duress. This lays the groundwork upon which one of my key questions is based: how and why this moment of influence and change was arrived upon. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will argue that this was largely a result of the power of a shared discourse around international best practices. In other words, on this terrain of “truth and capital” (Roy 2010), education practice and policy in Bangladesh underwent a significant change not from a moment of crisis, but from the idea of learning from the World Bank’s stories of success from other global south countries’ best practices. This framework provides the groundwork for my argument that CCTs intersect with local governmental conditions far away from ministry offices and policy makers’ desks in contradictory ways.

In so doing, this Chapter narrates a chronological history of development in Bangladesh. I will argue that this history is necessary for understanding the particular context within which interventions unfold today. Contemporary development decisions are largely formed within frameworks set by international discourse, and are not directly influenced by an understanding of a nation’s history. I argue that an understanding of particular historical moments is key for designing policies that are more appropriate for and responsive to various contexts. The history provided in this Chapter lays the groundwork for a later argument which poses that the practices of implementing

“technologies of development” need to be more reflective of the various contexts within which they unfold.

With this development and political history in mind, I then highlight two additional aspects of the history and contemporary context of Bangladesh within which development interventions unfold: civil society and patronage politics. I argue that we must probe past a simple dichotomy of weak state/strong civil society, and evaluate their role in present-day Bangladesh as overlapping and mutually constitutive realms. From this understanding emerges a grounded context from which I can interrogate the reasons why the FSP changed into the SESP, through the conjunctures of the local and global forces, and civil society and state relationships.

Specifically, I argue that civil society and local government in rural Bangladesh has become a key terrain on which development practice has continued to take place within the context of political chaos presented earlier in the Chapter. Part of this is the readily apparent celebration of NGO innovations, but my case study also demonstrates that NGO practice and local government practice are closely linked. This contribution stands in opposition to the commonly held simplistic dichotomy of a weak state and an active civil society. I argue that this division is crude, and renders invisible the ways that local government actors and patronage relations become an important terrain on which civil society action gains traction and support. I argue that local patronage relations, which have been characterized in Bangladesh as basic survival tactics that may provide short-term survival resources to the poor, but may also deny them full citizenship and reduce their agency, actually are the necessary processes through which civil society is able to instrumentalize development work.

Specifically, I argue that within the context of widespread ungovernability and mismanagement, as explained above, patronage politics has emerged as a fundamental component through which policies are understood and administered. That is to say, the issues of political instability and illiberal government have created the space, and even the need, for the persistence of low-level governmental negotiations with and through civil society.

In so doing, I reject the understanding of governance issues as decontextualized notions of transparency and efficiency. This more contextual focus shifts the conversation away from one of state and institutionalized corruption, to a more nuanced understanding of the active patronage relationships unfolding within, and around, government institutions that are now inherent to everyday life. I am focused on these more substantive state-society engagements, in which citizens access and influence the state and each other in ways that may produce varying degrees of democratic outcomes.

Understanding these relationships is also fundamental in understanding the particulars of my case study. My research finds that the outside-led administration of the SESP actually unduly empowers local government workers who may be prone to caste, class, family and occupational favoritism, and who may manipulate their intermediary role in the stipend's distribution mechanism. The SESP represents a crucial case study into how local patronage relations and informal systems of governance are transformed by CCTs.

Chapter 3 situates Bangladesh within a standard Development timeline, especially in relationship with contemporary global discourse around recent technologies of development. This framework reveals how mismatches between political and economic

trends in Bangladesh and global development practice led to unusual experiments and alignments between national and global policies and practices. In theorizing and framing recent technologies of development, I demonstrate how they have emerged specifically out of conditions of market-led development. Through the story of microcredit and microfinance, in particular, I underscore the need to recognize the appropriation of the Bangladesh consensus practices of microfinance into the Washington consensus practices of microcredit, and understand the relationship between discourse, expertise, and development practice. Much of my later arguments focus on the power of technologies of development and corresponding expert discourses to influence locally-designed programs that unfold far from where this discourse is centered, and this Chapter provides background on the ways that these technologies achieve such acclaim through reporting and discourse.

This Chapter also provides my critique of CCT assessment and reporting practices as overly quantitative, lacking important qualitative texture. First, I demonstrate that the enthusiasm and speed with which CCT programs have been embraced and propagated by international financial institutions and academia is astonishing, and highlights the need for critical, qualitative research to supplement such strong conclusions, and to better understand this quickly emerging development technology. CCTs continue to be widely documented as “successful,” but the vast literature praising this practice is lacking textured analysis of what the particular representations of success truly capture. Throughout the literature, it is unclear how various indicators of success are defined, measured, and represented. Measures of success are often narrowly focused and inconsistent. This empirical weakness demonstrates a significant gap in this literature.

What's more, there is an enormous need to push CCT research into more qualitative, ethnographic, and textured spaces of analysis. My study begins to push the CCT literature in these directions, interrogating both the ways that various measures of quantifiable outcomes have come to represent success, and demonstrating that there is a need for more qualitative research across scales, from the individual and household level, up through macro understandings of the very principles upon which CCTs rely.

In tracing the need for more qualitative and mixed-methods research on CCTs, this Chapter lays the groundwork for the examination of changes in reporting, evaluation, and measurement particular to my case study in Chapters 4 and 5. This critique goes beyond a narrow methodological finding, however, and lays the groundwork for my larger critique of the current period of Millennial Development. This broader critique is explored in Chapter 5, which argues that CCTs achieved a particular momentum in a context of rising importance of measurability within Development policy. CCTs align with recent trends towards and reliance upon poverty strategy reduction papers, indicators, benchmarking and metrics. IFIs were interested in measuring progress in key areas, and CCTs met both cost efficiency goals and measurement goals. These practices emphasize particular notions of success, and obscure others. I argue that the epistemology surrounding these logics misses the complexities of human capabilities as being structured by diverse criteria that cannot be reduced to global benchmarks.

Chapter 4 is situated in my experience within the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Education's Director of Higher Education (DSHE) in Dhaka, during which I conducted 10 months of mixed-methods fieldwork. This Chapter first outlines my position within the DSHE office, and situates this fieldwork within my broader

epistemological and methodological approaches. I also describe my two additional fieldwork sites, Sweco Consulting Offices in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the World Bank Headquarters, Washington DC, and corresponding research methods.

The bulk of this Chapter provides the details of this stipend project as a case study, mapping the way that both the FSP and SESP operate. I first describe the FSP and highlight key aspects of the program's history, objectives, and administration that I argue are fundamental in understanding the ways the program interacted with local populations. The FSP was a homegrown initiative of two small Bangladeshi NGOs and scaled up to include all rural females nationwide. There was much local pride and ownership of this program, and it is widely considered to have been very successful.

I then describe the new program, the pro-poor SESP, which replaced the FSP in 2007. I highlight the key changes between the FSP and the SESP, which I argue impact the target population in problematic ways. Conversations I had in the Ministry, villages, and schools indicate that there is much less pride around this program, and many Bangladeshis point to flaws in its administration, while bemoaning the loss of the female-focused objectives. After enumerating these problematic changes in objectives, targeting, and administration, I then argue that these changes result in the production of new development subjects. I argue that this expert-led development program intervenes into spaces of governmentality and citizenship, capturing and manipulating the agency of the people the program seeks to serve. I follow Li's (2007) critical stance of development technology schemes, exposing the limits of expert knowledge. I draw on Foucault's (1991) central emphasis on problematization and legibility, or how problems are defined and bounded so as to exclude alternative definitions. This renders complex political

matters into technical spaces of intervention. I follow Ferguson's (1994) understanding that development institutions generate their own discourse, which constructs particular objects of knowledge, and creates a structure around that knowledge. Interventions, such as the SESP, are designed on the basis of this structure, outside the place of intervention, and have complicated effects on the ground. I argue that the SESP transforms its participants into neoliberal subjects amenable to this style of development, which produces a particular form of citizenship that reconfigures their expectations of the state, themselves, and others.

Chapter 5 dives into the evaluation and reporting processes around both the FSP and SESP. The arguments in this Chapter build upon the Foucaultian angle from Chapter 4, following his work on the way that statistics and administrations create populations via "acts of simplification" (Foucault 1991). Here, I argue that the SESP relies on statistics, administrations, and operations that create populations via particular acts of data collection and reporting.

The Chapter situates this argument within the development context of Bangladesh, and highlights important aspects of the ways that program objectives are translated into measurable evaluation tools. I examine the most comprehensive locally-based report on the FSP, and the World Bank's most comprehensive evaluation on the SESP. In so doing, I trace the ways that both program objectives are measured, understood, and reported, and how these representations influence how such programs are carried forward. I examine how measures of success have been defined and propagated, and the ways that numerical representations are materialized into powerful discourses and narratives. Following my argument from Chapter 3 that CCT evaluations

need to better incorporate qualitative methods and findings, I argue that the FSP and SESP reports based on numbers fail to capture the complexity of even their own data.

This argument is situated in the recent increase in the reliance on quantitative measures of evaluation within development practice, and global knowledge more broadly. Here, I follow Adams' (2016: 6) work which demonstrates how "producing metrical forms of accountability can displace other activities, other ways of knowing, and other ways of seeing, seeing other things." I demonstrate how data in the FSP and SESP are collected and used, highlighting the overemphasis on quantitative findings, and the minimizing of qualitative findings. I trace the differences between local and international reporting practices, and demonstrate that the international best practices assessment translates complicated realities on the ground into internationally legible statistics and discourses. There is a systematic discounting of qualitative data, and a strategic use of certain measurable outcomes. Through this data, I demonstrate how the international reporting around the CCT-model SESP produces the reality it claims to be studying.

Specifically, within this context, I examine how the growing trends towards measurability in the aid industry has contracted the scope of "female empowerment." I theorize this concept, providing its history in a development context, rooted in my case study. I demonstrate how the practices of reporting and evaluation on the FSP and SESP have narrowed the scope of understanding female empowerment, rendered it technical, and represented it in statistical ways that do not capture the complex reality on the ground. Female experiences within the FSP are relegated to small spaces within reporting narratives, minimizing their importance in understanding the ways the FSP has impacted its target population. I argue that this has rendered invisible some of the problematic

changes between the FSP and the SESP. Specifically, I point to the achievement of a Millennium Development Goal around gender parity in education as representing female empowerment more broadly, a problematic understanding that undermines the need for continued work in this space.

Finally, these arguments are situated within the context of technologies of development, demonstrating the ways that knowledge becomes power. I evoke Roy's (2010) work on best practices and circuits of truth and power, demonstrating how development truths are forged and left unquestioned. Roy explains how available resources and models for improvement in developing countries facilitate openings into particular epistemologies, and make the maintenance of others more challenging. In terms of project assessment, international recognition, and solicitation of funding, for example, certain ways of doing development are made more accessible than others. In this context, I demonstrate how a highly successful female education program has become no longer about girls. Technologies of development do automatic work in achieving an end which produces a story of possibility and inevitability; the discourse has constructed the truth that CCTs targeting poor students will increase education outcomes and reduce poverty, point-blank.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation, outlining future research around these findings. I cover a number of aspirational, theoretically-driven questions which will delve deeper into this work.

Chapter 2: Historical development of Bangladesh

1. Introduction

This Chapter will survey pieces of the existing literature on Bangladesh in order to synthesize a more comprehensive and historically rooted portrayal of Bangladesh that captures the politics of development within which educational reforms are situated leading to the current moment, within which my research is based, and will argue that particular conjunctures must be recognized in order to understand the trajectory of my case study, and development in Bangladesh more broadly. Much of the existing literature on Bangladesh focuses on limited aspects of this broad picture, such as the NGO sector, political corruption, the role of Islam, or vulnerability to natural disasters. I seek to integrate these accounts to tell a broader story of how development has happened in Bangladesh, in order to better understand how it continues to unfold today. I move through development history in Bangladesh chronologically, and highlight key background processes and historical conjunctures that I argue are necessary to understand how international development has played out in Bangladesh.

In constructing this understanding of critical conjunctures in development history and practice in Bangladesh, I follow Hart (2001, 2004, 2010). She explains that ‘big D’ Development, defined as the post-war project of intervention into the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonization and the cold war, is back with a vengeance. Around 2000, this flourishing industry began to center on social capital and social development, evoking notions of vulnerability, voicelessness, and agency, propagated by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program. This work is “both reminiscent of the 1960s, and startlingly new” (Hart 2001: 649). To understand this

moment in development, one must examine the “multiply inflected capitalisms that have gone into the making of globalization” (Hart 2001: 651). She argues that work on Development must be rooted in questions of political economy, and must seek to understand the multiple, non-linear, interconnected trajectories embedded within a current moment. Hart (2004: 98) emphasizes the need to consider multiple historical and geographical determinations, building processual and relational understandings. In so doing, critical development studies can both ‘advance the concrete,’ and envision new ways forward that build on the interconnected historical geographies of a particular conjuncture. Indeed, Hart (2010) describes that in order to understand any past or present conjuncture, one must first be situated in relation to a series of key turning points leading up to that critical moment.

With this understanding in mind, I suggest that Bangladesh’s acceptance of the global “best practice” upon which my dissertation focuses, which makes cash transfers to poor school-going children conditional upon the completion of certain secondary school attendance criteria, can only be understood through this historical perspective, which is necessary for understanding how particular junctures and longer-term political and development climates have created the very openings that have exposed development processes in Bangladesh to particularly influential international authority. I will argue that these moments, within which international development institutions and practices were afforded particularly strong influence, are key to understanding the history and trajectory of both my particular case study and the development of Bangladesh more broadly. With this historically rooted and nuanced understanding, one can imagine a more democratic and productive way forward for development in Bangladesh.

I direct my intervention to highlight key changes in how international development institutions, especially the World Bank, have influenced Bangladesh development policy and practice over time. I highlight the conditions in which Bangladesh has come to accept the World Bank CCT doctrine by the late 2000s, and the contradictory ways that CCTs intersect with local governmental conditions far away from ministry offices, and far from official policy reports. Throughout the chronological history, I point to specific conjunctures in which foreign influence over Bangladesh development changed. Since 1971 onward, World Bank and international development ideas were taken up or rejected to varying degrees, and I make this the center of my discussion.

I show that Bangladesh has experienced plenty of “lessons learned” after blindly following World Bank prescriptions, especially during the neoliberal Ershad years, and that Bangladesh has developed a reputable NGO sector and strong civil society climate. These factors could support a Bangladesh-specific way of doing development during this time, but the most recent and significant shift in the stipend program was blatantly aligned with a standardized World Bank CCT and pro-poor model, and I argue, quite removed from a “Bangladesh way” of doing education intervention.

I show that while previous alignments with World Bank practices were driven by crisis, this most recent change has resulted from the development of a shared discourse around best practices, about an institutional understanding of the global south, and about efficiency of resources and practices. This moment of international influence is very different from those I trace in earlier administrations, and sheds new light upon the trajectory of development practice in Bangladesh. Development in the current moment

unfolds upon a terrain of “truth and capital” (Roy 2010), within which Bangladesh development practice can now be influenced without crisis or necessity.

Towards this end, this Chapter grounds my later analyses in the history of development and influence in Bangladesh. Following Roy (2010), the conjunctures and phases in the development history of Bangladesh can be understood through the idea that dominant ideologies are not the only ways forward, but are made most available through layers of discourse, funding, expertise, and international recognition. Previous periods of development in Bangladesh can be understood as neo-colonialism, with clear evidence of development decisions that were foreign-led, and heavily influenced by outside forces and both internal and external crises. Bangladesh then experienced a distinct period of development characterized by widely praised homegrown development intuitions and practices, achieving a particular notoriety among development scholarship and discourse. With this came lessons learned regarding the need (or lack thereof) to accept direct foreign and IFI policy prescriptions. This could lead one to believe that by the 2000s, Bangladesh was well positioned to carefully vet proposals circulating from international “best practice” discourses. And yet, as my case study will demonstrate, Bangladesh still followed the outside-prescribed CCT model and all the corresponding packaging promoted by the World Bank. Here, I understand “lessons learned” through a critical conception of development practice, in which there were multiples contradictory forces structuring the arena of development knowledge and practice. Openings emerge at moments for change, but can be foreclosed just as quickly. My work will show that it is not just economic power, direct influence, or soft power that has shaped Bangladesh’s

development agenda from the outside, as we might expect, but it is also the power of ideas, especially language.

To ground this analysis in the history of development in Bangladesh, this Chapter proceeds in five further sections. The first three sub-sections survey the history and politics of development policy, and seek to highlight key turning points during which a force or confluence of forces came together and led to significant changes in the trajectory of development policy and practice in Bangladesh. I will highlight critical conjunctures; overdetermined moments in which multiple, inter-related but not directly linked forces come together to produce a critical realignment of possibilities, openings out of which action could potentially lead to a range of new trajectories. I will show that from these conjunctures, out of which could come multiple trajectories, emerged just one.

These three sub-sections are organized chronologically, into Pre-independence, Post-independence, and Illiberal Democracy, with each section centered around the key conjunctures of each time period. These will point to some of the rich history of West Bengal, beginning in the 17th century and leading up to present day Bangladesh, highlighting key moments within development practice, both in Bangladesh and globally.

The fourth section, The Growth and Relative Strength of Civil Society, seeks to develop a nuanced and historically rooted understanding of civil society in Bangladesh. There, civil society is often equated with the strong NGO sector, which is certainly an active and important piece of civil society, but I seek to highlight a wider and deeper institutional landscape of civil society to better understand the unique, ongoing, and complicated relationships between citizenship, state-making, and development in Bangladesh. I believe this relationship is critical to understand the ways in which

development interventions and technologies are conceived and carried forward. I return to this in Chapter 4. The last section, Patronage Politics: Local Influences Within the Administration of National Policies, highlights the historic foundation and ongoing influence of informal patronage practices in rural Bangladesh. This section seeks to develop a nuanced understanding of how the particular practices of informal politics in Bangladesh may open or foreclose political possibilities, and understands patronage relations as a crucial aspect of the social and political landscape in rural Bangladesh.

2. Historical Development of Bangladesh: Leading up to 30 Years of Development Experimentation

Since liberation in 1971, Bangladesh has held a reputation as a quintessential developing country, characterized by mass poverty, natural disasters, corruption, and famine. Since then, the country has experienced rapid political, economic, and cultural changes, but has not escaped its place on the United Nations' list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Bangladesh has been referred to as a hotbed of development (Higgitt 2011), a development basket case (White 1999), a success story (Schuler et al. 1996), the Wall Street of development and the Silicon Valley of social innovation (Davis 2015). Throughout its post-Independence development, Bangladesh has received much attention from aid agencies, UN organizations, bilateral donors, and NGOs. In this way, Bangladesh has long been an object of outside-led development, but also a site of hugely significant economic and social developments from within. These two types of development, from outside and from within, have not occurred in isolation from each other. Rather, the relationship between global development policy and development initiatives within the borders of Bangladesh is mutually constitutive, and unpacking this

relationship can shed light on the complicated ways in which development policy in this “hotbed of development” is simultaneously local and global in unique ways. The ways that local and global development discourses and practices are separated and defined facilitates particular kinds of hybrid development processes. Global development defines and articulates solutions, whereas local development is understood as defining the problems. The international framing of Development in Bangladesh as particularly “experimental” given the unique conditions of the locale is fueled by natural disasters, and the global discourse framing Bangladesh as a “basket case.” This has produced Bangladesh as a site of ongoing experimentation, which generates development innovations, but also creates a sense that Bangladesh is a kind of test case.

Much of the literature on Bangladesh focuses on particular phenomena, demonstrating its position as a weak state or development basket case, but this intervention seeks to demonstrate that the interaction of these narratives, development practices and international discourses has led to the current moment, from which my case study emerged. The CCT intervention central to my case study was not simply a product of a weak state, but emerged through the confluences of local and global NGOs, the state, international development discourse, and patronage politics.

2.1 Pre-independence: Nationalist industrialization

Even before the first Europeans reached present-day Bangladesh in 1520, Bengal was establishing itself as a producer within the global economy, harvesting raw goods for export, and setting itself on a trajectory for exploitation. Starting in the late 1400s and continuing throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rice and cotton grown in the rich Bengal deltaic soils were exported to the geographical regions that would later

become Indonesia, Maldives, India, and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia (Van Schendel 2009). Europeans set up trading posts throughout the 1600s, and Bengal remained a steady producer of raw goods.

Although the Portuguese were the first to reach Bengal, it was the British East India Company, founded in 1600, that would have the greatest impact on Bengal's trajectory towards a position of future dependence within the global economy (Lewis 2011: 45). In the mid-1700s, the British East India Company (the Company) officially secured Bengal as part of the British Empire, placing Bengal in a continued position of economic exploitation. The Company operated as a joint-stock enterprise, which made it possible for traders to operate more easily within an uncertain business environment far from home. This allowed the Company to grow increasingly powerful, overtaking control of trade in indigo, cotton, tea, sugar, rice, and importantly, high value handmade cloth, such as muslin and calico. As Britain's economy boomed in the late 1600s, there was particular and growing interest in these expensive cloths. Dhaka, in the heart of East Bengal, was the opulent center for fine embroidery and lacework, laying the groundwork Dhaka's ongoing role as a textile center within the global economy (Lewis 2011:46). Today, Bangladesh's garment sector accounts for nearly \$11 billion in exports each year (Murshid et al. 2009), yet its foundations were laid much earlier.

By 1750, Bengal was producing over 75% of the Company's traded goods (Lewis 2011: 46). Bengal was seen as an almost inexhaustible source of wealth, with the Company securing all the profits, as the British continued to "systematically abuse the right to free trade awarded to them by the emperor" (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 50). Throughout the 1800s, Britain's own industrial textile industry grew, and the

corresponding availability of cheap textiles greatly reduced the value of the fine Indian cloth. This represented a key shift in the relationship between Britain and British India, including Bengal. Without the demand for the fine cloth, production in Bengal shifted back to entirely agricultural outputs, such as cotton and tea. Farmers were often heavily indebted to colonial capitalists and forced to sell raw materials at below-market prices. This solidified a relationship of colonial dependency, where commodities grown in Bengal were exported to Britain for manufacture and then re-exported for considerable profit.

During the 1800s, cotton was slowly replaced by jute, a crop very well suited to Bengal's rich deltaic soil. This high value natural fiber was in high demand on the international market, used for rope, sacks, and carpet, and the industry boomed until the early 1900s. Into the early 20th century, the industry remained "an exclusive project of British capital, as jute cultivators in East Bengal were subordinated to a peripheral status within the wider organization production" (Lewis 2011: 49). Raw jute was transported by boat to Calcutta, and shipped to Britain for processing and profit. Hundreds of millions of sacks made from Bengali jute were used to ship goods all over the world (Van Schendel 2009: 73).

Throughout this entire period of British colonialism, Bangladesh remained an agrarian society, with little opportunity for industry. Between the time of Britain's annexation of Bengal in 1757 and the partition in 1947, 96-98% of the population in Bengal worked in rural agricultural production with very little higher value-added processing services, which were controlled by the British (Van Schendel 2009: 67). Of note, Bengal was the world's prime production center for jute, but at the time of the 1947

partition, it did not have a single jute mill for refining raw jute into cloth (Boyce 1987). Its inability to bring its prime commodity through the refining process and to market as higher value cloth exemplifies the dependency cultivated by the Company's economic approach to Bangladesh and is echoed in later eras by dependency on international development institutions to refine practices and ideas to align with or respond to international powers.

In addition to exploiting labor and production, the British East India Company secured the right to collect land revenue from Bengal in 1765, allowing the Company to raise taxes as a de facto ruler. The Company pursued a policy of indirect rule, and exploited local patronage networks to manipulate local rulers against each other in order to maintain control. Most significantly, the imposition of the 'Permanent Settlement' land taxation system had immense impact on economic and social relations in rural Bangladesh (Van Schendel: 2009: 58). Introduced in 1790, the system was based on a deal between British colonialists, with ultimate property rights, and the Bengal rural gentry known as zamindars. The peasantry was denied any property rights to the land, and as long as zamindars paid fixed taxes to the British, they could increasingly extort labor and profit from the farmers. The system survived with modifications through the 1950s, and encouraged the development of a very hierarchical social structure, with as many as seven patron intermediaries often functioning between the tiller of the soil and the zamindar (Van Schendel 2009: 59). Rural social relations and patronage politics today cannot be understood without reference to this long-standing system of agrarian hierarchy, which was deepened through colonial rule. During these years, as Indian

historical research has showed, hierarchies of religion, language, and class were hardened, strengthening complicated and layered systems of local social relations.

Beginning after World War I and strengthening after World War II, nationalist sentiments were growing across the subcontinent, and European power was waning. The British were giving concessions to India, such as allowing elections for an Indian Congress by the 1930s. The movement for Indian independence grew stronger, and independence was achieved in a 1947 partition. The partition gave autonomy to India, and carved a second nation, Pakistan, into two wings. East and West Pakistan were separated by 1000 miles of India, with a population split 45%/55% between the two respective provinces. East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) was created as a homeland for Bengali Muslims. Van Schendel (2009:107) describes this as an extraordinarily unique experiment in state-making, positioning latter-day Bangladesh in a particularly precarious position. East Pakistan was a “severely fractured version of the old state of Bengal, as it had lost its capital Kolkata to India, which had contained its industrial base and main port. East Pakistan was composed only of a large and backward agricultural hinterland” (Lewis 2011: 59).

Indeed, at the time of partition, both parts of Pakistan had been overwhelmingly rural, with almost no modern industry of any significance (Kochanek 1993: 109). Beginning in the early 1950s, industry in both providences began to achieve consistent annual growth, mostly in the cotton and jute processing industries, but industry in East Pakistan continued to lag far behind that of West Pakistan. The industrial base in East Pakistan in particular was so low that its average growth rate of 5.7 percent per year is considered a statistical artifact (Rahman 2010). During these same years, the contribution

to GDP from the manufacturing sector in East Pakistan was more than double that of West Pakistan (Yusuf 1985: 55), with its growth rate averaging 11.1 percent. With a very small share of value-added industry in the East, the exploitation of surplus value from rural Bengali labor continued (McGuire 2003). This continual disadvantage is commonly attributed to discriminatory policies of the West Pakistani military-bureaucratic elite (Kochanek 1993: 109). Throughout the time of Pakistan's rule, East Pakistan experienced economic, cultural, and political subordination (Wood 1994: 101) and set Bangladesh in a continued position of abuse and structural weakness within the global economy (McGuire 2003), which in part explains its dependence on outside actors for guidance in the performance of development decades later. These conditions would eventually lead Bengalis to fight for and achieve independence in the Liberation War of 1971.

2.2 Post-independence: Agrarian decentralization

At the moment of independence in 1971, the stage was set for a difficult start to nation-building, as the new country suffered from recent war, famine, and a devastating cyclone. Before engaging in full-on war on their own soil, Bengalis had suffered the 1970 cyclone, which remains the deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded, and one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern history, causing 500,000 deaths (Murty 1988). The delayed response and weak relief operation by the Pakistan government contributed to the push towards independence. The Liberation War of 1971 involved horrific atrocities and war crimes, the scale of which has led some scholars to consider the war a genocide (Payaslian 2015). Following the bloody independence, the 1973 international oil crisis severely afflicted the country, which was still reeling from the aftereffects of war and natural disaster. This, along with the failings of the government to navigate the new

import economy and to distribute resources efficiently, led to the famine of 1973-1974, during which over 1.5 million Bangladeshis died (Sharma 2002). These compounding problems prevented Bangladesh from establishing a new standard of self-reliance and internally-generated stability during its formative years as an independent nation.

The founding father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), was the first to lead Bangladesh as prime minister from 1971-1975. He was the leader of the Bengali Nationalist Movement, and head of the Awami League, a Bengali political party formed in 1949 in reaction to the Muslim League that dominated West Pakistan. Mujib's administration had much work to do, as the new state of Bangladesh had not inherited central institutions from the British, such as the bureaucracy, military or police, all of which had become part of India and had never been developed due to East Pakistan's structural dependence on West Pakistan (Lewis 2011: 59).

At this point, still reeling from disaster, the new country was without a cohesive development or economic plan. Though this garnered some attention from the international development community in the form of aid and relief, this unfolded slowly within the climate of the Cold War. Mujib unveiled a new constitution in 1972, which focused on nationalism and peaceful coexistence with other countries, while adopting a policy of nonalignment in foreign affairs. This did little to improve the new country's relationship with the West. The United States and China had been aligned with Pakistan, and it is believed that the United States was suspicious of Bangladesh's association with the Soviet Bloc and its commitment to socialism. In 1972, China vetoed Bangladesh's application to join the United Nations. At the time of the 1974 famine, the United States used food aid to exert political pressure upon the new nation, pushing it to dissolve

important trade relationships with Cuba (Rahman 1979: 1978) and to lift restrictions on local and international private investment (Lewis 2011: 80). This set a precedent of acquiescing to foreign pressures in exchange for policy change and capital that reverberated into the early 2000s and the change from a pro-female to a pro-poor CCT.

Industry at this time was minimal, and the economy was quickly weakening. Since the early 1800s, Bangladesh had been the world's leading exporter of jute, but the golden fiber's importance plummeted in 1970 with the rise of synthetic fibers. Bangladesh had primarily been a source of raw materials and labor for centuries, and was now autonomous, with little support for the economic development it so desperately needed. Mujib's administration did not prioritize the economy, and instead hoped that because the veil of British, Indian, and Pakistani exploitation had been removed, the economy would naturally prosper (Lewis 2011: 80). The economy in the first decades after independence suffered from "low productivity, an excessive money supply, deficit financing, and galloping inflation" (Jalal 1995). In 1973, agricultural production was 84% lower than before the war, and industrial production lower by 66% (Van Schendel 2009).

Mujib's commitment to socialism was evident in the core of his vision for Bangladesh, and was demonstrated in his answer to these problems. During these first years, Bangladesh maintained ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba. The Soviet Union had aided the Bengalis in their fight to independence, whereas the United States was understood to have aided Pakistan (Ahmed 1994). For the first few years of his administration, Mujib maintained distance from the West, and the international development community.

At this crucial moment for the development trajectory of the new nation, Mujib was in a precarious position as the leader of the Bengali people; although he garnered nationalist momentum from the independence, the new country was in a position of extreme economic, political, and environmental vulnerability. His turn towards a socialist approach to industry and welfare may have been an attempt to provide a semblance of stability for the ravaged country, but was in marked contrast to global development practices within Bangladesh that had gained momentum over the previous decades. While other Asian and African countries were publicly following a socialistic path, this move within Bangladesh was a noteworthy realignment. Development, as an idea and a project, had emerged in the late colonial period, and strengthened through the 1930s and 1940s. Throughout the 1940s, previous laissez-faire practices gave way to more constructivist development policies, further institutionalizing the ideas and practices of development as planned interventions into newly independent nations (Furnivall 1965). Well before Bangladesh achieved independence, the idea of development as a global process in which “state funding, agencies and initiatives had a central role to play” (Bernstein 2000: 265) was an inherent global ideological structure through which ‘underdeveloped’ countries would be understood, targeted, assisted and manipulated.

In the late 1960s, this development model which pushed planned interventions into newly independent nations had come under attack by large contingencies of Bangladeshis who demanded greater economic equality and distributive justice, and this departure may have influenced Mujib’s administration and its socialist visions (Van Schendel 2009: 74). In some ways, this departure was a reaction to uneven patterns of growth that had resulted from the global development that had prevailed during the 1950s

and 1960s, which had stressed macro-level economic growth as a solution to poverty. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, from the modernization period focused on industrialization and leading up to the basic needs approach that gained prominence as a reaction against it, much of the western economic and political influences pushed certain universal paths to development. Although there were some departures among mainstream development institutions, at the center of each was a focus on GDP development. Concepts and practices of comparative advantage, import substitution, and stages of economic growth dictated a focus on GDP growth and trade. These approaches equated development itself with economic development, and it was not until the late 1960s, shortly before Bangladesh achieved independence, that these practices would be called into question. With economic growth often came increased poverty and great inequality, yet this was not openly recognized until the 1970s, when a shift towards the basic needs approach took center stage. This recognition and corresponding shifts in policy approaches was truly shocking at the time. Mainstream development institutions began to refocus on poverty and rural development as important factors in constructing development interventions, right as Bangladesh began to construct its identity as a new nation.

The new country, led by Mujib, emerged at this critical moment within the institution of development. While ideology was shifting towards a basic needs approach, Mujib's socialist approaches were still in contrast to dominant Western thinking. By focusing on public industry and minimizing private economic growth, he positioned himself away from western development thinking, and therefore support. To do this, Mujib put together a Planning Commission, headed by four academics affiliated with the

Awami League, who devised the country's very first Five Year Plan (FYP) in January 1972 (Islam 1977). Immediately, the government seized more than seven hundred firms that had been formerly owned by West Pakistanis, and all other non-Bengali owned businesses were targeted and nationalized. Within a few months, the FYP was modified to nationalize Bengali-owned business, including the industrial, banking, and insurance sectors. Under Mujib's administration, the government could seize any private-sector business that it claimed was mismanaged. By 1975, the public sector increased to include 92% of industrial assets, from just 34% in 1970 (Lewis 2011: 78-79). Foreign investment was technically permitted, but only in joint ventures within which the Bangladeshi public sector controlled the majority of equity. This, along with Mujib's general departure from Western ideologies which emphasized private economic growth, minimal public sector investment, and anti-socialist practices, resulted in very low foreign investment (Kochanek 1993: 81).

Mujib outlined programs to expand primary education, sanitation, food, healthcare, water and electric supply around the country. The content of the FYP was focused on state investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure. During Mujib's administration, 36,165 existing primary schools were nationalized, but education expansion or improvement was not a priority. Enrollment rates dropped shortly after the initial boost from nationalization, and remained at record lows through the 1980s (Hossain 2004:1). Government funding on education was low throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and very little progress was made towards improving infrastructure, access, enrollment, or completion (Ardt et al 2005). The nationalization of schools was a nod towards government investment in education, but the move lacked increases in funding,

infrastructure, accountability, or expansion. The education system was listed as a priority throughout Mujib's tenure, but material investments were completely lacking. This lack of concrete interest in the education system from the government created the opportunity for local and global development institutions to take a leading role in its improvement in later decades.

Mujib's administration had set out to bring existing nationalist movement leaders and the military under political control. He set out basic principles of a liberal democratic state, but the everyday reality quickly became "highly personalized, centralized, and increasingly repressive" (Kochanek 1993: 52). The FYP was developed in isolation, by the Planning Commission of four academics, and lacked wider government "ownership" across the bureaucracy (Lewis 2011: 79). There was competition between government ministries, decisions were made in private, and the precedent was set for weak accountability and low levels of responsibility (Kochanek 1993). While this resembles a very standard development critique of a "weak state" country, my argument places emphasis on these practices as part of the wider culture of patronage politics both in and outside of the government in Bangladesh, explored in a subsequent section. This culture of government has dominated the polity up to the present period (Lewis 2011: 79).

By 1974, the overall terrible state of the economy, and Mujib's increasingly inept and unpopular approach to politics completely eroded his support. The economy collapsed in July 1974, and Mujib made one final attempt to maintain his power by declaring a state of emergency and appointing himself president. Despite Mujib's socialist alignments, Soviet assistance had failed to materialize in any quantity, and his administration became desperate and vulnerable to the pressure from the international

donor community, led by the World Bank (Lewis 2011: 79). Although Mujib became increasingly authoritarian and socialist in his policies, he did lift restrictions on local and international private investment, which represented a significant turn towards Western ideology. Kochanek (2004) considers this decision, to turn toward the West for economic development assistance, the most agonizing issue that faced the new Bangladesh government. He (2004:127) explains that the new government was “proud, independent and inexperienced, the leadership of Bangladesh began their new aid relationship on a contentious tone. The Government of Bangladesh refused to acquiesce to traditional World Bank procedures, chafed at the Bank’s critique of its Five Year Plan, and rejected the Bank’s emphasis on providing greater scope to the private sector.”

As the country’s economic crisis deepened, however, its position in opposition to the Bank became precarious, and the Bank’s influence began to grow substantially. In addition to economic collapse, Bangladesh suffered a massive flood and famine in 1974, ultimately killing 1.5 million Bangladeshis (Sharma 2002). This made Bangladesh even more vulnerable to the aid community, and Mujib began to loosen his resistance to the World Bank and the United States. Bangladesh had been exporting jute to the Soviet Union and Cuba, and because of the US trade embargo against Cuba, the US cut off grain supply to Bangladesh at a crucial time (Ahmed 1994). Desperate, Mujib decided to conform to the international aid community’s expectations in order to secure necessary food and monetary aid. This was a last attempt by Mujib to regain popularity, and although the decision came too late to save his administration, it would have significant impact on the future of Bangladesh. Increasingly, from this point on, Bangladesh would become an aid-dependent country and Government success became judged by the level of

international aid it was able to obtain. This turn towards the West, and acceptance of conditional aid, represents a key moment in Bangladesh's development trajectory. This was a conjuncture in which Bangladeshi policy decisions could have opened or closed to connections with and influences from mainstream development institutions and Western governments. Rather than further separating itself from dominant Western ideologies, this moment solidified Bangladesh's position as one following mainstream development trajectories.

During his rule, Mujib had attempted to disband the military, and in August 1975, disaffected army officers led a violent military coup, and assassinated Mujib and murdered his family, sparing only two daughters who were in Europe at the time. One of the surviving daughters, Sheikh Hasina, would become the leader of the Awami League, and become Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 1996-2001, and again from 2009 to the present.

Following Mujib's assassination, there was political chaos, with a coup, a counter coup, and a period of military rule. This was the country's first change of administration, and the chaotic transition would be repeated again and again between future administrations. Kochanek (1993) describes the ongoing cycle as military coup, martial law, civilian-military rule, and mass movement, and notes that this systemic collapse has not yet come to an end. It was during this first period of military rule, beginning in 1975, that Bangladesh's development trajectory along the ideologies of the international development community was solidified. During the horrific famine, much aid was pouring into the country, and the World Bank convinced donor countries that "Bangladesh would not be able to fashion programs and strategies, so the World Bank

took the coordination of relief and aid away from Bangladeshi hands” (Ahmed 1994: 129). Ahmed’s account from the early 1990s emphasizes the deepening of a dependent relationship, which has endured, even strengthened, to the present: from that point on, “the World Bank decides what our policy would be, and it allocated all the money to different sectors. We are totally beholden to the World Bank. Whatever the World Bank says, we have to say yes” (Ahmed 1994: 129-130). My argument is situated within this claim, but sharpens this understanding to recognize that the influence of the World Bank is not through direct pressure or conditional aid offers, but through the use of expert language surrounding technologies of development.

After Mujib’s assassination, Bangladesh became fully integrated into the institution of international development. During the same period, with Robert McNamara as its President, the World Bank set a new agenda through the 1970s focused on “redistribution with growth” aimed at meeting unmet basic needs. These practices were built on the belief that meeting basic needs would reduce inequality without a need to actively redistribute assets, such as land, common under a more socialist orientation. The Bank pushed for increased agricultural outputs and food security. The Green Revolution called for new, high-yielding seed varieties, intensification of irrigation, use of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. Bangladesh, a land-poor but labor-rich country, did not fully adopt these changes ushered in by the Green Revolution, but some areas did experience even more landlessness as a result. It was also during these years that the International Development Association began giving soft loans, which focused on human capital, education, rural development, and women, in addition to the more typical

infrastructure and output-based growth. This shift in focus would help spur along the already developing homegrown NGO sector in Bangladesh.

During the years of military rule and political chaos, the United States and the World Bank secured their power in Bangladeshi development. After this period of political chaos, Ziaur Rahman (Zia) came into power in 1976 and reordered internal and international policies. Unlike Mujib, Zia's foreign-relationship building was intentional from the start, and proved much more successful. China soon recognized Bangladesh, and United States foreign assistance began to increase. This shift was a key moment in which Bangladesh became more open to international assistance and development expertise, and with this came changes within the education sector. While education in Bangladesh had remained a priority in name, few investments or material changes had been made. With this opening to development assistance and expertise, so too came shifts in the priorities, objectives, and administrative plans within the education sector.

The Bangladesh economy was still facing a major crisis, however, and Zia was pressured to address the crisis in several ways. The military and an emerging leftist political faction pushed for a return to social transformation and self-reliance, favoring "scientific socialism" with the aim of building a more egalitarian socialist revolution (Lewis 2011: 82). The emerging business elites were pushing for a stronger private sector, more open investment opportunities, and less public spending. By 1977, this shift was openly encouraged by the World Bank, who "saw the chance to engage with Bangladesh and move it more firmly onto the path of capitalist development through modernization within a liberalized economy" (Lewis 2011: 82).

Zia accepted the World Bank's expertise and guidance and worked to strategically open the private sector in Bangladesh to foreign investment, and to decrease spending on public industries. Zia's administration sold off many public assets to the private sector, a practice aligned with global trends in growth-oriented industrialization, with an emphasis on exports (Lewis 2011: 82). Kabeer (2000) points to a particularly significant provision of this time, which was the removal of duties on imported fabric. On the condition that the fabric was intended for garments for export, producers could import the fabric duty-free. This set the stage for a rapidly growing ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh, which is now the second largest in the world, exporting garments mostly to Europe and the United States. The ready-made garment sector was virtually non-existent in late 1970s when this law took effect (Mostafa and Klepper, 2009), but has grown 17% per year, and now accounts for over 75% of Bangladesh's export earnings (Bangladesh Export Processing Bureau 2009). This combination of acceptance of World Bank expertise and guidance, and the growth of trade relationships with international development funders including countries in Europe and the United States, further primed Bangladesh to move toward external practices despite conflicting internal sentiments.

A second important development during Zia's administration was the introduction of a village government system, "gram sarkar," in 1981. This program was not new; it had been an NGO and grassroots-led movement that had begun in 1974 across Bangladesh. But in 1981, the government officially took over the administration of the program, and made plans to extend it. The original experiment, known internationally as the "Swanirvar (self-reliance) Movement," was a basic-needs centered approach to rural community development, attempting to include various social groups in the village

structure. In the face of the recent natural disaster, the movement hoped to bring together varied social levels in order to face future calamities as a collective. At first, Zia's administration encouraged such spontaneous efforts of local people to "stand on their own feet" (Ali 2004: 353). The institutional structure of the movement consisted of six tiers at the village, union, thana, sub-division, district and national levels. The basic unit was the village assembly (gram parishad), which was headed by an elected village pilot (gram sarathi) and appointed four specialized committees headed by village ministers, each responsible for a particular sector, such as law and order, agriculture, education, health and family planning (Khan 2012). The role of family planning, in particular, is key to understanding the development of my case study, a 100% female-focused anti-early marriage education initiative. In name, the garam sakar movement placed ownership and responsibility around family planning at the local level. This was a very noteworthy ideological shift. This shift underpins the widespread success of the FSP throughout rural Bangladesh.

The village ministers were expected to represent the villagers in any dealings with the central government (Ali 1979). Although the program was soon absorbed and disbanded by the central government, the work of this movement constitutes a milestone in the history of rural development in Bangladesh (Khan 2012). Primarily, this attempt at decentralization hoped to involve local villagers and inspire self-reliance, but came with little legal power or funding. Landless laborers, women, and youth were targeted for incorporation into these structures, but were never allowed to reach a majority (Wood 1994: 294). In practice, the experiment was short-lived, and achieved little substantial change among local power networks, but laid important groundwork for future reforms,

and for the growth of civil society sector that would later become known for innovation in development. I will argue that much of the success of the FSP program came from its grassroots origins. It grew from a small NGO pilot project to a nationwide government program, and was supported by widespread pride, local ownership, and involvement.

During this second term, Zia released a Five Year Plan in 1980 that complicated his previous liberalized economic approaches, and turned toward a more mixed economy, with contradictory ideas, and little enactment. Officially, this FYP listed the public sector as the central driver of development, but was met with much criticism. Powerful business interests urged that large scale nationalized industries, such as the jute mills, should be returned to private ownership (Lewis 2011: 83). As part of this FYP, Zia launched the New Industrial Policy (NIP) in 1982, which then outlined plans to align with the United States' and other foreign donors' favored policies of "structural adjustment" and liberalization, and included privatization and deregulation of public enterprises. Meaningful enactment of this NIP, however, did not unfold during Zia's administration, which was cut short by his assassination the following year. His actions in 1980 suggest that progress toward the NIP may never have been achieved, though, as the government's actual efforts toward liberalization weakened, and were met with high levels of restriction, regulation, and uncertainty. Economic growth was rapidly declining, and the industrial sector was contributing just 8% of the GDP. In May 1981, Zia was killed in a coup. His widow, Khaleda Zia, would later head the BNP and serve as Prime Minister 1991-1996, and again 2001-2006.

In 1982, General H.M. Ershad, the army chief of staff since 1978, took power. His administration continued to build on the positive foreign relationships that Zia had

started. Throughout his rule in the 1980s, the mainstream development donor community continued to push for liberalization and privatization of the Bangladesh economy. Ershad revived the existing NIP, and added a Revised Industrial Policy in 1986, both of which signaled further alignment with the practices of the United States, China, and major international development institutions. Kochanek (1993: 96) explains that Ershad chose this development route because he had heard of the success of the East Asian “tiger” economies, faced foreign pressure for more private sector investment, and felt domestic demands from the business community for the return of assets. With this NIP, he liberalized control of the private sector, protected new industries, and provided incentives to attract investments. He made the especially controversial decision to return the jute and textile mills to private ownership.

Ershad worked to further separate Bangladesh from its previous ties with the Soviet Union. He expelled a number of Soviet diplomats from Dhaka in 1982 (Lewis 2011: 32). His policies openly endorsed the involvement of foreign donors, ideas of liberalization, privatization, and deregulation of public enterprises and institutions. This was a key moment for the institution of development in Bangladesh, as it signaled intentional alignment with global development ideologies and sought incorporation within international institutions of development. This moment was very significant in understanding the conditions that led to different phases of development alignment. My argument emphasizes these moments within Ershad’s administration as key to understanding the trajectory of development in Bangladesh, in which the expert influence of mainstream development institutions would take increasingly stronger hold in the years to come, as highlighted in my case study. During these Ershad years, Bangladesh

was aligning with international financial institutions and mainstream development policies and practices through deliberate political decisions. In contrast, earlier phases that led to shifts and realignments had come as a result of need created by natural disasters and geopolitics. These shifts, however, were domestic politics and strategic openings in governance. The varying degree to which Bangladesh was engaging mainstream development and international financial institutions created new possibilities and limitations over time, and this period was one in which these openings were deliberately widened.

At this point in Bangladesh's history, the World Bank's influence and direct involvement began to take on a critical role in shaping its institutions and policies (Quibira: 24). During the 1980s, the World Bank focused on policy reforms conducive to private sector development, working to thrust Bangladesh into the global capitalist economy. The reforms included removing perceived distortions in trade, pricing, credit allocation, and interest rates. In evaluating the effectiveness of these policy recommendations, the World Bank attributed the mixed results "not to any deficiencies in its own program, but to the government's failure to implement reforms" (ibid). The report went so far as to claim that the "core constraint in the development process in Bangladesh was the government itself and its unwillingness to enforce the needed public sector reforms" (World Bank 1998: 56). This evokes Ferguson's (1990) argument, which locates shortcomings of development projects at the conjuncture of global expertise and domestic implementation. The reforms were packaged to Bangladesh in a way that emphasized the widespread benefits to the economy, and corresponding place of growth

within the wider global economy, but the World Bank felt the government did not do enough to implement the reforms.

Although the plans for denationalization were firm on paper, and the World Bank applauded the NIP as a partial success (Lewis 2011: 84), the processes on the ground were inconsistent and cumbersome. Attempting to denationalize twenty-seven of the country's textile mills and thirty-three of its jute mills was fraught with difficulty, and after two years of attempts, Ershad's policy shifted focus to weaker forms of "public private partnerships" (ibid: 85). By 1985, the economy was once again in a downturn. At that point, the World Bank conducted a study of Bangladesh's trade and investment policies, to identify problems and offer recommendations. The study reported that the industrial sector had a major structural flaw, as the subsector of high-value exports, garments and shrimp, was very dynamic and lucrative, but was not entirely deregulated. Ershad was eager to improve the failing economy, and took the World Bank's recommendation, and outlined deeper processes of liberalization and deregulation in the Revised Industry Policy (RIP) of 1986. In reality, the RIP served only to mobilize the opposing party around the defense of the public sector, and domestic privatization was stalled. Lewis (2001:84) writes that "despite the veneer of liberalization implied by Ershad's economic reform policies, the reality was that centralized decision making, resistance to implementation, bureaucratic red tape and pervasive corruption remained in place." This contrast between Ershad's stated policies and the government's actual practices appears to support the World Bank's claims that lack of government follow-through derailed its priorities for the nation.

In addition to the attempts for structural economic changes, Ershad's government made a significant attempt to reorganize local government. This did not build upon the previous work of Zia's gram sarkar system, but instead set up a new upazila subdistrict system, in which elected councils formed local distribution points for centrally dispensed resources. Each upazila was to have a representative body, the upazila parishad (subdistrict council), under a directly elected chairman. In a study of this system and its local elections, Crook and Manor (1998) found that while the system was put in place as an attempt by Ershad's military regime to build political allies in the rural areas, it did allow village voters to discipline unpopular local leaders, to an extent. Although the system had mixed intentions, and was abandoned in 1990 when Ershad was removed from power, it remains an important step in the ongoing decentralization process (Lewis 2011: 87). The institutions and hierarchies of the upazila system would remain in some areas, informally, until an official government revival of the system in 2009.

Although Ershad's regime has some important legacies, his administration is considered "one of the most centralized and corrupt in the history of Bangladesh" (Kochaenk 1993: 53). He lacked the popularity of his predecessor, who was a hero of the Liberation War. His power base consisted of connected military and wealthy business communities, maintained through the heavy use of patronage (Lewis 2011: 89). With the economy once again in decline, and social grievances gaining momentum, an anti-Ershad Movement grew strong in the late 1980s. By this time, Zia's widow, Khaleda Zia, was leading the BNP, and Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina, was leading the AL, and both parties helped create a rallying call for Ershad's resignation. Both opposition parties offered democratic political alternatives to military rule, and a people's movement

successfully forced Ershad from office in 1990. Representatives from the international donor community played a key role in these final stages, threatening to withdraw support on which the military government depended (Lewis 2011: 90).

Throughout this history, I argue that during the period from colonialism through 1990, Bangladesh was heavily influenced by the World Bank and other mainstream development ideals due to crisis: natural disaster, fiscal crisis, political upheaval, economic necessity, or a combination of these crises. The past 30 years, however, have been characterized by a stronger Bangladesh, with increasingly successful homegrown development practices, as I will show in the subsequent sections. Despite the success of the NGO sector and the strength of civil society organizations in the more recent period, Bangladesh remains susceptible to international influence, but I argue this dynamic is one not of crisis-induced necessity, but of powerful expert discourse. This final chronological section will lead us to that current moment, and subsequent sections will highlight specific aspects of civil society and patronage politics that intervene into contemporary development. The following Chapters will pick up this Bangladesh-specific context and bring it towards development practice more broadly.

2.3 Illiberal democracy: Neoliberal alignment

Despite the ongoing disappointment with the democratic institutions and policies that would come to characterize this next era, the administrations' attempted developments, whether successful or not, are key to understanding today's political climate and rural social fabric. I will highlight a few key moments from each administration which have particular relevance to the context of my case study.

The transition away from Ershad's government marked the beginning of renewed democratic politics and hope in Bangladesh, with a 1991 election that was relatively free and fair. Unfortunately, this optimism would quickly fade, and politics in Bangladesh devolved into an "illiberal democracy" (Lewis 2011: 90, see Zakaria 1997, Zaman 2012). From 1991 to today, the government has been dominated by alternating administrations of the AL and BNP and their "battling begums," the two female party leaders who seem to put more energy into personal vendettas than national policies (The Economist 2015). Islam (2006) writes that the contentious politics between these two parties has devolved into a political war, which has stunted Bangladesh's hopes for development (12-13).

That first relatively free and fair democratic election was won by the BNP party, and Khaleda Zia was sworn in as Prime Minister. One of Khaleda's first policy steps was the abolition of the upazila council system in 1991. There had been a reinvigoration of the upazila system 1990, with new elections for councils and chairpersons. The BNP, with its urban power base, did not win a majority in these rural elections. The new regime did not wish to work with a tier of local government that it could not control, so instead, the entire system was abolished (Lewis 2001: 91). This arbitrary empowering and disempowering of local leaders encouraged distrust of the state, and allowed local rural power dynamics to strengthen and earn legitimacy in the absence of a rural state governance system (Baxter 1992).

The economy got off to a relatively strong start. The growing garment industry was targeted for expansion, and the Finance Ministry removed applicable foreign-exchange restrictions and provided new export-tax exemptions. Foreign investment regulations were restructured, making it possible for outside interests to completely own

industrial companies in Bangladesh for the first time. With this development, the US government wrote off almost one-third of a billion US dollars of Bangladesh's debt (Baxter 1997). The establishment of a new Dhaka stock market helped to maintain the economic momentum, there was certain measure of optimism about the new democracy (Kochanek 1993).

Unfortunately, this air of optimism was short-lived, and soon the government failed to demonstrate effectiveness and maintain support. This regime, and all following, have succumbed to the "power of interest groups and the politics of patronage which have gradually deteriorated the law-and-order situation" (Lewis 2011: 91-92). Kochanek (1993: 346) explains that each new government in this era would enjoy a short cushion of safety, but fail to establish longer-term legitimacy. This would result in an ongoing cycle of "military coup, martial law, civilian-military rule, mass movement, and systemic collapse."

During these years, the NGO sector began to develop rapidly, filling in gaps left open by the government, and forging new, locally-derived approaches to development. Bangladeshi NGO success stories became international headlines, and created a narrative of Bangladesh development as unique and innovative. The growth and visibility of these NGOs in Bangladesh, coupled with neoliberal policy agendas and decreasing emphasis on the state, helped the sector achieve a certain momentum. International aid agencies and foreign donors were placing increasing pressure on the Bangladesh government to support and facilitate NGOs' development activities (Rahman 2000). NGO-based development technologies emerging from Bangladesh would maintain this international notoriety, and have influence on international development discourse throughout the

1990s and 2000s, representing a unique recognition of south-based development knowledge and practice.

By 1994, the AL was preparing to recover power in the next election, and when municipal elections began, the overt failings of the democratic system became very apparent. There were accusations of vote rigging, confrontation in Parliament, boycotting, and ongoing protests. There were extremely low levels of trust in public institutions, and a declining confidence in the legitimacy of the two main political parties. AL demanded that BNP step down, but Khaleda refused, and held national elections in early 1996, which were boycotted by the opposition. This contributed to a deepening political crisis, with violence and political deadlock. It was a coalition of civil society organizations, including trade unions, NGOs, journalists and lawyers who successfully demanded that BNP step down (Lewis 2011: 93). After a brief period of nonparty caretaker government, elections were held, with Sheikh Hasina's AL taking the majority.

Sheikh Hasina's first administration, 1996-2001, managed to make a few significant achievements, despite a lasting reputation of corruption and inefficiency (Lewis 2011: 94). There were developments in infrastructure, agricultural production, and deliberate attempts to improve relations with India. These years also finally saw education on the forefront of policy agendas, after having been largely neglected throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Ardt et al 2005). Hasina commissioned and announced a large-scale National Education Policy, called Education Policy-2000. Shortly thereafter, Hasina lost reelection, and the policy was not taken up by the next administration.

In 2001, the BNP and Khaleda returned to power. Once again, the opposing party boycotted parliamentary proceedings, and little policy progress was made. Energy was

spent charging Hasina and her ministers with corruption, just as her government had done towards Khaleda. At this point, the unique and large-scale NGO sector in Bangladesh was largely understood to be a more active and visible leader of development than the government (Haque 2002). During these years, there were over 23,000 registered NGOs, 400 NGOs of which involved in the delivery of basic education programs (USAID 2002).

By 2007, the confrontational and dysfunctional political parties brought the country to the “brink of social and political collapse” (Devine 2008). A state of emergency was imposed, and a caretaker government stepped in. This intervention was to the satisfaction of many ordinary citizens, whose everyday needs had long been ignored, or actively blighted by the realities of power and politics at national and local levels (Lewis: 2011 96). The military-backed caretaker government successfully halted street violence, and raised hopes that corruption and instability would be tackled. This period was attractive to international diplomats and donors, and 2007 was the year of the highest total foreign assistance to Bangladesh since independence (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2012). There were reports that the economy was improving, with increased traffic at the Chittagong Port and a rise in garment exports (Lewis 2011: 96).

Finally, in late 2008, an election was held and Hasina’s AL returned to power. The first few years of this administration were relatively stable, and began some purposeful strides in development. They launched a campaign called “Digital Bangladesh by 2021,” vowing to streamline administration across government ministries, and improve governance and institutions (Lewis 2011: 97).

Hasina also recommissioned her National Education Policy. In the preface to this policy, she wrote: “Thirty-nine years have passed since our emergence as a free nation,

but no Education Policy has been put to implementation” (Government of Bangladesh 2011). This preface explained that policies have been prepared, often half-heartedly by each administration, but implementation has been halted by the use of “illicit corridors,” “diabolical interruptions,” and even “murder” (National Education Policy, Government of Bangladesh 2007). Here, she is likely specifically alluding to the assassination of her father Mujib, the Father of the Nation and first Prime Minister. Though this explanation is clearly drenched in political sway, her point remained that the government’s efforts to improve Bangladesh’s education system have continually been halted and undone with changing administrations. Previously, much of the growth of the education sector in Bangladesh began as initiatives of NGOs, as was the case with the original stipend project, started by two small NGOs and later absorbed by the government. The intention of Hasina’s policy, which outlined a Ten Year Plan, was for the government to finally address large-scale issues in the education sector, and achieve real growth by superseding changes in administration. It was during these years that the stipend project would be absorbed by international development institutions. Programs outlined in the Ten Year Plan are still underway and have made some meaningful strides in improving the quality and access of education, especially for females (Rahman 2014).

Most recently, Hasina announced a plan to nationalize all non-governmental primary schools in Bangladesh, including madrasahs, private, and NGO schools, totaling over 27,000 of the country’s total 80,000 primary schools (OneWorld South Asia 2013). This announcement was made in January 2013. The plan was that the schools would be absorbed in three phases, beginning immediately, though the process has been very cumbersome (Daily Star 2014). This is the first effort toward nationalization of education

since her father, Mujib, nationalized all existing primary schools in 1972 (Rabbi 2007). It remains to be seen if any similar attempt will be made to nationalize secondary schools. As of 2007, there were only 317 government-owned secondary schools, compared to 15,489 non-government secondary schools (Government of Bangladesh 2008).

At this point, Hasina's administration efforts were more focused on harassing the opposition, amending the constitution to suit her, and undermining democracy. Even very recently, protests, strikes, and violence related to political stagnation and corruption have peaked, and may again lead to a military intervention period, as it did in 1997 (Why Bangladesh's politics are broken, 2015). This could mean an army-led caretaker government will step in as an attempt to avoid an outright coup, and eventually move towards fresh elections. During these last two decades of both the AL and BNP's practices of "illiberal democracy" (BRAC 2009), the government's development efforts have been stunted, and much progress in Bangladesh has stemmed instead from civil society.

This period is characterized by a major shift in the vulnerability of Bangladesh as a development object, and by the related growth of civil society.

Foreign influence has remained consistent, despite domestic instability, but the reasons and outcomes of this influence begin to change. Bangladesh has shifted away from its role as a development "basketcase," and into its position as a development success story, but my case study will demonstrate its ongoing susceptibility to international development influence. This detailed history of development in Bangladesh leading to the current moment is important for understanding both the ways in which the vulnerability has changed, and the influence has remained.

3. The Growth and Relative Strength of Civil Society

Alongside the history of Development and state politics, a nuanced understanding of civil society in Bangladesh is crucial for understanding the contemporary moment of development policy in general, and my case study in particular. Civil society and the NGO sector have achieved for Bangladesh a particular notoriety, which has created openings within which local development policies have taken shape, and around which foreign-led development policies have intervened. The rich texture of civil society in Bangladesh is necessary to understand both how the homegrown FSP program achieved such widespread support, and how the outside-led SESP achieved traction in replacing the FSP. While civil society and the NGO sector in Bangladesh are often discussed as strong forces in response to a weak state, I argue that this simple dichotomy reduces these complicated realms in ways that obscure a richer understanding of development history. The interrelatedness of the histories of development, civil society, and the state are necessary for understanding the context in which my case study emerged, and the following section highlights key aspects of civil society towards this end.

Important to my case study, the work of local NGOs and civil society organizations in Bangladesh have highlighted three important ongoing commitments within the active civil society: village level informal politics, a dedicated focus on females, and an emphasis on access to education (Feldman 1995). The successes in human development credited to the NGO sector have occurred in multiple scales outside the level of the state and the nation. NGO interventions and civil society movements have long operated on local, household, individual, or village levels. This is of key importance to my case study, which highlights the moment at which the administration of the stipend

intervention was transformed from its original homegrown structure into a nationally mechanized and bureaucratically administered intervention, in line with more globally recognizable conditional cash transfer programs.

Civil society and the NGO sector in Bangladesh are often discussed alongside the country's weak governance and struggling economic system, which I argue obscures the interrelatedness of such processes. Migdal (1988) and White (1999) identify Bangladesh as a "weak state" within a "strong society," indicating that the lack of proper governance, social service provisioning and economic development by the state has created the space for a thriving non-governmental sector. Further, this understanding implies that the contributions of non-governmental and civil service organizations enable the state's continued absence in service delivery. Echoing Lewis (2011), I argue that we must probe past this simple dichotomy of weak state/strong civil society, interrogate their origins, and evaluate their role in present-day Bangladesh as overlapping and mutually constitutive realms. From this understanding emerges a grounded context from which I can interrogate the reasons why the FSP changed into the SESP, through the conjunctures of the local and global forces, and civil society and state relationships.

The focus of my work, the secondary education stipend project, is situated at the intersection of these realms, and provides a critical case study into the ways that unique forms of development have been made possible in Bangladesh. The FSESP was first a homegrown experiment by a local NGO in 1984, was then integrated into state policy and scaled up throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Over time, the involvement and influence from international development institutions increased, reshaping objectives and administration to align with global trends in development. The most noteworthy moment

of this influence came in 2007, at which point the program was completely reworked into the SESP. To fully understand the history, genesis, development, and future of this project, I seek to privilege this nuanced and historically specific understanding of civil society in Bangladesh. I argue that civil society in Bangladesh has enabled particular forms of development, but also that the country's civil society cannot be reduced to a "thick" version of civil societies in other developing contexts – certain practices that work elsewhere may not work in Bangladesh, and vice versa. This unique context is, in part, the post-independence emergence of large-scale NGOs, but also a wider and deeper history of civil society, which predates both the "weak" government and "strong" NGO sector.

Today, the increasingly high profile of the NGO sector in Bangladesh is often cited as the key indicator of the strong civil society, but a more historically rooted understanding of civil society demonstrates a depth and breadth beyond what is captured within the NGO sector alone. The NGO sector in Bangladesh is credited specifically for much of the country's incredible progress in human development in recent years (Rahman 2002, Blair 2005), and justifiably so. Yet, I here argue that to equate development NGOs with civil society, which has been a common tendency since the early 2000s, is to obscure a wide range of other forms of organization and social action within the public sphere (Howell and Pearce 2001). The NGO sector serves to strengthen and respond to this active society, helping connect engaged citizens into now democratic institutions and important religious and social groups (Lewis 2004). Civil society in Bangladesh is further often understood as a counterpart to the weak state and "stunted

private sector” (The Economist 2013), but I argue that such analyses falsely divides state and society.

In order to best understand the fabric of civil society in Bangladesh as it relates to my case study, I will now examine the historical context from which this contemporary moment emerges. A consolidated Bengali civil society reaches back to British colonial times, with practices of charitable action, philanthropy, and community organizing key aspects of colonial resistance movements. Beteille (1999) points to the limited forms of citizenship that were afforded to Bengalis during British colonialism as a catalyst for social organization, just as Jahangir (1986) draws attention to the long tradition of Bengali resistance to colonialism as a key foundation of today’s civil society.

Alongside the momentum and cohesiveness of the anti-colonial mentality, voluntary action and self-help organizations developed across Bengal throughout the early- and mid- 1900s. Lewis (2003: 9) explains that during colonial times, Christian missionary work began a legacy of charitable action in education and health, forming precursors for much of today’s community development approaches. Self-help village level organizations were encouraged by local administrations, which contributed to the ongoing development and extensiveness of patronage relationships. Later, during the Pakistan period, the farmer cooperation model further contributed to rural organization and patronage-building (Khan 1989).

Ongoing traditions and practices of civil society were integral in the processes leading to independence and the construction of the state. Organized resistance in the cultural sphere formed the Bengali language movement of the 1950s, which pushed back against West Pakistan leadership’s imposition of Urdu. This movement gradually took on

more explicitly economic and political agendas and later became absorbed into the liberation movement (Lewis 2003: 8). Rahman (1999) points to this cultural momentum as the foundation for the nationalist movement for autonomy and eventually independence.

At the time of independence, local traditions of voluntary action and rural volunteerism were strengthened by extreme natural disasters, famine, and war (Lewis 2003). Religious charity and private volunteer work formed schools, health clinics, mosques, and relief stations long before today's globally famous NGOs took shape. The Islamic duty of zakat, the payment of one fortieth of one's income to the poor, has long been a key aspect of rural social life (Zaidi 1970).

Hashemi and Hasan (1999:130) point to the enormous role that traditional civil society organizations in Bangladesh had in the struggle for independence, formation of Bengali nationalism, and ongoing development of a secular and democratic society. These groups, including students, lawyers, cultural activists, and journalists, have organized together during key moments throughout the development of Bangladesh. Often, these civil society groups have played a stronger role than political parties in major movements, such as the overthrow of Ershad's military dictatorship (Lewis 2003: 8). Blair (1995) points to civil action as the key force against authoritarian administrations throughout Bangladesh's history, as oppositional civil pressure has repeatedly achieved brief windows of democracy.

Bengali identity, culture, history, and nationalism have served to maintain a somewhat homogenous and cohesive civil society, which has leveraged much success in the development of the country. Trade unions, cultural organizations, movements against

military rule, rural associational life, and longstanding traditions of volunteerism and civic engagement underscore what continues to be a very active and productive civil society. Even today, as much as ever, Bangladesh state-making is very much a work in progress, leaving much space for a wide range of non-state actors. A nuanced understanding of civil society can help illuminate important aspects of social and political processes in Bangladesh. Similarly, the prevalence of patronage politics has tremendous impact upon how development interventions unfold, and a close examination of these historical and ongoing practices provides important context with which I approach my case study.

4. Patronage Politics: Local Influences Within the Administration of National Policies

This section will specifically highlight the historic foundation and ongoing influence of informal patronage politics in rural Bangladesh. Specifically, I seek to understand patronage relations as a crucial aspect of the social landscape in rural Bangladesh in order to situate and trace the administration of my case study, the stipend project. Additionally, I seek to understand the particular ways in which patronage politics may open or close certain democratic possibilities in rural Bangladesh. Specifically, I argue that within the context of widespread ungovernability and mismanagement, as explained above, patronage politics has emerged as a fundamental component through which policies are understood and administered. That is to say, the issues of political instability and illiberal government have created the space, and even the need, for the persistence of low-level governmental negotiations with and through civil society.

It should be noted that within global narratives surrounding Bangladesh, patronage politics is often subsumed under the label “corruption.” While related and overlapping, the concepts and practices represented by corruption and patronage politics capture different aspects of governance and everyday life, and I argue that separating patronage politics from corruption brings necessary nuance to understanding the way development projects are administered. Corruption has a long history within Bangladeshi state institutions, with roots in the East India Company, and became very apparent to everyday citizens during the authoritarian rule of the 1970s and 1980s. Scholars of Bangladeshi studies commonly believe that since then, state institutions have remained highly politicized, ineffective, and uncertain (Lewis 2011:107). In this context, corruption is understood as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, within both the public and private sectors, but the most commonly evoked use of the definition applies to practices involving public officials, civil servants or politicians (from <https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption>, retrieved 1/26/2018). Though it is not a focus of my work, corruption understood in this sense is certainly a pressing issue in Bangladesh. The anticorruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) often points to Bangladesh as a site of endemic corruption and corresponding wasted resources. Corruption in Bangladesh was ranked the absolute worst in the world, out of 120 countries, for three consecutive years 2001-2004 (Blair 2004). According to one in-depth TI study, corrupt practices in state institutions are responsible for halving the per capita income in Bangladesh (Ahmmed 2013). Khan (2004) notes that all the effective rulers in Bangladesh history have been involved in large-scale direct and indirect corruption.

This understanding of corruption is regularly evoked in policy conversations centered around ‘good governance,’ and is often posited as a simple explanation for many ongoing problems in Bangladesh, such as weak law and order enforcement, regular defaulting on loans, a deterioration in the quality of administration, and politicization of the education system, but Sobhan (2004: 4101) argues that these governance issues must be understood as “embedded in the social and political forces which govern the distribution of power and influence” in Bangladesh, and not in terms of abstract, decontextualized notions of transparency or efficiency. This more contextual focus shifts the conversation away from one of state and institutionalized corruption, to a more nuanced understanding of the active patronage relationships unfolding within, and around, government institutions that are now inherent to everyday life. I am focused on these more substantive state-society engagements, in which citizens access and influence the state and each other in ways that may produce varying degrees of democratic outcomes.

Patronage politics represent complex, culturally embedded relationships that occur in all sectors of society both inside and outside of state institutions. I situate my case study in a historic understanding of patron-client systems in Bangladesh developed in a context of highly unequal distributions of resources, low levels of overall output, and high levels of uncertainty (Blair 2004: 932). Patron-client practices evolved in this context of low security, involving mutual but unequal exchanges in which the patron provides some basic need (food, housing, employment, protection from natural disasters), while the client provides labor and/or loyalty. Patronage politics throughout South Asia are explained in a rich body of literature beyond that captured within my argument. For

example, political historians in India note these pre-colonial forms, but argue that the modern practices are inextricably linked with colonial bureaucratic practices that relied upon granting local officers discretionary authority over local administration. This system of indirect rule openly encouraged forms of loyalty to local officers, so long as taxes and revenue were extracted. This understanding applies to the *garam sakar* movement in Bangladesh explained earlier in the Chapter. Kaviraj (2010) argues that this system endured into postcolonial India in the ways that a vernacular, localized state interprets central rules of local terms, serving the people, even if central rules are broken. The Permanent Settlement of Bengal, in the late 1700s, perhaps underscored and strengthened these practices. This ‘agreement’ consolidated zamindari land tenure systems and gave zamindars proprietorship over their land. In this context, social relations and practices between landlords and cultivators were solidified in new and enduring ways.

Patron-client relations combine elements of religious, economic, and political alliances and relationships. Households act as social units to negotiate reciprocal exchanges and dependencies inside and outside the family, in which people of “higher rank” are able to extract labor, service, and respect from people of “lower rank” in return for support from patrons (Kochanek 1993). Eirik Jansen (1987) describes this as a hierarchical web of dyadic relationships and mutual obligations, with households and individuals competitively seeking to elaborate a set of constantly shifting networks. While it may be argued that people at the very bottom of this complicated pyramid may not be actively aligning with national political ideologies, they are engaged in an everyday battle of survival, in which they too make calculated choices and decisions based on a network of local patronage (Lewis 2011: 101-102).

Patronage relationships may lead to substantive citizenship benefits for the most vulnerable and destitute members of society (Piliavsky 2014), though they may also reproduce dependency and foreclose future political possibilities.

Throughout South Asia, state bureaucracies are complex, negotiated spaces that defy simple classification as rational, hierarchal systems (Gupta 2012). In his edited volume *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*, John Dunn (2013) argues that patronage in South Asia is actually an active and vital political form in its own right, and may be a driving force for burgeoning democratic cultures. He notes that in the vocabulary and political consciousness of modern western democracies, patronage may represent a residual and unfair practices of previous eras, but that for South Asia, the exercise of patronage in everyday life may be better understood as a very complicated form of democratic engagement (xii).

Patronage politics in the South Asian context not only produce uneven citizenships that differentially benefit different populations, but are also responsible for expanding forms of democratic claims-making (Kaviraj 1984, Chatterjee 2004, Corbridge et al. 2005). Partha Chatterjee calls this space “political society,” and while it is in no way ideal, he argues that it provides an important means by which local residents are able to access state spaces from which they have been historically disconnected. His work in contemporary India demonstrates the various forms of democratic engagement that operate outside what is traditionally understood as the formal legal institutions of the state. Similar engagements are enacted in everyday Bangladesh, yet little work has been done to investigate the extent to which substantive democratic outcomes may result.

Unlike in other parts of the subcontinent, there was no real development of industrial capitalism in east Bengal during the colonial period, which continued during exchange-rate manipulation during the Pakistan period. Lewis (2011: 101) explains that this left the transition to capitalism in the 1970s a partial one, and left room for the development of different forms exchange and accumulation. Leading up to liberation in 1971, upwardly mobile rural households purposefully navigated their position to align with these emerging local patronage politics. This was understood to be a more attractive and productive route to improving status and access than the more commonly sought rural practice of accumulating landholdings. During the turbulent years surrounding independence, landholdings became insecure, and the politics surrounding social and economic status shifted away from accumulation onto more fluid social relationships. High levels of land fragmentation created by Muslim inheritance laws and rapid population growth contributed to this shifting mentality.

Bertocci (2001) describes the associational village realm of patron-client relationships in Bangladesh as flexible negotiated institutions, detached from local government structures and religious bureaucracies. Lewis and Hossain (2008) note increasing participation from low-ranked government officials, such as the elected Union Parishad, who now rubs up against local informal institutions. Bode (2002) evokes this blend of formal and informal negotiations in Bangladesh as a way to show how each maintains legitimacy in the eyes of the poor. Formal institutions, such as the Union Parishad, claim legitimacy from democratic political principles. Informal institutions, such as lineages and religious community leaders, are legitimized through long-standing structures around kinship, hierarchy, and reciprocity.

These lines are blurry, unpredictable, and ever changing. These complex relationships are enacted within different arenas in everyday Bangladesh: bazaar, mosque, market, school, and temple. In rural areas, these networks are the dominant mode of social organization and may also provide some measure of social security or informal safety net. Successful negotiation of patron client relationships may provide some level of access to resources and social security in the absence of formal rights/alternative livelihood options (Lewis 2011).

Bode (2002) notes that although giving support to local leaders does not necessarily guarantee any tangible benefits or state resources, opposition may result in exclusion, given the poor little choice. For the poor, there “remain rather few alternatives to forming dependent bonds with the wealthy” (Bode and Howes 2002: xv). They acknowledge that the poor may secure employment or land through patronage relationships, but claim that this prevents forging and enacting more meaningful claims of citizenship. Wood (2003a: 455) expands upon this concession, equating the ongoing negotiating of informal reciprocity as a “Faustian bargain.” He explains that the poor rely on local and personal relationships in a desperate search for security, and in doing so, put longer term goals of autonomy and improved livelihoods on hold (Wood 2003b). While I argue that this understanding is a bit shallow, as it does not capture the complexity and history of these relationships in South Asia, it does underscore an important aspect of the daily negotiations faced by rural Bangladeshis.

Of further importance to my case study, CCTs are often justified as a way to overcome patronage relations, by setting firm requirements and clear targeting mechanisms. I demonstrate that in Bangladesh, the CCT is an actually an outcome of

these and directly intervenes into such spaces of bureaucratic negotiation. Project goals, definitions of target populations, and criteria for measurement were developed outside the space in which they will operate, and seek to avoid bias and nepotism.

I seek to extend these debates by asking how local patronage relations change and are transformed when inserted into a national and international development program. I insert my research at this important intersection within current literature, seeking to trace the ways in which the negotiation of patronage relationships may contribute to or weaken democratic outcomes. The relations between local officials, elites, parents, and teachers transform small-scale administrations of the nationwide SESP in ways that produce different outcomes for different participants. Specifically, as will be explained in Chapter 4, families who are connected to local patronage networks that overlap the specific local SESP administration practices are better able to claim their entitlement and qualification to this program. Because accessing the program administration and proving one's poverty, are necessary for participation, the specific positions of citizens within patronage networks changes their access and credibility. Families who are not aligned in ways that assist their access, or who are not understood to experience a particular level of poverty by those in charge do not receive the same opportunity and consideration for participation. In this way, patronage relationships strengthen and weaken access for different citizens into the national SESP stipend program. This is all in contrast to the previous iteration of the nationwide stipend program, in which all females qualified, and the contours of patronage networks had no impact upon granting access and qualification. On the ground, in rural Bangladesh, my research finds that the SESP actually unduly empowers local government workers who may be prone to caste, class, family and

occupational favoritism, and who may manipulate their intermediary role in the stipend's distribution mechanism. The SESP represents a crucial case study into how local patronage relations and informal systems of governance are transformed by CCTs.

5. Conclusion

My case study unfolds within these historical and ongoing political, economic, and social processes. This Chapter synthesized a directed intervention into the history of development practices, civil society, and patronage practices in Bangladesh, capturing the politics of development within which educational reforms are situated leading to the current moment. This Chapter argues that particular conjunctures and ongoing practices must be understood in order to approach the history and trajectory of my case study, and development in Bangladesh more broadly.

In tracing development history in Bangladesh, I highlight critical conjunctures, which produced important realignments of possibilities, openings out of which action could potentially lead to a range of new trajectories. From each of these conjunctures emerged just one path forward, and understanding these negotiations, trade-offs, and trajectories is crucial for understanding the contemporary moment in development. Specifically, I highlight that Bangladesh has reached a point in its development trajectory in which it could be well positioned to navigate foreign influence, and possibly resist the adoption of prescribed “best practices.” Instead, my case study demonstrates that Bangladesh was strongly influenced by the outside-prescribed CCT model and all the corresponding packaging promoted by the World Bank. My work will demonstrate that is not a result of economic influence or soft power, but instead the power of ideas, especially language.

I argue that a nuanced understanding of civil society relations in Bangladesh is key for understanding the political and social aspects surrounding the administration of a development program. I argue that we must probe past the oft-evoked simplified dichotomy of weak state/strong civil society, and evaluate their role in present-day Bangladesh as overlapping and mutually constitutive realms. From this understanding emerges a grounded context from which I can interrogate the reasons why the FSP changed into the SESP, through the conjunctures of the local and global forces, and civil society and state relationships, and will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

In understanding the role of patronage politics, I understand governance issues not as decontextualized notions of transparency and efficiency, but as active forces embedded in the everyday social and political realms which govern access and distribution of power and influence. I am focused on these more substantive state-society engagements, in which citizens access and influence the state and each other in ways that may produce varying degrees of democratic outcomes. My research finds that in the case of the SESP, local government workers who may be prone to caste, class, family and occupational favoritism, are able to manipulate their intermediary role in the stipend's distribution mechanism. The SESP represents a crucial case study into how local patronage relations and informal systems of governance are transformed by CCTs.

These contexts underscore the shifts in how and why international development influences play out in Bangladesh, and the extent to which they are responsive to the changing role of civil society and patronage practices. My case study, especially the change from the FSP to the SESP, highlights the ongoing influence of the development community, despite the very different need in Bangladesh. Specifically, I question why

the FSP, a previously widely accepted and successful homegrown program, was influenced to become the SESP, a dramatic realignment with World Bank-led development practices.

These directed interventions into the specific contexts surrounding my case study set the stage for Chapter 3, in which I explore international development practice, institutions, and discourse more broadly. My case study emerged from the confluence of the complicated political and social fabric of Bangladesh described above, and the power and practice of Development that will be explored in this subsequent Chapter.

Chapter 3: Development and technologies of development

1. Development

The previous Chapter provided a directed intervention into the development history of Bangladesh. This Chapter will situate this understanding of Bangladesh within a broader standard international Development timeline. This will further reveal how disconnects between political and economic trends in Bangladesh, and global development practice led to unusual experiments and alignments between national and international development policies. Further, my case study within this broader development framework will be used to build a critique of current international development trends, within the current phase of Millennial Development.

Throughout this dissertation, I follow Hart's (2001) approach to understanding development in two senses. By 'big D' Development, Hart refers to a post-WWII project of deliberate intervention into the third world, as part of the processes of decolonization and in emergent in the conditions of the Cold War. This project is dialectically linked with what she terms 'little d' development, broadly referred to as the historical development of capitalism. This distinction between 'd'velopment as the uneven development of capitalism and 'D'velopment as a "constructivist" (Furnivall 1948) project of intervention in which state "funding, agencies, and initiatives have a central role to play" (Bernstein 2000: 265) is useful in approaching my project. While the complicated processes involved in each are intertwined, I rely on the literature surrounding 'D'velopment specifically in understanding the ways in which my case study has influenced, and been influenced by, 'D'velopment. Throughout the

dissertation, as I refer to development, I am employing this ‘D’velopment conceptualization, without continuing to capitalize the d.

Sachs (1992), in *The Development Dictionary*, proposes that this project of development began in January 1949, when Harry Truman’s inauguration speech described the Southern hemisphere as underdeveloped areas. This project of development has taken on different forms, with shifting priorities, approaches, and justifications, and has become highly institutionalized.

From the 1950s-1960s, much of development thinking resonated around this belief of a universal path of development, and though it took different forms, it revolved around economic growth. Modernization Theory was espoused by western political scientists, such as Rostow (1960), but largely rejected by Southern economists and western development economists who put forth different growth models, but all approaches had economic growth at the primary objective. Modernization Theory (Rostow 1960) also prioritized economic growth by laying out the stages for development from traditional society through industrialization and finally onto high mass consumption. This was unique in that this development ladder presumed that all countries could, and should, follow the same universal path along development. Following this, the important substitution industrialization (ISI) approach became dominant, aimed at substituting imports with domestically produced goods. This was a third world industrialization strategy heavily centered on state-driven industry and opposed to western theories that understand one single path to development, and comparative advantage. During this period, particular development institutions and western economic thought followed a belief in comparative advantage, asserting that the so-called third

world should produce primary goods, for purchase in the first world. The strategy here was to industrialize rapidly, through protectionism and urbanization, prioritizing economic growth. Throughout this period, the conceptualization and practice of development revolved around economic growth, trade, and increased gross domestic product (GDP).

By the 1970s, the import substitution industrialization approach needed to be reconsidered. There was rapid urban population growth, and accompanying high rates of unemployment, inequality, and substandard living conditions (Singer 1995). With this, it became evident that increased overall economic growth can cause increased poverty and inequality (Seers 1969), forcing a reconceptualization of the approach to development. At this time, Robert McNamara became President of the World Bank and called for a renewed focus on poverty. He outlined an approach that incorporated what he called “redistribution with growth.”

This new understanding became known as the basic needs approach. McNamara set a new World Bank agenda, and created a whole new wing of the World Bank: International Development Association (IDA). The IDA was established as complement to the existing function of the World Bank, to help the world’s poorest countries. The aims of IDA were to reduce poverty by providing loans and grants for programs that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities, and improve people’s living conditions. The IDA was intended to compliment the World Bank’s lending arm. With this came a new agenda that prioritized basic needs as a way to reduce poverty without deliberate redistribution. In so doing, the World Bank’s focus shifted away from strictly economic measurements and onto human capabilities, evolving into investments in so-called human

capital. This concept of investing in human capital, in addition to and as part of increasing economic capital, became a deliberate aspect of overall growth strategies. Importantly, at this time, the World Bank added to its role as financial lender, and became a ‘Knowledge Bank’ as well. In so doing, the World Bank began institutionalizing development knowledge as truth, legitimizing and justifying its technical interventions, such as poverty measurement tools, human development reporting protocols, and best practices around the world for decades to come. This concept is key to understanding this dissertation’s focus on how an existing conditional cash transfer program in Bangladesh was redesigned to align with World Bank strategies, and the ways in which such expert knowledge has traveled and influenced the trajectory and practice of social welfare programs in across the globe.

Throughout this period, there was a new focus on rural livelihoods, women, children, and agriculture. With this came the Green Revolution and the promise of food security, which in practice ended largely as a failed promise. The Green Revolution resulted in increased reliance on pesticides, fertilizers, and mechanization. Unfortunately, throughout the basic needs period, poverty was not reduced in the scope that had been hoped. Even though the meeting of basic needs was listed a development priority, only one-third of World Bank lending went towards poverty alleviation, with middle income countries receiving more assistance.

Around 1980, development encountered another conjuncture, shifting back towards a focus on economic growth. ISI had caused rising debt in the third world, and 1980 was marked by a Debt Crisis. In many third world countries, foreign debt exceeded possible earning power, and repayment became impossible.

The debt crisis led to a redefinition of development, and new roles for international monetary institutions, shifting towards policies that would best ensure debts would be paid. These approaches turned back towards basic market-oriented thinking, focusing on deregulating markets and privatizing state industries, all part of the overarching move towards neoliberalism (see Mosley et al. 1991, Williamson 1993, Peet and Hartwick 2009). These approaches allowed a disciplinary role for the World Bank and the IMF, employing condition-based lending, while working towards short-term stabilization. Neoliberal practices encouraged lower trade barriers, liberalization of financial markets, and creation of incentives for foreign investments.

Such neoliberal policies built around an approach of “getting the state out.” This made the neoliberal era less a return to earlier growth-centrism, and more a new development approach which was adopted throughout most of the third world. The post-WWII period had been about growth, but was also state driven. This “get the state out” period certainly had much impact in the trajectory of development in Bangladesh, as the country was approaching its first full decade as a nation and was in a position to be heavily influenced by international development institutions.

First, structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were ushered in by the World Bank and the IMF, structuring loans in particular ways that encouraged market-oriented growth. SAPs were designed to offer new loans, or lowered interest rates, but attached certain conditions. Borrowing countries were expected to implement free-market policies, as part of the Bretton Woods’ institutions’ attempts towards macro-economic stabilization (Chossudovsky 1996).

This primarily involved the liberalization of the market, the privatization of state assets, austerity and massive cuts to social spending, and the reduction of trade barriers (Weaver et al. 1997). The goals of SAPs involved reducing fiscal imbalances, and working towards long-term growth. Policies encouraged a focus on industry and export-oriented growth. The World Bank describes the purpose of SAPs as “unleashing markets so that competition can help improve the allocation of resources...getting price signals right” (World Bank 1994: 61). Borrowing countries that did not enact deliberate market-oriented changes were sometimes subject to severe fiscal discipline (Cabello et al. 2007).

This is directly evident in the historical development of Bangladesh, as detailed in Chapter 2: when Zia released his 1980 five year plan prioritizing the public sector as the central driver of development, he was first met with criticism from powerful business interests, and then from the international community. In 1982, just two years later, Zia released a completely reworked New Industrial Policy, in which he outlined plans to align with the United States’ and other foreign donors’ favored policies of structural adjustment and liberalization (Lewis 2011).

With neoliberalism, the World Bank’s role began to change. SAP was tied to policy-based lending, as opposed to the project-based lending that had previously dominated. This policy-based lending tied conditionalities to loans, a key concept underpinning the relationship between developing and developed countries. These conditionalities ranged from short-term to long-term monetary policies, often including currency devaluation, austerity, reduced wages, increases costs for public services, focus on resource extraction and export-oriented growth, and improving the rights of foreign investors (see Lensink and White 1999). During this neoliberal period, the economic

autonomy of third-world countries became threatened. This period has been under intense scrutiny by critical development scholars, and much of the literature concludes that the severe neoliberal policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank caused significant social, economic, political, and environmental damage to developing countries (see Gogo Kingston 2011, Bradshaw and Huang 1991, Greenberg 1997, Due and Gladwin 1991).

Bradshaw and Huang (1991) found that “not surprisingly, structural adjustment programs further enhance powerful capitalist organizations' position in Third World economies. Fewer trade restrictions, less local government interference, and greater privatization increase the power and profitability of external capital (326). This period spurred the ongoing patronizing aspect of the relationships between developed and developing countries, connected by development institutions. The post-WWII project of “big D” development has long been comprised of unequal power dynamics between the north and south, or so-called developed and developing countries, but this period of structural adjustment in particular exacerbated and solidified the patronizing aspects of development “from above.” These unequal relationships are maintained largely through multi-national institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, but also through institutions practicing at smaller scales, such as those within academia, political arenas, think tanks, and economic organizations.

This phase continued throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, and became known during this time as the Washington Consensus of development. During this time, the prevailing idea was that economics was non-political, and that there was no alternative to free market capitalism. This consensus prioritized trade and financial liberalization, continuing to deregulate and privatize the state, with the ideal of completely removing

barriers to foreign investment. This set the stage in Bangladesh for the growth of export-led industries (mostly shrimp, garments).

During the 1990s and into the 2000s, there was increasing visibility and awareness of, and response to, global poverty. There were protests and campaigns to eliminate poverty and inequality, and outcry at the adverse effects of globalization. Eventually, Jeffrey Sachs emerged as a face to this anti-poverty movement. Previously, he had been known as an IMF economist involved in austerity policies and SAPS, but he later turned away from hard-line neoliberalism and became leading thinker in anti-poverty approaches, including the MDGs. Sachs (2005) laid out plans to spur economic growth in developing countries by investing direct aid into infrastructure, education, and health. His views explained that markets work, but too often fail the poor, and that developing countries just needed a boost onto the first “rung” of the development ladder. Sachs has often pushed towards this outcome through “shock therapy,” a sudden and dramatic shift in national economic policies aimed at making the market more “free.” Elements of shock therapy often include the end of price controls, privatization of state-owned entities, and trade liberalization. Sachs writes of this as the “rapid end of price controls in order to reestablish supply-demand equilibrium...one important element of such a rapid liberalization may be the trade in foreign exchange, to allow for free convertibility of the currency for purposes of international trade in goods and services (from <http://jeffsachs.org/2012/03/what-i-did-in-russia/>, retrieved August 15 2017). Into the early 2000s, Sachs worked in capacities that institutionalized his approaches, as an economist at the IMF, and Special Advisor to the UN General Secretary, and the Director of the UN Millennium Development Project. These views on poverty reduction became

pervasive in development, and constituted a renewed justification for and focus on deliberate intervention.

This phase led into the early 2000s, when the UN's Millennium Development project began. Emerging from this approach to development came the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals were officially established in 2000, and set poverty-reduction and human-focused development goals to achieve by 2015. These goals included such targets as halving the number of people living on less than \$1/day, achieving universal primary education, eliminating gender disparities in education, and halving the number of people without access to clean water and sanitation. This period in development history furthered the World Bank's role as more of a market enabler and knowledge bank than aid giver. The World Bank's role as necessary expertise in the development world became pervasive, and the practices it set in motion would continually reinforce its continued role in this capacity. While the World Bank's influence may have been reduced throughout the 2000s with the rise of private investment and the growth of other southern institutions, I argue that their influence remains very strong through discourse, language, and expertise.

These human-focused goals set the stage for my case study representing major achievements development, as gender parity and universal education became measurable successful outcomes in Bangladesh during these years. The government's Primary Education Compulsory Act passed in 1990 had made primary education free and compulsory for all children up to Grade 5 (UNICEF 2009), and gender parity and near-universal enrollment in primary schools were achieved by 2002 (Hossain and Kabeer 2004). The female-focused education stipend projects are credited with much of this

achievement, and were widely hailed as helping Bangladesh meet these universal measures of development success as set by the UN.

Like all phases of development history, this phase was not without critique. Easterly (2006: 11) explained that development as an institution had been in motion for 60 years, set countless reform schemes and spent \$2.3 trillion dollars, and the development aid industry was still failing. He concluded that big plans will always fail, and that the poor need markets, not bureaucrats. This perspective called for a renewed emphasis on free markets, and began to turn towards “technologies of development.” My case study began to take shape during this time, emerging from processes around best practice interventions and the financialization of education,

2. Best practices and technology of development

This section will expound upon the emergence of ‘development technologies,’ new monetary instruments that have emerged in Development over the past 20 years, and have led to the current moment in development practice. These interventions have taken shape during the neoliberal era, with development emphasis on free markets, decentralization, privatization, and a “New Policy Agenda” which shifted the burden of social services away from state governments and onto NGOs. These interventions have received widespread praise and support from international development institutions, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, and have become a focus of debate and ideological struggle within both academic and policy circles.

Specifically, a development technology is a certain set of knowledge paired with particular techniques, which are designed together towards a specific end, centered around a development goal (reduce poverty, improve human capabilities, etc.).

Microfinance (Roy 2010), land titling (De Soto 2000), and conditional cash transfers are three such development technologies. In contemporary international development studies, scholars point to the particular momentum and acclaim with which these development technologies unfold. They are often cited as ‘global best practices,’ or ‘magic bullets’ that can have profound impact on global poverty.

Tracing the emergence, practice, and performance of microfinance in particular can inform our understanding of such ‘best practice’ interventions, and the complicated yet significant work they do in setting policy agendas, shaping global discourses, and propagating sets of knowledge as truths. After briefly tracing the stories of land titling and microcredit-microfinance as examples of development technologies, and the complicated impact they have had upon development practices, I will demonstrate how the emergence of the CCT is embarking on a similar path, and how my research provides a timely and critical case study to better understand how this intervention is unfolding on the ground.

Land titling became widely recognized as a technology of development in the 1990s. This came as an answer to a widespread urban housing problem created by ISI. ISI had shared in a dual sector view of development economics, which contended that the way to modernize and industrialize was to bring surplus agricultural seasonal labor to the urban sector. This work was not high-value additive work, and this improved productivity in the urban sector was expected to spur economic growth and a virtuous cycle of job creation, which would offset massive government expenditure in industries and subsidies on intermediate and capital goods. With this did come a massive urbanization of the population and economy, but not the anticipated match in jobs. There were far fewer

factory jobs than had been expected, and far fewer factory housing units. The problem of squatters and slums, therefore, contributed to a housing and employment shortage.

Informal housing became the norm, and land titling was proposed as a neoliberal solution to poverty. A paper title recognizing property was considered a solution to poverty, and this was the technology of development

In Peru, where de Soto is from, populism and diverse political movements also emerged from this changing climate. In response, De Soto proposed a market solution instead of a political one, land titling. With this, De Soto (2000) ushered in the idea that the poor are natural entrepreneurs, and that the underlying problem of poverty was caused by the inability of the poor and smallholders to leverage their assets to successfully gain access to and utilize credit. He argued that land titling would provide the security of title for these people, which would then allow them to participate in credit opportunities, leading to efficient and fair market outcomes. De Soto (2000) pioneered land titling as a technology of development that would build and facilitate pro-poor markets, leading directly to the practice of microcredit, and eventually microfinance.

The institutions of microcredit and microfinance, often used interchangeably though actually quite distinct, have received unprecedented applause and support from international development agencies over the past 20 years, with studies citing improvement in livelihoods across various economic, gender, social, and health indicators (see Yunus 2008, Morduch and Haley 2001, Hulme and Mosley 1996, Khandker 1999, Holvoet 2005). Useful to my case study, I will trace the story of microcredit and microfinance beginning with BRAC and the so-called Bangladesh consensus, then demonstrate how the Washington Consensus on Poverty emerged in the

1990s, picking up microfinance and narrowing its focus to microcredit. This demonstrates how a Bangladesh innovation was picked up and modified by global development actors, a story with key parallels to my case study.

This story begins in Bangladesh with microfinance, a term representing a wide range of financial service provisioning for populations in poverty. Bangladesh is often cited as the home of the first and most meaningful microfinance institutions, and much of the discourse and practice surrounding microfinance continues to hinge on what Ananya Roy calls the “Bangladesh consensus” (2010). These processes contribute to the ways in which Bangladesh emerged as a very particular site for development interventions. Microfinance, as practiced by BRAC, and the Bangladesh-based Grameen Bank, and others, extends credit and debt schemes into spaces of other financial services, such as savings, insurance, and transfers.

As an example of Bangladesh-based microfinance and the Bangladesh consensus, I examine the NGO BRAC. BRAC is considered the world’s largest NGO, and began in Bangladesh in 1972, shortly after the independence. BRAC is a development organization dedicated to alleviating poverty by empowering the poor, and providing tools to fight poverty across several interrelated fronts. BRAC employs microfinance as a key part of this toolkit. BRAC launched microfinance activities in 1974, and continually designs loan and savings products to meet the needs of people living in poverty. This approach to microfinance included particular innovations and emphases, such as asset-building, consumption smoothing, and subsidized interest rates. All BRAC microfinance clients also have access to a range of additional social services, such as education, healthcare, and legal aid (from <http://www.brac.net/microfinance> retrieved 2/7/2018).

The “Bangladesh consensus” emphasizes that the primary focus of microfinance should not involve making a profit, but empowering the “bottom billion,” those living in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1 a day (Roy 2010: 37).

In the 1990s, these practices of microfinance in Bangladesh began to achieve international acclaim, from this emerged a wave of *microcredit* practices from the Global North, with a very different approach. Microcredit is part of the “Washington Consensus” on Poverty, which used the BRAC and Grameen Bank innovation of microfinance, but made it narrower in focus. This microcredit was about market efficiency, profitability, and “banking on the poor.” This approach, employed by the World Bank’s Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), and the World Bank, argues that what is needed to empower the poor is “a global microfinance industry integrated with financial markets” (Roy 2010: 26). This approach forefronts the possibility of integrating microfinance institutions into substantial circuits of finance and profit, with the hope that then some money can be reinvested. In this way, a Bangladesh innovation was taken up by global development actors, and changed in ways that fundamentally realigned priorities, possibilities, and outcomes.

Microcredit assumes that by providing the poor with access to credit and to the market, they could lift themselves out of poverty. This “truth,” paired with a certain set of techniques, operates as a technology of development aimed at aiding the poor, but also as a profitable device of neoliberal populism. This practice of microcredit is sometimes understood as “banking on the poor,” (Weber 2004). Often hailed as the “magic bullet” solution to global poverty, microcredit seeks to offer credit opportunities to the world’s poorest. Robinson (2001) explains that after early success, microcredit grew throughout

the 1980s in an attempt to provide large-scale outreach profitability, and in the 1990s, it began to develop into an entire industry. Microcredit continued to gain tremendous momentum, growing by 21% each year between 2003-2008 (Gonzalez 2010).

Microcredit has indeed become an entire international industry, with its own trade associations, dedicated finance, training, and other support organizations, research, and journals (Fisher and Sriram 2002).

The two approaches, microcredit and microfinance, overlapped in problematic ways that prioritize profitability in socially responsible entrepreneurship, and may be exploiting subaltern women (Sen and Majumder 2015). As this dissertation will argue, technologies of development, and “best practice” interventions should not be understood as potential magic bullet solutions to the ever-complicated forms of global poverty.

A narrative around the miracle of microcredit even emerged in popular media, citing celebrity activists such as Bono, quoted in the New York Times in 2005: “Give a man a fish, he’ll eat for a day. Give a woman microcredit, she, her husband, her children and her extended family will eat for a lifetime.” Kabeer (2005) describes this phenomenon, and notes that microfinance has held a sort of unsubstantiated evangelism within the development community. Yet at the same time, this explosion of support has also triggered a similarly poorly grounded wave of criticism (see Kabeer 2001, 2005) with some studies even citing that microfinance does more harm than good (see Fisher and Sriram 2002, Taylor 2012). Kabeer (2005) explains that much of this critical backlash towards microfinance is rooted in methodologically divergent research, often based upon secondary sources. Key concepts such as empowerment are defined and used disparate ways, producing a literature that is inconsistent and often poorly grounded.

Given this polarization, the lack of rigorous microfinance impact studies (Marr 2012, Korth et al. 2012), and criticisms surrounding the integrity of existing data (Duvendack et al. 2011), recent scholarship has set out to make sense of the empirical evidence alongside the “stories, assertions, opinions, and anecdotes” (Kabeer 2005) to clarify what exactly the development technology microfinance has achieved (see also Angelucci et al. 2013, Duvendack, et al. 2011, Roodman 2012, Oya 2012). Consistently, these studies conclude that scholarship must exercise caution in discussing the impact of microfinance in general terms, because microfinance organizations vary considerably according the contexts in which they work, their definition and understanding of the problem of financial exclusion, the strategies they adopt to address this problem, and the commitment they bring to bear in the implementation of their strategies (Kabeer 2005). This underscores the need to recognize the appropriation of the Bangladesh consensus practices of microfinance into the Washington consensus practices of microcredit, and understand the relationship between discourse, expertise, and development practice.

3. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs)

With the story of microfinance as a development technology in mind, I turn to a more recent development technology, the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), which has achieved significant acclaim, despite a lack of empirical findings. CCT programs first emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean around 1995, and have expanded rapidly and significantly over the past decade, but have a much longer history grounded in neoliberal shifts in development. The official conception and continual spread of CCTs is couched in particular historical moments within development practice, driven by neoliberal populism. While neoliberalism guided states to cut spending and emphasize

laissez-faire market principals, poverty and inequality increased. This led to increasing condition-based lending, and the financialization and measurability of human development, especially towards gender and education indicators. These conjunctures led directly to the creation, institutionalization, and rapid expansion of CCT programs.

CCT initiatives target a population and offer a small cash incentive to participate in the program's specific requirements. Specifically, CCTs are cash transfers that are (1) targeted to the poor and (2) made conditional on certain behaviors of recipient households. Often, the cash transfer is conditioned upon the completion of a minimum threshold of use of health or education services; for example, minimum school attendance rates of 75 percent, or regular visits to a preventative health center for immunizations. CCTs have gained momentum for their alignment with "pro-poor" development schemes, allowing state and development agencies to incentivize individual behavioral modification along the lines of specific development goals. This takes place by assessing income levels of a particular population, and providing benefits only to the poorest, in an attempt to break the "cycle of poverty." The World Bank, a key proponent of CCTs, defines them as follows:

Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs provide cash to poor households in exchange for the recipients' commitment to take actions such as enrolling their children in school or taking them regularly to health clinics. These programs focus on reducing poverty and building human capital through partnerships between governments and poor households.

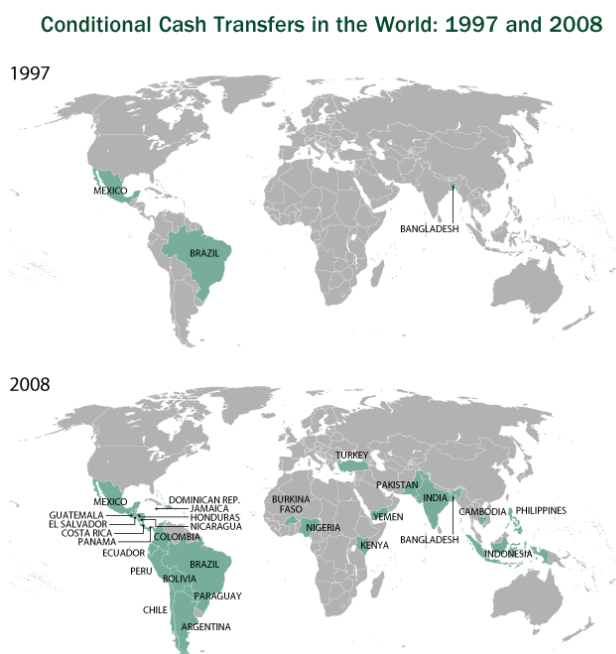
(From

<http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?theSitePK=469382&contentMDK=22063209&menuPK=574960&pagePK=64165401&piPK=64165026>, retrieved May 20, 2017)

Although CCT programs have only officially been in practice for about 20 years, they have expanded rapidly across the globe. In this short time, CCT programs have

developed in over 50 countries (Fiszbein and Schady 2009, Arnold et al. 2011) and were serving well over 135 million people worldwide by 2011 (Stampini and Tornarolli 2012). In 2008, the World Bank proudly documented this growth in a report titled “CCT Programs: Now on Every Continent,” and explained that in addition to “being implemented in more countries across the world, CCTs have also grown phenomenally within countries” (from <http://go.worldbank.org/O9G34HWKP0>, retrieved February 7, 2017). This report includes the map shown in Figure 3.1 below:

Figure 3.1: World Bank Map of Conditional Cash Transfers in the World, 1997 and 2008



From <http://go.worldbank.org/O9G34HWKP0>, retrieved April 11, 2017

Although the language of conditional cash transfer did not exist in international policy documents until the mid-late 1990s, it is important to note that the educational stipend programs in Bangladesh date back to the late 1970s. In Chapter 4, I will argue

that the Bangladesh stipend programs were met with particular acclaim and momentum when they were absorbed into the language of the globally-recognizable CCT, and that this critical moment represents complicated mechanisms of power and practice within development policy.

Despite being a recent phenomenon which surely lacks long-term studies and thorough critical assessments, CCTs have been met with an explosion of positive literature, citing numerous benefits and positive outcomes, including but not limited to: the ability to reach the poorest population directly (Schady 2006), increased school attendance (Oosterbeek et al. 2008), increased household consumption (Danvers 2010), ease of program evaluation (Rawlings and Rubio 2005), promotion of the accumulation of human capital (Danvers 2010), reduction in poverty in the short and long term (Robertson et al. 2014), ability to function as a large scale social safety net (Fernald et al. 2008), relative increase of empowerment of women (Soares and Silva 2010, Molyneux 2007), increased prevalence of females in the workforce due to increased children in school (Foguel and Barros 2010), breaking of the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Fiszbein et al. 2009), and cost effectiveness (Morley and Coady 2003, Behrman and Skoufias 2006, Lindert et al. 2006). A lengthy and thorough World Bank Policy Research Report (Fiszbein, Schady et al. 2009) assesses these and other positive outcomes of CCTs across “low- and middle-income countries; large and small programs; those at local, regional, and national levels” and conclude that they are proven, versatile programs, that do substantially reduce poverty and argues that CCTs shall remain a compelling part of the solution to global financial insecurities.

Indeed, policy-makers and academics seem convinced of the social relevance, administrative efficiency, theoretical relevance, and financial viability of CCT programs (Lomeli 2008). Again, a narrative of triumph is emerging within popular media, as Nancy Birdsall, President of the Center for Global Development, said of CCTs: “I think these programs are as close as you can come to a magic bullet in development” (New York Times 2004). CCT programs are spreading, scaling up, and achieving unbounded growth globally, and direct participation by international financial institutions continues to rise (Aguilar 2006, Golbert 2006, Gomez-Hermosillo Martin 2006). CCTs continue to gain further support and momentum. A large part of this widespread celebration of CCTs is rooted in the recent growth of the behavioral economics field.

Behavioral economics, a field that did not exist until the early 1990s (Camerer et. al 2011), serves as an academic explanatory basis for CCTs, bridging a gap between hard empirical sciences (e.g. economics) and soft qualitative sciences (e.g. psychology). The most cited volume on behavioral economics explains power of the growing field in its ability to increase the explanatory power of economics by providing it with more realistic psychological foundations (ibid). The field has grown, earning a solid reputation within academia, and has begun to enter the space of popular media. This is an important phenomenon in understanding the widespread receptiveness of CCTs, as the academic justification for monetarily incentivizing better behavior has become accessible and popular among a wide audience, normalizing the concept of conditioning transfers upon the completion of certain prescribed behaviors.

An example of the popular spread of behavioral economics is the book *Nudge* (Thaler & Sunstein 1999), which draws on and integrates the fields of behavioral science

and economics, and became a New York Times bestseller, an Economist Best Book of the Year, and a Financial Times Best Book of the Year. The book is acclaimed for being straightforward, informative, and entertaining, presenting legitimate academic research to a wide audience. Co-author Steven Levitt of similarly acclaimed book, *Freakonomics* (2005), partially explains the book's popularity by noting that "academics aren't supposed to be able to write this well" (from <http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/304634/nudge-by-richard-h-thaler-and-cass-r-sunstein/9780143115267/> retrieved July 27, 2017). The field incorporates approaches across both social and hard science, and has often been presented in a uniquely accessible format, contributing to conversations within academia, policy, and popular culture. The accessibility and popularity of behavioral economics create an important aspect of understanding the widespread acceptance and growth of CCTs as a technology of development over the past 20 years. Indeed, behavioral economics has provided a broad and sturdy base upon which CCTs have grown. The academic field of behavioral economics grew alongside the practice of CCTs, providing increasing rationale and quantifiable justification.

Behavioral and development economists make two key arguments emphasizing why the practice of attaching conditions to particular incentives is so important. First, they argue that agents do not consistently behave as one would expect a fully informed, rational agent to behave. Specifically, behavioral economics argue that people suffer from self-control, procrastination, and a lack of rationality in decision-making, which produces daily behavior decisions that are inconsistent with their own long-term goals for the future (e.g. O'Donoghue and Rabin: 1999). This provides "contemporary support to

the time-honored notion that governments may ‘know better’ what is privately good for poor people than do the poor themselves” (Fiszbein and Schady 2009: 50). The increasing incorporation of behavioral economics into development policy is situated within this belief. Psychologists and behavioral economists argue that the context of poverty creates stress, and poor people must allocate increased mental energy to these stresses, which decreases their ability to dedicate mental energy to daily decision-making. Behavioral economic studies find that “living in poverty” creates a cognitive tax similar to skipping a night of sleep or becoming addicted to alcohol. As a result those in poverty behave in ways that do not align with the typical economic model of the rational actor, and are often thought to perpetuate their poverty (Bloem 2015).

The influence of this argument within mainstream development policy is increasingly evident; the 2015 edition of World Bank’s World Development Report, its main annual publication, is entitled “Mind, Society, and Behavior.” It asserts that poverty “shapes mindsets,” justifying the belief that the poor are poor because their poverty prevents them from behaving in ways that can take them out of poverty. This shifts the burden of poverty-alleviation away from structural policies provided by the state, and onto the daily behavior of the poor themselves, with the state positioned to incentivize decisions on their behalf.

The second main argument for attaching conditions to cash transfers, one that is evoked less often in the literature, is that governments are most developing these policies within complicated decision-making spaces that often benefit from public support. By attaching welfare support to ‘good behavior,’ policy makers and governments may increase public support, popularity, and acceptability.

CCTs have become widely accepted tools for targeting and reducing poverty, and tell a strong story of success. The story has become so compelling, partially due to their ability to benchmark and enumerate and compare across contexts, and also due to their alignment with behavioral economics. In the World Bank's most comprehensive and most widely cited report on CCTs, Fiszbein and Schady (2009) highlight these causes for celebration. The conditions are justified because households were previously underinvesting in their children, due to incorrect beliefs about the returns of certain investments (e.g. school attendance or health check-ups). The poor are framed as unable to understand the benefits of certain practices, and CCTs are situated as the small incentive needed to nudge them towards certain behaviors, which will interrupt the cycle of poverty. This focus on children also supports the celebrity of CCTs, as the conditions are often centered on the wellbeing of the children themselves, as opposed to the parents. This frames CCTs as able to balance social assistance and human capital formation without operated explicitly as handouts to the poor.

This same report underscores the incredible quantitative abilities of the CCT technology: "in many cases, CCTs have been the drivers for developing poverty maps or household targeting systems in their countries...indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that CCTs have moved forward the state of the art and standards for targeted programs generally" (Fiszbein and Schady 2009: 7). Further, the report notes, CCTs have the incredible ability to help countries meet the millennium development goals. This justification is especially relevant to my argument: yes, CCTs do "help" countries achieve their millennium development goals, largely because mainstream development institutions are then in the positions of defining the problem, outlining the objectives, and

designing the intervention, all towards the same end. CCTs allow interventions to point directly towards the quantifiable millennium development goals.

Further, the World Bank continues to provide academic rationale for the continued and expanded use of CCT programs, by situating CCT practices within impressive theoretical frameworks. A 2010 World Bank presentation entitled “Using Incentives to Improve Outcomes: North-South Knowledge Sharing on Conditional Cash Transfer Programs” listed over a dozen social, economic and psychological theories which all contribute to a broad justification for the use of CCTs, including: Self-Determination Theory, Dynamic Skill Theory, Bio-Ecological Theory, “Stages of Change” Theory, Social Control Theory/Norms and Behavioral Control, Social Capital Theory/Relationships and Networks, Social Disorganization Theory/Concentration and other effects, Neo-Classical Economic concepts, and “The Choice Architecture” (Aber and Rawlings 2010). This overwhelming list of academic theories work to justify the integrity of CCTs as a legitimate, scientific, controlled technology of development, embedded in the logic and truth of behavioral economics. These narratives have contributed to the widespread celebration of CCTs.

As detailed above, there is no lack of enthusiasm for well-documented “successful” outcomes for CCT interventions. What is less clear, however, is *how* these successes has been measured, defined, and represented. The myriad ways in which different CCT programs are designed and unfold on the ground, coupled with the complicated ways in which various benchmarks and measurable outcomes are set, quantified, and reported leaves much room for obscure and inconsistent understandings of what success means. What’s more, while recent scholarship has begun to highlight the

need for critical and qualitative research on CCTs, the work that this widespread and well-published praise has done in influencing the direction of development as an institution is significant. Here, I will survey the small but growing literature that calls for more rigorous and critical research into CCTs, and examine those CCT studies that begin to address this need. This literature review serves as a foundation for Chapter 5, which will unpack the ways in which CCT reporting itself performs within and among development discourse and institutions.

The remainder of this section will serve as a critique of CCT assessment and reporting practices as overly quantitative, lacking important qualitative texture. Importantly, however, is the foundation this somewhat narrow methodological critique will lay for my larger critique of the current period of millennial development. During this period, which follows the Washington Consensus, led by the Wolfensohn World Bank, development policy and practice has come to emphasize particular notions of success, and an epistemology that understands certain measurable indicators of improvement as universal truths, regardless of context. There has been a steady rise of poverty reduction strategy papers relying upon indicators, benchmarking, and metrics as defining understandings of success. This Wolfensohn Bank represents a commitment to measurable work towards poverty reduction, especially through the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs).

PRSPs were introduced in 1999, and were required from countries seeking debt relief. These reports had to be produce these heavily structured reports regularly, and negotiate approval from the Bank. PRSPs for all countries follow the same rubrics, logics, and approaches, yet there was an open effort to place significant emphasis on

notions of local ownership, civil society, collaboration, and NGOs. Alongside this process, the Bank reformed its image into a 'Knowledge Bank,' with emphasis on its expertise and capacity to provide advice directed towards the alleviation of poverty. Since this time, the dream of a world free of poverty is central to the image the World Bank promotes of itself (Granzow 2000).

Fraser (2011) argues that PRSPs should be understood as a technology of 'social control,' which seeks to shape political space in developing countries. Requiring PRSPs is an attempt to manufacture consent, transform objectives of states, and he argues that this process may imperil state sovereignty, self-determination, and hope for substantive democracy.

Cornwall and Brock (2006) take a critical look at PRSPs as a process, instrument, and extension of development buzzwords. They argue that PRSPs are tools designed to service the one-size-fits-all development approach, which is apoliticized, seeking to find universal models across diverse spaces. They point towards development policy solutions that shape universalizing models, which "invite participation." In this way, the World Bank and other mainstream development institutions are able to frame both the problem and the solution. PRSPs represent the belief that poverty reduction can only be achieved through result-oriented, long-term strategies. This aligns with the Millennium Development Goal paradigm, framing international development a measurable moral goal that all governments of all countries should reach for. Cornwall and Brock (2006: 1049) conclude that PRSPs have "become the medium through which diverse understandings of development are translated into targets, instruments and plans."

Critics argue that these commitments and practices towards poverty reduction are full of “empty rhetoric, hypocrisy, incompetence, confusion, or overload in the absence of a coherent agenda” (Cammack 2004: 1). Cammack contends that this World Bank’s poverty reduction is an intended consequence of their larger goal, the “transformation of social and governmental relations and institutions in the developing world in order to generalize and facilitate capitalist accumulation on a global scale, and build capitalist hegemony through the promotion of tightly controlled forms of 'participation' and 'ownership'.... pursued consistently since the mid-1990s, with Wolfensohn as Director... reflected in PRSPs means of governing low-income countries (Cammack 2004: 2).

In the early 2000s, the Washington consensus began to give way to the “post-Washington consensus,” which integrated social and economic dimensions of development, and pointed towards broader goals such as sustainability, gender equality, family structures, and property rights (Saad-Filho 2005). This approach challenges the old state versus market dichotomy, but critics argue that the post-Washington consensus still “maintains the economistic and colonial discourses of neoliberalism, and thus provides little space for the meaningful social transformations called for by feminists working in development” (Bergeron 2003: 397).

Saad-Filho (2005) outlines the ways the post-Washington consensus creates the space for the World Bank and other institutions to provide guidelines and recommendations for changes across sectors in developing countries, including economic policy, legal and judicial changes, market-friendly civil society institutions, anti-corruption programs, and so on. He, and others, call this broad set of policy recommendations “enhanced conditionality.” And while the post-Washington consensus

does rightly acknowledge the fact that development processes are centered around social relations, and that an approach limited to economic aggregates is insufficient, it has its own failures. Critics argue that the post-Washington consensus carries forward the same problematic methodological foundations of the previous era, relying on reductionism. It understands the market as natural, rather than socially constructed, and continues to recommend highly conservative fiscal and monetary policy.

Throughout this era, as IFIs have become increasingly interested in measuring progress in key areas, CCTs quickly emerged into this space, rising in significance because they met both cost efficiency measurement goals. CCTs seem to straddle the space between neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism. In a sense, they are a continuation of neoliberal approaches in that they focus on individual behavior, but at the same time, they are explicitly tied into state support. Molyneux (2006) examines Mexico's Oportunidades program, and demonstrates that while some understand it as a quintessentially neoliberal program, others argue that it represents a departure towards the co-responsibility models involved in recent approaches to social welfare and poverty relief. She argues that within this space, we must critically examine the broader implications of CCT's selective and gendered construction of social need.

The results-oriented and measurable approach of the CCT adopts the "world-is-flat" type of epistemology propagated by the post-Washington consensus. This approach makes claims that a 10% decrease in childhood morbidity, or 25% increase in female school enrollment, means the same thing in Mexico as Bangladesh, Brazil as Nepal. This framework misses the complexities of development, which necessitates consideration beyond basic measures of human development. This period of development is

overlooking human capabilities as being structured by diverse criteria that cannot be globally benchmarked. In a development period marked by extremely quantifiable Millennium Development Goals, I argue that achievement of such does not always mean improved livelihoods in meaningful, democratic, or sustainable ways. I situate the following argument of CCT measurement as overly quantifiable within this broader critique, which will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Rawlings and Rubio (2005) note that systematic, rigorous approaches to the evaluation of CCTs program is a recent trend, pointing to a review of World Bank projects from 1998-2000, where only 10 percent had adequate plans for a rigorous evaluation (World Bank 2001). While the call for rigorous evaluation for CCTs has been growing, still lacking have been qualitative, ethnographic, and critical inquiries into CCT performance.

This lack of rigorous, appropriate, and long-term impact evaluation is evident across CCT programs. Evaluation for programming within the millennial development trend, including the MDGs, are in line with neoliberalism and idea of financial efficiency and cost-benefit maximization. These measures tend to focus on a fixed idea of success up front, disregarding the recognition that success is often a long term process. A “failure” in terms of one indicator might have created strategic opportunities for local actors to change power relations. This is difficult to measure, evaluate, and report upon, but is key for understanding a program’s “success.” The widespread proliferation reports praising CCT outcomes are not grounded in this longer-term understanding of success, and often to not look beyond snapshots of measurable outcomes statistics.

A lack of sufficient understanding of program success is evident in my specific case study: Raynor and Wesson (2006: 9) examine the literature on the FSP, and conclude that while success is widely reported, “very little has been done in the way of ‘rigorous’ impact assessment,” agreeing with Mahmud’s (2003:9) conclusion that ‘successful’ outcomes of the FSP cannot be properly understood without a rigorous impact assessment study. Raynor and Wesson (2006) highlight the problematic tendency of education-focused CCT reporting to focus on simple measures of enrollment and retention. In their assessment of the FSP, they conclude that there is a need for studying and reporting on much more than just school enrollment (9). They explain that while the FSP has been hailed as a major success for increasing enrollment among female students, a claim with which they agree, less clear is exactly what impact it has had in relation to other stated program objectives such as fertility control, getting women into paid employment, or empowerment of women (9).

While simple statistical outcomes highlighting “success” have proliferated, few studies have investigated or demonstrated the meaningful and complicated ways in which programs effect their beneficiaries beyond simple quantitative indicators. Reports of success are generated based on quantitative outcome data, and programs are modeled and replicated without seeking to understand the ways in which beneficiary populations are affected beyond these narrow measurements. CCT programs have proliferated, replicating “successful” programs across the globe, without attention to the complicated and various contexts in which they unfold. Within the quantitative literature, there are meaningful gaps in the kinds of measurements that are collected and analyzed. Very rarely do CCT reports interrogate the ways in which the intervention has affected the

target populations beyond the initial measure of success; perhaps female enrollment in secondary schools has risen, which is a “success,” but what is obscured throughout the literature is how this intervention performs within communities beyond the initial successful behavior. Was there any impact upon women’s employment, fertility, age of marriage, voting participation, or literacy? Did the ways in which women understand and enact their citizenship change? Were there actors within the administration of the CCT that became disciplinary agents of the development institution?

At the third, and incidentally last, “International Conference on Conditional Cash Transfer Programs” held by the World Bank in 2006, there were over 45 presentations on CCTs, and only two reported on any qualitative research findings (Adato 2008; Ahmed, Kudat, and Çolasan 2006). According to the World Bank’s published agenda from this event, the session on evaluation methods did not include any reference to qualitative assessments (World Bank 2006). A 2009 World Bank Policy Research Report entitled “Conditional Cash Transfers, Reducing Present and Future Poverty” notes that CCTs are hailed as a way to reduce poverty, promote child health, nutrition, and schooling, and help countries meet Millennium Development Goals, and explains that the report seeks to confirm that those claims make sense, and are supported by the available empirical evidence (Fiszbein and Schady 1-2). To do this, the report “reviews the very rich evidence that has accumulated on CCTs, especial arising from impact evaluations,” and throughout the 383 page report, there are references to only two qualitative studies, among a vast 21-page bibliography. Both of these studies will be addressed later in the Chapter, as part of the evaluation of the small existing qualitative literature.

Indeed, scholars have noted that the widespread acclaim and consistent reports of success for CCT programs are often shallow in scope and narrow in focus, and are not based on rigorous critical research. These reports of success may obscure critical aspects of how the project is actually performing, the effects it is having on its target population, and its often-complicated role within its particular geographic context. This is especially important given the recent and growing rise of results-based approaches and the corresponding reliance on demonstrated impact (White 2004), a phenomenon which will be further explored in Chapter 5.

A 2014 paper notes that there has been enormous attention to measuring program effectiveness, but still, very little research into how programs are actually experienced on the ground (Rabinovich and Diepeveen). They explain that to date, few studies qualitatively examine beneficiaries' perceptions and experiences of these design features (2014:3). They highlight the need to examine beneficiaries' experiences and perceptions of individual components of social protection programs, and claims that just one or two studies attempting to meet this need have populated the literature. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2006) and Teater (2011) argue that program beneficiaries and implementers, both key players on the ground, play crucial roles in ensuring effective and well-targeted programming, but their feedback is often neglected in quantitative impact assessment studies. There is indeed a resounding recent call that qualitative studies on CCTs are lacking in the literature, and that deploying ethnographic and qualitative methods in CCTs studies could greatly inform our understanding of this rapidly expanded technology of development. Below I will detail a few key arguments emerging from this small but growing literature.

Ansell and Mitchell (2011) and Adato and Hoddinott (2007) note that the adoption of CCTs in different contexts is not well understood. Marshall and Hill (2014) note that there remain stark and significant gaps in the literature supporting CCTs, with a particular need for more research on emerging areas such as impacts on gender, long-term school outcomes, methods for increasing efficiency and adapting conditionalities within cultural contexts. Rawlings and Rubio (2005) admit that despite numerous positive evaluation results from some countries, one should not assume that “similar successes can be achieved in other countries in different contexts, especially in areas facing supply constraints in health and education or where the capacity to administer a conditional cash transfer program is limited” (52).

Bamberger and White (2007) highlight one additional problem with the fixation on narrow quantitative performance measurements, explaining that by defining impact as a simple singular comparison of baseline measures against post-project measures, there is no control group to hold against the target population. Therefore it is implicitly, and often unreliably, assumed that any positive changes can be attributed to the intervention (Bamberger and White 2007). Discussing this common CCT evaluation method, Adato (2008: 7) notes that occasionally control groups are used as a reference alongside beneficiaries, which raises ethical questions “with respect to the possibility that families who might otherwise have had the opportunity to benefit from the program would be purposely denied benefits for the sake of program evaluation.” She explains that in practice, this is not considered a problem, because programs are often rolled out gradually, and those households excluded from, or waiting for, absorption into the program can act as a control group.

Nevertheless, Brammerger and White (2007) highlight that such control groups are often not evoked in CCT studies, and data often relies of pre-project indicators. Their study highlights the inconsistency and inaccuracy of claims based on this comparison, which tout interventions as “effective,” noting that such reports are often based on “flimsy evidence” (64). This method of benchmarking is extremely common among CCT reports, and very few studies make note of the substantial assumptions that are necessary in determining and labeling interventions as successful. Often, even if an individual case study does warn that successful improvements of certain indicators may not necessarily be the direct result of the CCT, broader studies site the study’s ultimate finding without any of its corresponding explanation of assumptions. This then propagates the story of success, which then circulates in the literature detached from any of the studies’ complexities and assumptions that could disrupt its momentum as a best practice intervention.

This is the case, for example, with one study by Paul Gertler (2004). This article, published in the *American Economic Review*, uses a controlled randomized experiment to assess the impact of Mexico’s PROGRESA program on child health outcomes. Gertler (2004: 340) concludes that the program was successful: “I found significant improvement in the health of children in response to PROGRESA,” and cites specific decreases in occurrences of illness and anemia, and an increase in average growth. He adds that the effect of the program seemed to increase the longer children were involved, suggesting that the program benefits were cumulative. These findings, and his conclusion of success, have been cited in over 500 publications (retrieved from [googlescholar.com](https://scholar.google.com) February 10, 2017), including several by the World Bank, National Institute of Health, and economic-

and development-focused academic journals. What most of the citations do not include, however, is the second part of Gertler's analysis, which concedes that while his study *suggests* (my emphasis) that PROGRES had positive effects on children's health, one cannot determine which aspects of the many complicated conditional requirements should be credited for these, or if the conditions were necessary at all. He explains that there is no way to determine whether the "same results could have been achieved with just a large cash transfer and no behavioral requirements" (Gertler 2004: 340). Stated more broadly, such CCT studies may effectively find correlation between programming and outcomes of particular indicators, but cannot rightfully claim causation. Without a control group, these findings become shaky. That is, these simple measurements do not inquire into the social, political, cultural, and economic contexts and fluctuations that may have impacted the same indicators that the CCT had targeted.

I take this argument further still, noting that such reports may claim widespread and complete success based solely on aggregated data, and often obscure important qualitative realities. In so doing, these measurements of success, and their compelling statistical reports, render invisible the complicated ways in which the project is performing on the ground, impacting the targeted population, and possibly excluding others. For example, determining an education-based CCT's overall project performance based on a single quantitative measurement of classroom enrollment rates would obscure possibly significant variances across a multitude of axes of difference, such as space (urban/rural locale), gender, class, and religion. Certainly much of this gap could be addressed with more social and spatial resolution in surveying, but often, these aspects are left out of major outcome reporting. Aggregating data is a compelling results-based

tool for meeting donor requirements, but such broad views can obscure complicated and significant inequalities on the ground. If an education stipend program targets “poor children,” how is poverty defined and measured? Are some poor students excluded because the opportunity cost associated with attending school are still too great to overcome? Are male students more likely to partake in the program than female students? Are “poor students” stigmatized for being labeled as such, or perceived to be a drain on state resources? What is the experience of being targeted and labeled as poor, then asked to follow certain behaviors for incentives? Qualitative research is needed to understand implementation strategy, meaning, and experience. These are important questions to consider against the widespread praise for CCT interventions, and I ask these, and others, of my case study in Chapter 5.

In addition to possibly obscuring real outcomes across these axes of difference, many reports tell partial stories. Without attempting to capture the experiences associated with implementation, outcome numbers may be misleading. Were the reported numbers inflated to meet donor’s high benchmark protocols, receive more benefits, or achieve programming renewal? Were there cases of bribery or patronage? Were well-performing students favored for their ability to pass state exams and continue to receive school benefits? Mixed-methods inquiry can begin to address these questions.

Further, I argue that even rigorous and accountable quantifiable data obscures complicated subjectivities experienced by target populations. This represents a complex form of governmentality that has been little studied in the new global “best practice” that is the CCT. Besides representing a number in a statistic of outcome data, in what ways are targeted participants affected by their participation in the program? In what ways are

program recipients actively remade by their participation in a CCT program? Are they changing their behavior to conform to program requirements? In this way, CCT interventions may transform program participants from passive objects of development into active subjects of development. The program may be placing undue burden on the poor, and participation in the program may have profound effects on the experience of being poor. While the program may be celebrated as activating citizenship through economic incentives, participation in the program requires certain behaviors be followed. By attaching these conditions, defining the goals, and requiring that families meet certain criteria, the program is managing citizens' agency, which may complicate or foreclose future political possibilities.

A handful of recent studies have begun to examine CCT programs with qualitative research approaches. These studies, four of which will be explored below, highlight just a few of the ways in which qualitative investigation could reveal important understandings of how CCT programs perform in different contexts, and how beneficiaries are profoundly impacted by their participation. In exploring these questions within my case study later in the next Chapter, I will extend these avenues of research, demonstrating that the effects of CCT programming on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are complicated, and not consistently beneficial. Simple quantitative snapshots of program performance, which has been the norm in CCT research thus far, render invisible many of the varied ways the program effects the population it seeks to serve.

In one of the first references to qualitative studies for CCT program evaluation, Adato argues for these mixed methods to become the preeminent approach to rigorous

CCT studies, but recognizes that the qualitative side of research is not yet “fully appreciated by researchers, donors, and policymakers in social program evaluation...they are often under-funded, meaning that they cannot achieve the depth that is their strength” (2008: 21). Of note, while the importance of qualitative and specifically ethnographic research into CCTs is the focus of this argument, only two such ethnographic studies are cited. Both studies, carried out by IFPRI, were carried out by local B.A. or M.A. studies in their home communities in Turkey or Nicaragua. These two studies, by B.A. and M.A. students, were the only two published ethnographic inquiries into CCTs, according to Adato (2008).

Qualitative research on CCTs can reveal a host of unintended administrative inequalities and program inefficiencies that may prevent potential participants from fully understanding and partaking in program benefits. The most often cited and propagated reports on this and other CCTs, however, point to blanket success as captured by carefully chosen quantitative outcome measures.

By way of example, The World Bank discusses *Red de Oportunidades*, a CCT program in Panama, as a solution to the widespread poverty experienced in indigenous areas. In the 2015 Project Report “Better Health and Education for Panamanian Kids,” (retrieved February 20, 2017 from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2015/05/13/better-health-and-education-for-panamanian-kids>) the World Bank highlights the success of this program, citing several statistic indicators. The report indicates no areas for improvement. Several years prior, however, Waters (2010) assessed this same CCT program in Panama, employing

qualitative research methods to highlight the potential to design better programming that will be more socially, culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Waters notes that many ultra-poor sections of the population are inherently excluded because programming does not take into account “culturally informed beliefs and practices” (679) which may not align with offered services and required conditions. He claims that despite the widespread proliferation of “successful” CCTs, the potential of these programs has not been fully realized, because barriers to access to education and health services are not necessarily adequately understood or addressed (2010: 679).

Waters’ research utilized focus groups, and sought to elicit perceptions from target groups, in a setting that allowed for an interplay of ideas shaped by social contexts (681). These focus groups held discussions in indigenous languages, and inquired into the CCT program’s design and administration, addressing questions around the key topics that are often absent from CCT evaluation and assessment. He found that access to the program was severely limited by geography and topography, and that negative perceptions about the quality of health and education services deterred participation. Required health visits or attendance may not be possible at local clinics and schools, and perceived disrespect for indigenous language and traditions in public spaces may prevent participation (683-684). There were also patterns of misunderstanding in certain areas, where potential recipients misunderstood the grant to be a loan, and therefore did not apply. He also found that general feelings of government distrust translated to doubts related to program continuity and duration (682). Lastly, despite the common social fabric of multigenerational households and networks of shared living space along lines of “fictive kinship,” the nuclear family remains the basic social and cultural building block

for society, and therefore cash transfers should be made directly to nuclear families rather than to households, as had been the practice (2010: 685).

Similar to Waters' 2010 research, Rabinovich and Diepeveen (2014) investigated beneficiaries' experiences in a CCT, noting that in CCT literature, little attention has been paid to beneficiaries' understandings and perceptions of the programs and its individual components. Their research focuses on participants in Argentina's large-scale CCT, the Universal Child Allowance (AUH). Their work sets out to better understand the impacts of specific aspects of the program. This paper underscores the importance of beneficiaries' understanding of program eligibility and requirements to achieve optimal compliance and participation. Their work seeks to highlight the importance of carefully designed CCT components, understanding the implications each program element could have upon a specific population. They find that beneficiaries experience the program in certain ways, and describe some aspects of program administration as problematic. Specifically, for example, beneficiaries would prefer that cash transfers be deposited directly to women, not men (2014: 9). The paper concludes that further study into such dynamics could inform the development and implementation of more transformative CCT programming (2014: 18).

While any progress towards deeper and more textured research on CCTs through qualitative methods may be a valid and productive avenue for research, which could have very profound impact on the design and implementation of better CCT programs, the inquiries also fail to constructively question the ways in which impact assessments thus far have provided CCTs a very powerful basis of success, from which programming has continued to gain momentum and acclaim. Because CCTs as a development of

technology have been so thoroughly reported as successful based on quantitative outcome data, they have become standard instruments for development across the globe. This story of success has carried CCTs through their rapid growth, and has done very specific and powerful work in institutionalizing CCTs as necessary and unquestioned tools for development success. The very work of evaluation and reporting itself has had profound impact on the proliferation of CCTs across the globe. Indeed, I argue that CCTs have become an accepted development industry in and of themselves, much like microfinance became a global financial industry (Roy 2010), with its own sets of truth and expert knowledge.

While supplementing the vast set of quantitative reporting data, and the story it tells, with critical qualitative research is productive and necessary, so too is critically understanding the work reporting has done thus far. In my case, how was the homegrown Bangladesh stipend project influenced by the worldwide phenomenon of CCTs? And, alternatively, how has the story of CCT success incorporated the Bangladesh stipend project? How has the trajectory of the Bangladesh stipend project changed, and how have those changes been reflected in program evaluation and reporting? Subsequent Chapters will begin to answer these questions by tracing the ways in which the Bangladesh stipend project has been assessed and how its success has been measured. I will analyze the ways in which CCTs, as a development of technology, have developed expert knowledge and constructed powerful truths about how development should happen, and how this discourse itself shaped, and was shaped by, the Bangladesh stipend project.

4. Conclusion

Like other technologies of development that came before, the growth of CCT programs has been rapid and expansive. Both academic and policy literature have praised CCTs as innovative and effective mechanisms through which desired development outcomes can be achieved. With this continued widespread praise, CCTs are often considered a “magic bullet in development” (Dugger 2004, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/03/world/to-help-poor-be-pupils-not-wage-earners-brazil-pays-parents.html>). Such accolades are continually carried forward and strengthened by the development technology’s momentum as an expert-designed best practice, with its own set of discourse, knowledge, and success stories.

The research and literature upon which these stories of success depend, however, has significant and important gaps. Previous analyses of CCT programs have depended largely upon one-dimensional quantitative findings, often rendering invisible the more complicated reality that unfolds on the ground. Qualitative, ethnographic, and mix-methods research into CCTs could provide important insight into the experience of being targeted, labeled, and incentivized.

With the CCT as a key case study within this current moment in millennial development, the logic of behavioral economics is intersecting with mainstream development practices in ways that create complicated subjectivities, and may foreclose more democratic development possibilities. I situate my argument at this moment, employing a governmentality lens to probe into the ways that development subjects are created in the administration of the SESP in Bangladesh.

Chapter 4: Bangladesh education stipend project as case study

1. Introduction

On my first day as a Fulbright-Clinton Fellow in the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) my supervisor, Director of Planning Dr. Shirazul Haque, asked that I read through all past and present program manuals and propose a project for my tenure in his office. A few weeks, hundreds of pages, and many cups of tea later, I proposed an analysis of the much-feted Female Secondary Education Stipend Project, a female-focused conditional cash transfer program whose primary stated goal is to increase female enrollment in secondary schools, and in turn, delay marriage. Over the next nine months, I conducted mixed-methods research on this remarkable project, in both its past and present forms, and began to uncover a host of complexities. My research inquired into the complicated ways that this program operates, both in relationship to the local population it seeks to serve, and as an ongoing reflection of international development best practices.

This Chapter first outlines my position within the DSHE office, and situates this fieldwork within my broader epistemological and methodological approaches. Next, I describe my two additional fieldwork sites, and corresponding research methods. Finally, the remainder of this Chapter is dedicated to providing the details of this stipend project as a case study.

2. Methodological and Epistemological Framework

In this section, I will briefly explore my epistemological approach to designing my methodology for this project. The following sections will explain the specific methods I employed in each of my field sites.

First, as a qualitative researcher, I worked to continually acknowledge my own situatedness and subjectivity, throughout the framing, enactment, and analysis of this project (see Haraway 1991, Radcliffe 1994, Rose 1997). Haraway's concept of situated knowledges offers a feminist objectivity, which emphasizes making a person's position known, and acknowledges that all knowledge stems from a particular combination of researcher and place (Jensen and Glasmeier 2010). Throughout my research in the field, I remained aware that the extent to which I speak Bangla, wear Bengali attire, and participate in Muslim practices, for example, could have bearing on my social situatedness, and relationships with my research and research subjects.

My research seeks to echo Lakshman Yapa's (2002) approaches to methodology and analysis while undertaking public policy and poverty research. His approach stems from his own situatedness, which acknowledges his historic and cultural ties to both everyday life in Sri Lanka and academia in the US, both backgrounds continually contributing to his positionality in regard to his research, research subjects, and analysis. In approaching his research, he notes that academics and policy makers, in a mutually reinforcing relationship, continually frame poverty and impoverished people in problematic ways. By signaling out "the poor" and placing them in a category to be understood and analyzed, we are seeing them as the "problem," and therefore placing ourselves as part of the "nonproblem." This false duality leads to ineffective solutions and reinforces redundant poverty discourses. Yapa (2006) explains that "the dualistic logic of the problem and the nonproblem has a parallel dichotomy in what postmodern theorists call 'the subject and the object.' The poor are the objects of study and those who

study the poor are the subjects. By virtue of their location in the realm of the nonproblem, academics place themselves in a position of subjecthood” (80).

This aspect of Yapa’s (2006) approach was particularly useful in thinking through my methodological tools, as I was seeking to understand a nationwide project that purposefully targets and labels sections of society as “poor.” In approaching my research, I was aware that this state intervention was evoking a poor/not poor binary in order to seek particular development outcomes. Indeed, understanding the complicated relationships of the subjects and objects of development interventions would become a focus of my work.

In approaching my research and analysis, I worked to allow categories, patterns, inconsistencies, and silences to emerge from the texts and interviews themselves. One of my main objectives, to trace the emergence and administration of this program, was designed to create a space in which the substantive relationship between program and its objects of development could become visible. In doing so, I worked to trace broad ideological contours and render visible attendant power relations. This work is an exploration of how politics, discourse, and intervention produce and respond to different degrees of the institutionalization of poverty.

In approaching and framing this research, I also followed Jensen’s (2010) explanation of public policy research. In designing and conducting public policy research, she seeks to reinterpret understandings and recast problems, rather than work within existing knowledge bases, especially when the existing policy may be ineffective or detrimental. Further, she notes that inquiry into “poverty” within public policy is specifically in need, demanded by the reality that we operate in an ever-political context

in which alternative interpretations of the underlying causes of poverty, which may challenge dominant global narratives, are too often obscured by more powerful discourses. Karim (2011: viii) echoes this understanding, explaining that her fieldwork in Bangladesh allowed her to “critically apprehend how dominant development discourse and practices restructured certain forms of knowledge and actions as legitimate and acceptable, while delegitimizing and obscuring others.”

This understanding directly informed the design, methodology, and analysis of my research, as I worked to highlight the ways in which development discourses have overtaken and redefined locally designed policy in Bangladesh. My research seeks to offer alternative understandings of this global best practice, and render visible new spaces for interpreting and approaching poverty and poverty-focused development schemes.

3. My mixed methods research on the stipend project

Based on this epistemological framework and the objectives of this research, I designed a mixed-methods approach to my field work. The bulk of this research was conducted over a ten-month period in which I was serving as a “special assistant” in the Government of Bangladesh’s Department of Higher and Secondary Education (DSHE). I worked within the Office of Planning and Development, in the department’s main building, Shikha Bhabon in Motijheel, Dhaka. This office is the primary location for all national level activity and documentation related to the secondary stipend projects, including report generation and storage, consultant meetings, creation of calls for project proposals (PPs), and budget hearings. The largest and most well-known of the Government’s secondary stipend projects is the Female Secondary Education Stipend Project, which is commonly referred to as the “female stipend project” (FSP). My focus

was on the history and ongoing administration of this particular project, which has undergone significant changes (in objectives, practice, administration, and name) since its origination as a small NGO project in 1982. The project has taken two main forms: first, it operated as a strictly female-focused initiative from 1982-2007, and next, it shifted its target to poor boys and girls, from 2007-present.

During these ten months, I participated in all meetings involving this stipend project. There were meetings discussing all aspects of the ongoing administration of the project, and those that became most fruitful to my research were focused on the following topics:

- planning future iterations of the project
- writing reports to secure additional international funding
- assigning reporting protocol tasks for existing grantors and funders
- translating Bangla-language reports into English
- designing evaluation tools
- planning trips to schools to conduct evaluations

Several of these meetings were conducted in preparation for and during visits from various stakeholders and international consultants, my interactions with whom would become a large part of my data collection. Throughout my tenure in the office, DSHE hosted teams of stakeholders affiliated with: the Asian Development Bank, Grontmij Consulting (now Sweco), the World Bank, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Each of these visits, and visitors, had a particular relationship with the complex administration and ongoing trajectory of the stipend project. The various roles and influences of these stakeholders will be unpacked throughout this Chapter.

In addition to participating in these meetings, I traveled with DSHE employees and visitors on three school visit trips--trips into rural Bangladesh to visit sets of schools

participating in the stipend project. The agendas of these trips varied, as did the conversations that unfolded within various schools and villages. These trips were to Komilla, Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Mumensingh districts. While on these visits, I traveled and stayed with government employees and consultants, and visited 2-4 schools in each district. We spoke with teachers, students, headmasters, parents, and community members.

As an everyday colleague at DSHE, a participant in the stipend-related consultant meetings described above, and an accompaniment on official school visits, participant observation was a primary research tool throughout my ten months at DSHE. In addition, I employed other interrelated qualitative research methods including textual data and analysis, semi-structured interviews, and discourse analysis. I employed a similar mixed methods approach in my two secondary field sites, which will be explored below (Sweco Consulting offices in Copenhagen, Denmark, and at The World Bank in Washington, D.C.).

In approaching this research, I followed Elwood's (2010: 95) explanation that an active engagement with mixed methods allows for ways of doing research that intersect contested epistemological and methodological differences, and can disrupt persistent efforts to frame different paradigms and modes of inquiry as inherently incompatible. In preparing for, conducting, and analyzing this research, I relied heavily upon Iain Hay's edited volume, *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* (2010, updated 2016). Specifically, I was guided by Dowling's Chapter "Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research," Howitt and Stevens' "Cross-Cultural Research: Ethics, Methods, and Relationships," Dunn's "Interviewing," Waitt's "Doing Foucauldian

Discourse Analysis – Revealing Social Identities,” and Kearns’ “Placing Observation in the Research Toolkit.”

I acknowledge that my continued physical presence, in the role of a “special assistant,” influenced government personnel’s’ perception of my legitimacy within that institutional space. This provided me access to informational gatekeepers (Dunn 2005), which often led me to key informants (Hay 2005).

As defined by Fetterman (2008), key informants are individuals who are articulate and knowledgeable about their community or institution, and can provide valuable information, and serve as a link between the researcher and the community. They are especially useful for research concerning large organizational or institutional structures involving vested interests and power dynamics. Key informants typically provide information through interviews and informal conversation, and as links for participant observation. They should be used extremely cautiously, however. Researchers must compare, combine, and triangulate these views with other interviews, observations, and data in order to maintain rigor.

I also followed McKenna and Main’s (2013) guidance towards the careful and ethical selection and use of key informants in qualitative research. By employing a critical social science perspective, their work considers the value and challenges involved in the use of key informants, and recognizes that if employed carefully, the use of key informants can be particularly illuminating in understanding complex practices and relationships, at various scales.

Early in my research, it became clear that the access to and careful use of informational gatekeepers and key informants would be very valuable. Key informants

emerged early in my time at the DSHE, and I maintained ongoing conversations with them throughout my tenure in the office. The use of this data is used carefully, as a supplement to the discourse analysis, participant observation, and other interviews conducted. The key informants cited throughout the following Chapters each had long-standing involvement with the stipend project in one or more capacities. My key informants had long tenures either within stipend-participating secondary schools, the GOB, ABD, WB, or consultant firms. Often, these key informants straddled the perspectives of two such affiliations, or cultures (Fetterman 2008). For example, several may have been employed for several years first by the GOB, and later by an ADB- or WB-hired consultant. Some key informants were involved in the early years of the stipend project, from 1984-1990, and others have only been involved since the 2007 switch. Each perspective was taken within the context of the informant's positionality, and the data from their interviews is used in conjunction with other findings.

Throughout my data presentation and analysis, I seek to privilege the anonymity of key informants, so their names have been changed, and their specific affiliations are not listed.

Throughout this research, I used a translator and field assistant, and recorded interviews with a voice recorder. I acknowledge that the presence of my translator, field assistant, and voice recorder, were actively involved in the intersubjective arena of the research setting, in which the roles of researcher and researched are mutually constitutive.

4. Mixed methods research within Sweco Offices and the World Bank

Following this ten-month field stint in Bangladesh, I received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellowship to continue this work, specifically

through additional ethnographic methods. I also received an American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) Junior Fellowship for additional work on this same project. Shortly thereafter, unfortunately, the U.S. State Department issued a Travel Warning to Bangladesh, and I was unable to use either fellowship for its original purpose. Instead, I designed two additional research trips elsewhere, which would extend the scope, scale, and nuance of this work.

I spent three weeks as a guest at the Sweco Consultancy Offices in Copenhagen, Denmark. I had first connected with these consultants during my time in Dhaka, and was invited to their headquarters to participate in a few weeks of their operations, while collecting stipend-related documents for analysis. Sweco has played a key role in the design, funding, implementation and evaluation of the stipend programs since 2002. Sweco and its acquired firm Grontmij have been hired by the Government of Bangladesh and the ADB to conduct impact evaluations on a yearly basis, and were recently selected to develop Bangladesh's first ever Ten Year Education Plan (of which the stipend programs were a large part).

In designing and approaching this phase of research, I recognized that Sweco's position as an outside delegate of a powerful international development agency and their highly influential role in the ongoing production of knowledge surrounding the stipend project could provide a valuable perspective in constructing a global institutional ethnography of the stipend project. Coupled with my ten months of fieldwork in Bangladesh, this work would provide a rare opportunity to understand both the international institutional decision-making processes and the subsequent on-the-ground practices of this top-down global development technology. During this time I employed a

similar mixed-methods research approach, based largely in participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and textual analysis. Again, the names of key informants have been changed in the analyses that follow.

I also spent a week in Washington, D.C. as a guest participant at the Annual Meetings of International Monetary Fund and The World Bank Group. Participating in these meetings allowed me a unique view into the workings of international development and discourse “from the top.” As one of four major funders and administrators of the stipend project since 1994, the World Bank has long had a direct relationship with the particular ways in which the project has been carried forward. Additionally, my theoretical framework underscores the power and influence that even the discourse and knowledge emanating from the World Bank have upon the trajectory of international development in general, and my Bangladesh stipend case study in particular. While at the World Bank, I employed participant observation and discourse analysis to add additional perspective to my work.

While the majority of my data and findings were collected during my time in Dhaka, these two additional sites provided valuable data points and perspectives from different scales, and from different positions of power. Together, this research and analysis stands as a multi-sited institutional ethnography. As noted by geographers in recent years, institutional ethnographies have gained momentum as a valuable methodological and analytical tool for better understanding how particular discourses and policies are created (King 2009), and understanding how development ideas are institutionalized and gain currency in ‘battlefields over knowledge’ such as the World Bank (Bebbington et al., 2004). These studies are often multi-sited, and combine on-the-

ground fieldwork with interviews and discourse analysis of those “on the inside” of large development institutions (Perreault 2003, Goldman 2005, Wolford 2010).

5. The original project: Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FSP)

The remainder of this Chapter provides the details of this stipend as a case study, providing the programmatic background within which my theoretical arguments will be situated. This first section details the program’s evolution up to and beyond 2007, the year in which the program underwent a significant change, shifting its focus from females to poor students. I will then delve into the details of this change, and the complications that followed. This Chapter, therefore, assesses the ways the stipend as a program has operated and changed, and provides the details necessary to understand the complicated ways in which the program interacts with its target population. These details are also necessary for understanding how the project has been influenced by development institutions, reporting, and discourse, which will be the focus of Chapter 5.

As will be cited throughout this Chapter, there have been several publications on the stipend in its original female-focused form, the majority of which are largely based on quantitative reports published by international development institutions and academic researchers (see Schurmann 2009, Mahmud 2003, Khandker 2005, Liang 1996). Scholars have noted that these reports and assessments have rarely inquired beyond simple quantitative measures of enrollment and retention, and therefore lack important ethnographic and critical inquiry into the program’s effects on the village, household, and individual levels (Raynor & Wesson 2006). This Chapter will include background and analysis documented in this existing literature, and will be supplemented by my research, which begins to extend these understandings into critical spaces that interrogate the

complicated ways the programs are creating development subjects in the population they seek to serve.

The FSP began as a small homegrown initiative in rural Bangladesh in 1982 to increase female enrollment in secondary schools at a time when classrooms were comprised of as little as 8% females. As my key informant Masud described, in classrooms from the early years of independence into the early 1980s, one would be lucky to find just one single school bench dedicated to females in each school (personal communication, April 28 2013). By the time the FSP was operating in its full nationwide form fifteen years later, classrooms were 47% female, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANEBIS), and full gender parity in secondary school classrooms was achieved in 1998. Since this time, there have been more girls than boys in classrooms nationwide (BANEBIS 2013). The FSP is largely understood and represented as a major, if not the only, reason for this incredible growth in female enrollment, and that growth is often extrapolated to represent larger indicators of development goals, such as female empowerment, gender equality, delayed marriage, and increased citizenship. There is a wealth of literature praising the FSP in such ways, and a small contingency of studies that begin to delve beyond these statistical measures and broad claims to inquire into the more complicated effects of this program that are obscured by simple measures and indicators. My research contributes to this work, and analyzes the complicated processes surrounding the growth and transformation of this program. In order to critically understand both the programmatic complications of the stipend in its current form, and the varied influences and power structures at play in the

trajectory of the FSP and SESP, I first carefully trace the growth of the stipend from the very beginning.

5.1 Early history

When the stipend program began in 1982, it was a very small homegrown initiative to increase female enrollment in secondary schools. In this early stage, it was the work of two Bangladeshi NGOs as an experiment in just one *upazila* (subdistrict), Shahrasti (Schurmann 2009). At this time, educational enrollment for females in Bangladesh was among the lowest in the world, with many secondary school classrooms dominated by over 92% male students (BANEBS 1991). In this experimental year, program implementation was led by the NGO Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE), with support from USAID financial assistance, and supervision from the Asia Foundation (Mahmud 2003).

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the practices, flows, and power of development in the 1980s, and their relationship to particular moments in Bangladesh, created conjunctures within which this small NGO program could flourish. Related USAID project and assessment documents addressing female education in Bangladesh point towards these particular openings within development, both internationally and nationally. In a 1983 USAID Report (Quasem), the years leading up to project address the issues of women not getting a proportionate share of the socio-economic development of the country, and emphasize USAID's potential for improving women's ability to contribute to national development goals of the country. For this particular report, which assessed the state of female education in all levels, USAID was granted consent from the Ministry of Education to undertake, fund, and publish their findings. The findings clearly

supported: increased local spending on female education (1983: 225-232), education-driven efforts towards increasing women's presence in the formal employment sectors and thereby increasing the nations' GDP (1983: 456-490), and the notion that increased education for women would decrease fertility rates, which would be desirable for the nation's overall economic and development wellbeing (1983: 491-497). These findings and positions were then used in direct support of USAID's technical and financial involvement of the female stipend project.

Similarly, the Asia Foundation's involvement can be understood in the context of wider national and international development trends. In a 1988 Asia Foundation Evaluation report (Thein et al.), the lens through which success was measured is almost entirely fertility-based. The Asia Foundation's involvement in the stipend project emphasized two objects: to encourage girls to enter and continue secondary school, to lower fertility by delaying marriage and increasing contraceptive use. Though the evaluation finds that "conclusively, fertility decreases can be associated with increased education" (Thein et al. 1988: 2-3), the report briefly notes that additional "social benefits" have been achieved, such as increased status of women, reduced dowry costs, more respect in in-law's household, and increased possibilities for employment (ibid 3-5). Both the emphasis on reduced fertility as the preeminent objective and finding, and the treatment of "social benefits" as welcome but unplanned results align with wider trends in development agendas globally, and in relationship to Bangladesh.

The involvement of these international development actors each entered with their own development agendas, along with funding and assistance, and worked in tandem with the small local Bangladeshi NGOs. The arena of development at that time,

as explained in Chapters 2 and three, had created the space for exactly this kind of development intervention. With the Western and international development community's emphasis on less state involvement, the increasing role of foreign influence in Bangladesh, and the growing role of non-state actors, the stage was set for the project to begin, grow, and flourish in the hands of local NGOs and international funding agencies.

At this time, program design was entirely in the hands of the NGOs, operating on a very local level. BACE was already known for having established a small-scale stipend program for primary school-aged students in 1977. The secondary stipend program was modeled after this primary version, but was made available only to female students, as an attempt to address the extreme gender disparity at the secondary level. Interestingly, the primary stipend program was partially designed by Dr. Mohammed Abdus Satter, the government's former Secretary for Population Control and Family Planning, within the Ministry of Health and Population Control (Raynor 2004). The degree to which family planning and fertility reduction were stated (or unstated) goals of these stipend programs is an unclear but intriguing thread of research I hope to explore in future work.

The female secondary stipend program, known in this early stage as the FSP, proved to be immediately successful in increasing secondary school enrollment among females in Shahrasti. Local acceptability was high, and enrollments in the pilot schools increased immediately. One year later, a second upazila, Kaharole, was added, doubling the program area (Schurmann 2009). The program continued to slowly scale up throughout the following decade, adding more upazilas as funding and administrative capacities allowed. Throughout the first four years of the small but growing project, girls'

secondary enrollments increased nationally from 8% to 14%, and dropout rates fell from 15% to 4 % (Haq & Haq 1998: 93).

At this time, the project was beginning to attract government attention, as acclaim for and pride in the two pilot programs was spreading. In 1987, the NGOs began to advocate for the government's official involvement in and support of the stipend program (G. Masud, personal communication, March 23 2013).

In 1990, the government took official notice of this program and its success, and introduced free tuition for girls in class VI-VIII (Raynor 2004) to assist in the program's continued success by further offsetting the total cost of education. This was a key moment in the history of the FSP, both in the immediate impact it had upon total cost of education, and in the introduction of the state into this homegrown, originally non-governmental project. This 1990 moment in which the government absorbed the cost of secondary school tuition began the state's official role in the ongoing operation of the stipend, even though over 95% of secondary schools in Bangladesh were, and continue to be, privately owned and operated (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, retrieved 10/13/17 from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.PRIV.ZS?locations=BD>).

The program next underwent a significant boost in 1992: The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) partnered with BACE and other Bangladeshi NGOs and began funding seven additional upazilas (Schurmann 2009). Since this time, NORAD has continued its role as a main funder of the stipend programs. Of note, however, is that NORAD does not intervene directly with stipend programming, but instead channels all its funding through Norwegian NGOs who work in direct partnership with Bangladeshi NGOs (V. Haugh, personal communication, December 9, 2016). This

approach is in contrast with the more outsider-led methods utilized by the two other international funding agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The stipend program was scaled up between 1982-1992, in part with the “technical and financial support of international actors” (Schurmann 2009: 505). Though the program had achieved significant success in increasing enrollment in project areas, female enrollment and literacy rates nationwide were still among the lowest in the world: the 1991 census found that only 20% of Bangladeshi women were literate, and as few as 14% in rural areas. The gender disparity in secondary school enrollment was significant, with classrooms comprised of less than 33% female students (BANBEIS 2003). This was indeed an improvement from 1974, when classrooms were only 9-17% female (BANBEIS 2002), but there was still tremendous growth needed to achieve any sense of gender equality in education. Statistics from this time support that the FSP was likely incredibly successful in bringing girls to secondary school in project areas, but most of the country was still not included in the program. It should be noted that this early praise represented increasing enrollments of girls in secondary school, which is certainly considered important and worthy of recognition, but early reports did not delve into more textured evaluations seeking to understand impact beyond simple measures of enrollment. These other understandings of success—such as girls’ sense of empowerment, or an increasingly positive perception of girls’ value within the community—would come into play in later years of the stipend. These measurements are important yet incredibly complicated, and the varying degrees to which such understandings are sought (or not), and represented (or not) within evaluation and reporting will be discussed in Chapter 5.

After this decade of slow growth but noteworthy success, the FSP was scaled up dramatically. In 1993, the program became institutionalized by the national Government of Bangladesh (GOB). The national government took a lead in making the stipend program available to all girls nationwide. At this time, NORAD was still funding seven upazilas, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank International Development Association officially began supporting a large portion of remaining upazilas. One of my key informants describes this year of growth:

This was an exciting time. The growth was messy...the GOB did not have a clear plan at first, but began adding more districts throughout the school year. By the end of the school year, the female stipend operation was in place in the entire country. It was an exciting time. (Masud personal communication May 13 2013).

Indeed, by the start of the 1994-1995 school year, the female stipend program was available to all secondary school-aged across the *entire country*, except in the two major urban areas where school facilities were better (Raynor 2004). As will be shown in table 4.4 below, the Government of Bangladesh supported the largest number of upazilas, followed by the World Bank. This funding structure, comprised of the four institutions, set forth in 1994 remained largely intact for the life of the FSP, through 2006.

This nationwide universal female approach was considered quite extraordinary, and received much acclaim from academic and policy circles. From 1994-2007, the FSESP continued to operate nation-wide for all rural girls, and is generally considered to have been quite successful. Throughout these years, a universal female approach was maintained, which meant that all rural girls nationwide were eligible to receive a set stipend so long as they met three conditions. First, they had to attend 75% of school days. Second, they had to achieve at least 45% scores on class-level tests. Finally, they had to remain unmarried (Raynor and Wesson, 2006). This approach stayed consistent until the

major 2006-2007 change away from the universal female approach to a pro-poor targeting scheme. The actual stipend amounts also stayed consistent over the years, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Of note, these conditions and the corresponding cash transfers were in place since the pilot stages in the early 1980s, several years before the term *conditional cash transfer* existed on development policy documents.

5.2 Consistency in procedure across programs

The FSP had simple requirements and procedures for participation. Girls in all upazilas nationwide, apart from the excluded metropolitan areas (Khulna, Dhaka Chittagong and Rajshahi), were eligible to qualify for the stipend. The student or her family need not fill out paperwork to apply, and instead, all females were automatically considered for participation. In order to then receive the twice-annual cash installments, girls had only to maintain compliance with the three conditions (75% attendance, 45% pass rate on tests, and remain unmarried).

The exact amounts of the stipend varied by class level, but remained consistent across upazilas and throughout the life of the FSP, never increasing through the 13 years of the program. In addition to the cash amount paid directly to the female students, schools would receive money for stipend recipients' tuition, books and SSC (Secondary School Certificate) exam fees. Stipend amounts, which were set in place in 1994 and continued for the life of the program, are shown in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Female Secondary School Stipend Amounts by grade, 1994-2007 (amounts in Taka)

Grade	School Type	Monthly Stipend	Monthly Tuition	Biannual Payment Amounts			
				Stipend	Tuition	Books and Exam fees	Total
6	Govt.	25	10	150	60	-	210
	Non-Govt.	25	15	150	90	-	240
7	Govt.	30	12	180	72	-	252
	Non-Govt.	30	15	180	90	-	270
8	Govt.	35	12	210	72	-	282
	Non-Govt.	35	15	210	90	-	300
9	Govt.	60	15	360	90	125	450
	Non-Govt.	60	20	360	120	125	480
10	Govt.	60	15	360	135	125	925
	Non-Govt.	60	20	360	180	125	970

Adapted from Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education (1996).

To better understand what these amounts in Taka meant for the stipend recipients, I first discuss their value as a portion of household income. The table below compares the monthly stipend to monthly household income.

Table 4.2: Monthly Stipends as Percentage of Total Monthly Household Income (amounts in Taka)

Year	Stipend Amount (9 th grade)	Average Household Income	Stipend as Percentage of Household Income
1995	60	3658	1.64%
2000	60	4816	1.25%
2005	60	6096	.98%

These percentages are extremely low compared to other large-scale CCT programs in other countries. In the World Bank's lengthy 2011 Policy Research Report on CCT programs, the FSP is considered among the twenty largest and most significant CCT programs to date, globally. This report discusses stipend and cash transfer values as

a percentage of total household consumption. In this report, the World Bank notes this stark difference in value between the FSP and other large-scale CCTs: “the generosity of benefits ranges from 20 percent of mean household consumption in Mexico, to 4 percent in Honduras, and to even less for programs in Bangladesh” (Fiszbien 2009:5). The fact that the FSP stipend amount is understood to be quite low, yet the program has had significant impact upon female enrollment and retention is extremely significant.

Also noteworthy is the difference between the FSP amounts and Bangladesh’s Primary Education Stipend Project (PESP), the administration of which is very similar to the SESP, which will be explored later in the Chapter. The PESP allocated 100 taka per month to eligible students in grades 1-5 (Tietjen 2003), which is four times the amount that would be transferred those same students in grade 6.

There must be other influences, considerations, or practices at work in the space within which participation decisions are made. Female enrollment and retention did steadily increase throughout the years of the FSP, despite these very low cash incentives. This should lead inquiry into this program to interrogate other aspects of participation and incentive. As I explore in Chapter 5, evaluation and reporting on this program did not push such inquiries. There are moments within evaluation and reporting that begin to recognize the weight of benefits beyond the cash, such as gender empowerment, dignity, confidence, and social status, but these important phenomena are left largely underexplored in seeking to understand the FSP’s influence and impact.

Next, to further understand the value of the FSP’s monthly stipend amount over time, I use the purchasing power parity (PPP) metric and theory to understand the stipend’s decreasing value. This is important to understand in approaching the more

complicated reasons around participation, value, and incentive. Throughout the life of the FSP, female enrollment and retention rates rose very steadily, despite the stipend's decreasing value.

The PPP is a metric used to compare economic productivity and standards of living between countries and across time, taking into account exchange rates and costs of goods. In order to develop these ratios, a wide comparison of prices across countries and sectors had to be developed. For this to hold any type of meaning, an enormous amount of data has to be collected, and complex comparisons must be teased out. To facilitate this process, in 1968, the International Comparisons Program (ICP) was established by the University of Pennsylvania and the United Nations. To this day, these PPP tools are used by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (from <http://www.investopedia.com/updates/purchasing-power-parity-ppp/>, retrieved 10/13/17).

Using this metric, we can understand the relative value of the stipend amounts over time, comparing Taka to US dollars. The PPP data used below, comparing Taka to USD, was developed by the University of Pennsylvania, and published by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Economic Research Unit (from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PPPTTLBDA618NUPN>, retrieved 10/14/17).

For example, when the stipend amounts were set in 1994, the PPP was 16.9. That means that every USD can be understood as holding the purchasing power of 16.9 Taka. So, the 60 Taka monthly stipend for students in grade 9 can be understood as $60/16.9$, or \$3.55 purchasing power. Since the monthly stipend amounts did not increase over time,

but the PPP ratios did, we see this value decrease throughout the life of the stipend project. Below, table 4.3 displays the values of the stipend over time, for Grade 9.

Table 4.3: Stipend Values for Grade 9, 1994-2007

Year	Grade 9 Monthly Stipend Amount (in Taka)	PPP	Converted Value (in USD)	Change From Previous Year (in USD)	Annualized Net Difference (in USD)
1994	60	16.9	3.55	n/a	n/a
1995	60	18.0	3.33	-0.22	-1.98
1996	60	18.9	3.17	-0.16	-1.44
1997	60	19.2	3.13	-0.04	-0.36
1998	60	20.3	3.0	-0.13	-1.17
1999	60	21.5	2.79	-0.21	-1.89
2000	60	21.8	2.75	-0.04	-0.36
2001	60	21.7	2.76	+0.01	+0.09
2002	60	21.7	2.76	0.00	0.00
2003	60	22.2	2.70	-0.06	-0.54
2004	60	22.8	2.63	-0.07	-0.63
2005	60	23.2	2.59	-0.04	-0.36
2006	60	23.9	2.51	-0.08	-0.72
2007	60	24.7	2.43	-0.08	-0.72

Total Difference: -10.08

As demonstrated above, since the stipend amounts never increased, the value of them as a monetary incentive decreased significantly between 1994-2007. In the example of the 9th grade stipend, the annual value of the stipend decreased by over \$10.00 between 1994 and 2007. This is a significant amount of money, especially compared to the stipend's original value; this decrease is the equivalent of over four months' worth of stipend transfers in 2007. The power of this monetary incentive, therefore, may have decreased over the life of the FSP.

The idea that the stipend amounts were too low was certainly noted in government and consultant reports. In Pathmark Associates Limited Consulting's most comprehensive evaluation of the FSP, based upon research conducted in 2005-2006 (Pathmark 2012), focus group discussions were held to identify the communities'

perspectives on the stipend programs. These discussions were held in sixteen different districts, and several findings were quite varied, but one that remained consistent was identifying that stipend amounts were too low:

- “The amount of the stipend is not sufficient” (4).
- “Insufficiency of stipend money” (6).
- “The amount of the stipend is limited” (8).
- “Amount of stipend is too low” (15).
- “Amount of the stipend money is low compared to the need” (16).
- “The amount of stipend money is insufficient” (17).

This important feedback obviously did not translate to any increases in stipend amounts. The fact that the stipends amounts are understood as low as a percentage of household consumption, as compared to other CCT programs, and as a decreasing relative value, is significant and readily apparent across evaluation documents, yet no stipend increase was enacted. The World Bank goes as far as to claim that “in Bangladesh, the benefit level is very low, so many people fail to participate in the program” (Fiszbien 2009: 79). This claim is followed with a footnote explaining that “because the amount of the stipend was fixed in nominal terms, the current transfer is even lower in real terms after adjusting for inflation” (ibid: 319). The World Bank was a consistent funder and administrator of the FSP, and was involved in large-scale evaluation and reporting, but here lies a significant disconnect between critical finding and ongoing policy.

The amounts listed in Table 4.3 above (the stipend, tuition, books, and exam fee) did not increase throughout the life of the program. What did increase, however, were the actual costs of tuition at both government and non-government schools between 1994-2007. The government sets public school tuition fees, but only 5% of secondary schools are public, and the majority of the remaining 95% of schools have raised tuition costs

significantly since 1994 (UNESCO 2007). Over the years of increasing tuition, the FSP tuition allocations transferred to schools did not increase in tandem. Program documents explain that the obligation of the schools participating in the stipend program is to “accept the tuition fees from FSSAP at a rate as decided by the Ministry of Education (World Bank 2003).” This, of course, leaves some room for interpretation, and inconsistent processes.

This disconnect, and the complicated burden it creates, is significant, but is not discussed in any FSP program documents, reports, or assessments that I collected throughout my research. A key informant discussed this problem, pointing towards the increasing gap between the tuition amount transferred to the schools, and the actual cost of tuition as an additional burden placed upon non-stipend students. His experiences on school visits indicated that this gap often caused the tuition charged to non-stipend students to increase in order to make up the difference: “Though our official reporting does not inquire into this situation, conversations with teachers led me to believe that tuition charges are increasing for non-stipend families to compensate for the low government transfer. With this, the stigma attached to ‘poor students,’ and the resentment faced from ‘non-poor students’ has increased. In most schools, however, most families could qualify as ‘poor’” (personal communication, March 14, 2013).

To further complicate understanding the decreasing value and incomplete coverage of the stipend practice, I compare the FSP amounts to the Primary Education Stipend Program in Bangladesh, and to other education stipend CCT programs elsewhere. The Primary Education Stipend Program in Bangladesh (2002-present day) is a pro-poor CCT program that transfers monthly stipends to qualifying poor families, as long as the

children attend school 85% of the year. This monthly stipend amount for primary school aged-children up to grade 5 is 100 Taka. This is compared to the FSP, which until 2007, was set at 25 Taka per month for 6th grade girls. This disparity is not directly addressed in any FSP project documents, though the two programs overlapped for 5 years.

Further, understanding stipend values as a percent of overall household income reveals that the rates of the FSP were relatively low, especially compared to education CCT programs elsewhere. Educational CCTs can be as high as 20% (Mexico) and 29% (Nicaragua) of mean household income, but are less than 1% in Bangladesh (WB 2009). This further signals the need to delve deeper into the broader development effects of this program, as there are clearly more mechanisms at work beyond simple cash incentives. The FSP is considered enormously successful in increasing girls' enrollment, but with such a relatively small cash incentive, perhaps the more significant aspects of this mechanism are rooted in the less quantifiable measures of success, such as female empowerment, increased dignity, and the changing social fabric in Bangladesh towards more gender equality.

5.3 Four institutions, one program

From its start in 1994, the universal female approach was funded and orchestrated by four organizations, with varying scopes of programming and levels of implementation involvement. The four organizations were the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation (NORAD), and The World Bank IDA. Each organization took on a portion of the country, divided by upazilas, as detailed in table 4.4 below. It is important to note that although certain aspects of each organization's programming were different, including

the official name of each program, the core practices and procedures of the stipend program remained consistent across all upazilas.

Table 4.4: Stipend Projects by Organization, Name and Geographic Coverage

Organization	Stipend Project Name	Geographic Coverage
GOB	Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FSESP) or Female Secondary Stipend Project (FSSP), used interchangeably	282 upazilas
WB	Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP)	118 upazilas
ADB	Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) until 2000, then Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP)	53 upazilas
NORAD	Female Secondary Education Project (FSEP)	19 upazilas

Adopted from Raynor 2004

The four funding and implementation organizations, with their respective coverage, remained constant throughout the life of the nationwide female stipend project. Though there were four different names for the programs, as listed above, together they covered all rural areas in Bangladesh, and comprised what is commonly referred to within the GOB officially as the Female Education Stipend Project (FSESP), and commonly as the female stipend project (FSP). This dissertation will use “FSP” to describe the female stipend program in its full collective nationwide form, from 1994-2007. The pro-poor scheme, which subsumed the FSP and carries on to this day, is more deeply fragmented, with more complicated administrative procedures, and will be referred to later in the Chapter by its most common name, the Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP).

The key elements of the individual programs, such as stated objectives and distribution mechanisms, were generally consistent, with minor variations in official program manuals. I argue that the universality of the programming, despite multiple sponsoring organizations, was key to the legibility and legitimacy of the program. The

FSP was a nation-wide rendition of a small-scale homegrown program that had been slowly expanding since 1982, and school- and village-level buy-in was high. The FSP became widely known and understood, and on the local level, it was not evident that the funding and programming structures were varied. This remarkable consistency in practice is largely due to the program's somewhat organic growth. There was significant local ownership and pride in the original program, and as it slowly expanded geographically, these sentiments continued across new upazilas during the program's formative years. Additionally, the program expanded with universality at its core, leaving little room for targeting complications or significant divergences in approaches.

As a key informant from the GOB described the program, "the female stipend project had become a common thing. Everyone understood that it was right and good for the female education. It was a good program, all upazilas had it" (J. Mohammad, personal communication, April 28 2013).

The stated objectives of each program resonated around three broad goals:

1. Increase school enrollment among secondary school-aged girls;
2. Improve secondary schooling completion rates for girls (decrease dropout); and
3. Increase female age at marriage, thereby delaying childbearing and reducing the fertility rate (Khandker, Pitt & Fuwa 2003).

Each organization's specific stated (and unstated) objectives varied slightly, and some added important targets for improving the quality of education, health and safety of school buildings, and livelihood opportunities for female graduates. For example, the GOB's FSESP stated objectives, in the exact verbiage of the government's 2002 FSSP Development Project Proposal (DPP), Third Revision were as follows:

1. Enhance and retain female students in the secondary stage and thereby promote female education
2. Reduce population growth by motivating the stipend clientele group to refrain from marriage till (sic) completion of the SSC examination or until the attainment of 18 years
3. Increase involvement of women in socio economic development activities
4. Increase women's self-employment for poverty alleviation to assist in improving the status of women in society
5. Strengthen the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education through implementation support and capacity building at upazila level all over the country. (Government of Bangladesh 2002: 4).

These five goals are situated squarely upon the core three (increase enrollment, decrease dropout, reduce fertility), and add extended objectives that speak to the advancement of women more broadly, with the assumption that with increased schooling, these other indicators would follow. Indeed, increased schooling for females has been shown to have a number of social benefits, ranging from raising the average life expectancy to improving the overall function of political processes (Hill & King 2010). Moreover, studies have found specifically that with increased schooling for females comes increased productivity and income, improvements in family health and disease prevention, increased child survival rates and improvements in investments in children's human capital, reduced fertility rates, and increased sense of female's place in public processes (see, for example, Sperling 2004, Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2004, Schultz 2002, Kalsen 2002, Saito et al. 1994, Subbarao & Raney 1995). These dedicated studies are focused specifically on measuring certain outcomes with changing levels of female education. These additional indicators are difficult to measure, and require nuanced and textured mixed methods research. Such research for the FSP has not yet been attempted, and so such indicators are often absent from many studies that seek to capture and represent the program's success in meeting stated objectives. Indeed, the path between

stated objectives and reported success is convoluted, with some objectives falling off and others being subsumed within more quantifiable indicators. My research traces the ways that these and other objectives are measured, understood, and reported, and how these representations influence how such programs are carried forward.

As detailed in Table 4.5 below, a comprehensive comparison of all four institutions' programming from the years 1984-2004 reveals that such objectives of the programs evolved over time and across each funding agency, but, importantly, never swayed from the primary goals set forth by the original pilot program. Every single program resonated around the two key objectives: increase enrollment, and decrease dropout. Most programs (9 out of 13) included the program's third key objective, that of delaying marriage and/or reducing fertility. The fact that that these key objectives and the universal female targeting mechanism remained constant throughout the life of the program were key to the program's legibility, widespread practice, and success. These three objectives are represented in bold in the table below, to highlight their consistency. While there were certainly changes in project titles, and several aspects of objectives evolved across institutions and time, there were absolutely no program changes that would deter from the program's universality and continued focus on females. Of key importance, none of the changing objectives created barriers for females to remain eligible and collect their stipends. Throughout all the years of all the nuanced versions of the female stipend projects, the program was commonly referred to as simply the FSP, and there was no need for program participants to conform to or understand any changing criteria. The table below chronicles the evolving objectives over time, and includes all the

Capacity-building					X				X	X		X	
Physical infrastructure					X		X		X	X			
Empowerment/equality									X	X			X
Study science													X

Adopted from Schurmann 2009

As displayed above, the variances across the four funding agencies' areas were significant in number, but my research shows that they were subtle in practice in terms of citizens' interaction with the program. The variances did not cause fragmentation in the administration or perception of the FSP as experienced by students, teachers, and parents. This was crucial for the FSP's ongoing legitimacy and sustainability. An interview with Bangladeshi consultant Kalique Aminur highlighted this, by underscoring the importance of the program's consistency nationwide, as it was understood on the ground. Aminur was part of a team of Grontmij Consultants (now part of Sweco), hired by the ADB to design the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP), which was approved in August 2012.

The families were so happy for the stipend. It was available to all girl students, and they could get up to 1000 taka...for SSC fee, books, and twice a year stipend deposit. It happened this way for all girls for all years! There were no complicated paper works, and parents did not have to meet rules. I know that there were other parts of these projects happening, but the only part that mattered to the families was the stipend. They had heard of it, and then they got it, and they were so happy. They did not know about complicated changes at DSHE, they just knew they could count on the stipend.

(K. Aminur, personal communication April 11 2013).

At this time, Aminur and his team were in the thick of a "Long Fact Finding Mission," in preparation for ADB's new secondary education program, SESIP. This program would have a project period of ten years, and would include the stipend in the pro-poor form, but would be predominantly focused on other education improvement initiatives. The stated objectives of this program would be to enhance the quality and

relevance of the secondary education program, increase equitable access and retention, and strengthen education management and governance (Aide Memoire, ADB, 2013).

Aminur had previously worked on the FSP, and his comments highlight the universality of FSP programming as a key component of its success, especially as compared to the administrative complexity that was currently unfolding in its place.

The widespread understandability and universality of the core mechanisms of the FSP helped it maintain acceptability and participation for years. Though some specific objectives and programmatic inputs varied across the four institutions, all four programs employed the same requirements and practices. These core practices were:

1. All females qualified, and there was no need to conform to and prove program requirements beyond simply being a female student.
2. Stipend cash was deposited directly to female students, into bank accounts created in their names, twice each year.
3. Associated school fees (tuition, books, exam fees) for each stipend recipient were transferred directly to schools.

These core practices were most legible and consequential for the population they served, and remained for the life of the program. There were several other important program elements that evolved around each agency's changing funding and objectives, but none ever impacted the universality of cash being transferred to female students.

For example, The World Bank's evolving FSP project documents often included several additional objectives beyond these core three. These objectives often spoke to the condition of the school facilities and latrines, or the quality of the teaching. Therefore, in World Bank project areas, school reporting often included evidence of indicators such as the number of female teachers, number of available latrines, or quality of available drinking water. For some years, some of these indicators were "required" by the World Bank, but compliance with this target was *not* required for individual girls to continue to

receive their stipends (M. Moushumi, personal communication, May 18, 2013). This was extremely important: in order for girls to continue to receive their stipends, they had to meet the original three conditions (attendance, passing, and remain unmarried), but their schools did *not* need to demonstrate compliance with all additional criteria. A schools' failure to, for example, report on the availability of female-only latrines would therefore not prevent its female students from continuing to collect their cash transfers. The school may receive a poor report from the semi-annual World Bank-formatted reporting mechanism, Management Information System (MIS), but its female students would remain eligible. In this sense, the programmatic differences offered potential benefits, but did not have the power to hinder the program's universal replicability, transparency, or ease of student compliance and cash transfer. My key informant Masud described these aspects of the World Bank-led stipend program as

...the best. Their stipend project included more than just cash transfers. Although not all schools always followed, they were asked to provide separate latrine facilities, clean water, and female teachers. This was to make the school a healthy place for the girl students. If they did not follow, they got a poor mark in MIS, but girls still got stipend (personal communication, April 20, 2013).

By placing these additional objectives within FSP program language, the World Bank's projects were encouraging efforts towards healthier schools and higher quality teaching. Schools in the World Bank's project area, 118 upazilas, were asked to report this data to their local government-run project office twice each school year in the MIS format. The data from these reports was input into a computerized accounting system. The remaining upazilas, not under the World Bank's charge, were encouraged but not required to send their own MIS reports in for processing. As a result, digitized data on the FSP within the 118 World Bank upazilas is more complete than those from the remaining

354. One of the only thorough studies conducted on the FSP, that by Khandker, Pitt and Fuwa (2003), was based on this readily available MIS data. The MIS reports to the World Bank always included enrollment numbers, SCC scores, and attendance records, the three necessary measurable indicators required for girls to continue to receive their stipends. But these reports contained very scattered data on other target items, such as number of female teachers, number of available latrines, and quality of available drinking water. These indicators are important markers of progress, quality, and development, but were not core to the FSP's main operations.

In addition to the consistency of the three main objectives discussed above, the method of cash transfer remained consistent across funders and years. I argue that this method, transferring stipends directly to the female students, is integral in understanding the program's success.

5.4 Female students as bankers

Remarkably, across all 460 upazilas nationwide, bank accounts were set up in each girl's name, and stipends were distributed directly to them. This direct distribution method is very unusual among cash transfer programs worldwide. Most CCT programs deposit cash to adult females, or heads of household, but rarely directly to children or students (see Fiszbein & Schady 2009). I will argue that this was a crucial and advantageous aspect of the FSP, especially as compared to the post-2007 pro-poor program. Since stipends were deposited directly into the girls' bank accounts, intermediaries were bypassed, and receipt by the female students themselves was ensured.

This banking mechanism was a significant feat in remote rural areas. There was and is a nationwide rule that minors cannot have bank accounts in their names, but the GOB issued an official exception to this rule for the stipend recipients (Masud, personal communication, November 20 2012). Nationalized banks, operating under Agrani Bank, were given permission to establish bank accounts in the names of the female stipend recipients. Mahmud (2003) explains that this was an incredible administrative accomplishment: if any rural schools were located more than 5km from a bank branch, bank officers opened temporary booths on school premises twice a year. Every single girl was given a bank account in her name, received a checkbook, and operated her account. This was an incredible practice in a country where only 22% of adults are thought to have access to a bank account (Sohel 2014).

This direct transfer method was simple and lacked intermediaries. Leakages and hidden costs were virtually impossible, since school authorities, parents, and local elites were completely removed from the process. This phenomenal approach to disbursement should be highlighted, and the fact that this practice was completely abandoned when the FSP was later changed to a poor-targeting scheme is extremely significant.

Yet instead of highlighting this noteworthy administrative practice, the World Bank (2009) notes that such depositing of cash transfers directly to students is extremely rare, globally, and though seemingly successful in Bangladesh, evaluations “don’t consider the differential impact of making payments to the students versus to their parents,” so no conclusions may be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the direct deposit to students (183). Rather than discussing the potential benefits of this method, or conducting a study to document them, the World Bank simply states that conclusions

may not be drawn. To date, no comparative study of the two mechanisms in Bangladesh has been conducted. Interestingly, and importantly, an education CCT program in the UK tested variant mechanisms of disbursement, one providing cash transfers directly to students, and one to the parents, and found the impact on participation to be twice as large when the benefit was paid directly to the student (Ashworth et al. 2002).

While studies have not inquired directly into the leakage occurring in the new SESP targeting scheme, a similarly structured primary education stipend program in Bangladesh, the PESP, has been shown to lose substantial resources through leakage, skimming and bribery (Al-Samarrai 2009). This primary education stipend project began in 2002 in rural Bangladesh, the design of which was “reportedly not discussed with any Ministry of Education (MOE) staff in charge of the secondary school girls’ scholarship program, nor was there any deliberate review of the evaluation documents associated with it” (Tietjen 2003). Therefore, there was no official capacity in which FSP staff and administrators could share their experiences, failures, and successes with the designers of a new stipend program. Since the FSP’s banking and distribution method was not widely documented, researched, or commended, this PESP had little reason to consider such a practice. This disconnect within the MOE and across programs underscores the need for more inclusive, democratic, and transparent evaluation and reporting. The lack of institutionalized evaluation and reporting on the FSP banking mechanism and the disconnect between various stipend projects demonstrates the importance of more deliberate reporting, dissemination, and collaboration. As I’ll show in Chapter 5, reporting practices themselves are political, and foreclose certain discussions and possibilities. What questions are asked, to whom, and with whom the findings are shared

are extremely material in influencing how future programs will be enacted and carried forward.

Tietjen (2003), whose report was commissioned by the World Bank, explains that PESP's autonomous design process was likely driven by pride. Her research demonstrates that PESP designers were proud that they were not influenced by donor agencies. It was frequently pointed out to her that the PESP was "100 percent GOB-funded and designed (ibid)." This indicates that MOE staff were deliberate in keeping their work internal, at least partially to proudly avoid the intervention of the World Bank and other institutions involved in funding and assisting in MOE projects. This phenomenon should serve as a reminder to institutions such as the World Bank that their development interventions should continually work towards facilitating development that is locally supported, and based upon authentic partnerships.

In addition to avoiding intermediaries and reducing leakage, the FSP's direct transfer mechanism was likely powerful in shifting norms within the male-dominated banking arena, and empowering girls with their own financial responsibilities and abilities. The complicated but powerful potential of empowering women through access to finances and financial literacy has been widely studied, documented, and enacted in the world of microfinance, both specifically in Bangladesh and globally, but this aspect of the FSP remains underexamined. The large-scale 2012 Pathmark report inquired into the ways that girls were using the money, which had been transferred directly to them through their own bank accounts, and found that the majority of their stipends were spent on school-related support expenses: books, pens, paper, coaching, and dress making (17).

This points to one of the most significant gaps in the evaluation, reporting, and understanding of the stipend programs. While reports point to outcomes such as empowerment, dignity, and independence, very little research into these spaces has attempted. These phenomena are listed in project objectives and outcomes, but often rely on quantitative data representing simple increases in female enrollment. These political and material aspects of reporting will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

5.5 Praise for the FSP

Acclaim for the FSP is largely focused on oft-cited measurable outcomes, especially because the stipend program is credited for having helped Bangladesh achieve a Millennium Development Goal (MDG), gender parity in education. As the World Bank boasted in 2007:

Girl's enrollment in secondary schools in Bangladesh jumped to 3.9 million in 2005, from 1.1 million in 1991, including an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas. This has enabled Bangladesh to achieve one of its Millennium Development Goals ahead of time—gender parity in education (1).

While this achievement can certainly be understood as being remarkable, it is important to note that it is a simple snapshot of a complicated picture. The years 1991-2005 marked significant demographic growth, with the population in 1991 at 108,727,400, and in 2005 growing to 143,431,100 (from <https://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh>, retrieved 10/19/17). This is a growth of almost 35 million people, so one would expect that with this, the number of students (girls and boys) enrolled in schools would also increase. It is also important to scrutinize the World Bank's claim above by understanding those numbers in terms of percentage of total school-age girls. At most, estimates suggest that this 2005 snapshot of 3.9 million

girls enrolled in secondary school represents 75-85% of total secondary school-aged girls (from <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/education.html>, retrieved 10/17/17). What's more, the snapshot above represents any enrollment, and does not account for dropout, unsatisfactory learning outcomes, or failure to pass necessary completion exams. Dropout rates for girls in 2005 was as high as 37% of enrolled students, and among those who did not drop out, over 28% failed to meet necessary learning objectives and pass onto the next grade (ibid). These interrogations begin to demonstrate the need to interrogate snapshots of measurable achievement propagated by international development institutions, which continue to address Chapter 5.

The FSP is regarded as a massive success across international development institutions. Impact studies, largely based on measurable outcome data, repeatedly concluded that the FSP was extraordinarily successful: In a thorough assessment of the existing literature on this program, Raynor and Wesson (2006: 3) conclude that the FSP was “undeniably successful in increasing secondary enrollment and retention, as a host of studies has documented.” Aggregate statistics suggest that secondary girls’ school enrollment increased by over 13% each year between 1994-2003 (Khandker, Pitt and Fuwa 2003) and graduation rates jumped from 1.1 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2005 (World Bank 2007). As a percentage of total enrolled students, the percentage of enrolled female students in secondary schools increased steadily during project years, and reached 52-53% by 2005 (BANBEIS 2006).

In addition, several studies claim that the FSP achieved success across important social and cultural indicators. Bangladesh saw a “marked decline in the proportion of girls marrying at early age” (World Bank 2003: 3), and significant reductions in fertility

rates over the same period (World Bank 2009a). In addition to such oft-cited quantifiable indicators of success, the program is found to have had positive effects on attitudes and norms surrounding delayed marriage and childbearing (Liang 1999), as well as on women's increasing place in education and employment (Pathmark 2001).

The FSP is considered “innovative and first of its kind” (Abadzi 2003: 15), and a “model for other programs around the world, with impacts on gender equality far beyond education” (Al-Samarrai 2009). The World Bank called the FSP the world's “vanguard program of this type” (1999: 17), and awarded the project the ‘World Bank Award for Excellence in Girls’ Education’ in 2000 (World Bank 2003). Abadzi (2003:15) notes that this particular award is extremely significant, as few such projects have received such acclaim and publicity.

These awards are significant, and just begin to point to important aspects of education interventions that go beyond quantifiable enrollment measures. Unfortunately, these areas of praise remain underexamined, and related impact reports just begin to scratch the surface of important measures of success that interrogate real impacts of this intervention. Instead, by focusing on girls’ enrollment as over 50% of classrooms, these awards represented the FSP as an unqualified success, and likely created the space for the program to undergo its significant transformation away from focusing on girls.

The data on increased enrollment is clear, and significant, but should be used to represent success more broadly. No impact assessment studies on the FSP have been undertaken to truly interrogate the real effects of the stipend program (Mahud 2003, Schurmann 2009). Awards point to success beyond enrollment, such as reduced fertility and increased self-worth of girls, but little research has been done to truly understand

these claims. Rates of early marriage and fertility did decline during the years of the stipend project, but had been steadily declining during the years prior, and has continued since (from

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?end=2015&locations=BD&start=1960>, retrieved November 7, 2017), so it is very difficult to substantiate this causation claim without further ethnographic and targeted research.

Among the evaluations and impact reports I examined while at the Ministry of Education, only a few began to investigate more qualitative measures of success, such as empowerment and dignity. These reports were largely conducted by the GOB, not the ADB or World Bank, and are not very widely-published. The most extensive collection of data towards this end is from Pathmark Associates Limited, a consultant firm based in Dhaka. In a 2012 report commissioned by the GOB, data was collected from 2005-2012. Structured interviews reveal girls' voices speaking towards and supporting these phenomenon, but the questions could be considered leading:

Did the stipend create female empowerment?
Are female students experiencing dignity?
(Pathmark 2012: 26).

What's more, even in terms of education outcomes, these awards and oft-cited moments of praise have undoubtedly centered around simple statistics of increased enrollment, and do not inquire into quality of education, or outcomes for those who enrolled. The statistics demonstrating a steady increase of girls' enrollment are significant, and even encouraging, but definitely obscure the bleaker reality of attrition and graduation overall. The greatest attrition in Bangladesh continues at the secondary school level: fewer than half of the nation's youth enroll (from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>, retrieved November 7, 2017). Of those that do enroll, 80% of "poor students" (as measured by family assets) drop out by class 9 (Pritchett 2013). And still, girls often drop out when they are married, and two out of three girls continue to get married before the legal age of 18 (from

https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/children_4866.htm, retrieved November 7, 2017).

While statistics demonstrating that girls now represent at least half of secondary school classrooms certainly indicate one important trend, pointing to this phenomenon as a sweeping success story of secondary education greatly obscures these significant concerns.

Even within those that do enroll with the stipend, there are no tracer studies to measure learning outcomes, literacy, or numeracy improvements among stipend recipients. Not a single study has attempted to trace FSP or SESP students beyond their secondary school education, to understand what possibilities their education made available. Have FSP recipients achieved higher employment gains after graduation? How have their lives been impacted one, two, five, or ten years after participation? No such questions have been asked, and so the real impacts of the FSP and SESP remains unexamined. This need for further inquiry should interrogate across quantitative and qualitative measures, seeking a deeper understanding of success through measures of education, employment, empowerment outcomes. Additionally, I argue that future inquiries should delve into the changing subjectivities of the stipend recipients to truly understand the program's real impacts.

Nonetheless, these praises certainly do point to important strides in female enrollment. Yet I argue that there are significant gaps and shortsighted claims within these sweeping claims of success, even simply within the scope of the classroom itself. While girls did account for over 50% of enrolled students, there were significant issues with quality, retention, and passing. For example, in 2005, there were 501,375 girls enrolled in 10th grade, and only 347,815 of them appeared for the Secondary School

Certificate examination. This means that only 69% of enrolled girls had remained in school to the end of the school year, and were able to attempt the certificate examination (from

http://data.banbeis.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=316&Itemid=106, retrieved 10/17/17). Among those that appeared, fewer than half passed (ibid).

These findings indicate substantial problems with female retention, education quality, learning outcomes, and overall benefit.

Despite such consistent acclaim from both academic and policy circles, the program underwent the extremely significant transformation between 2006-2007. As of 2007, program documents for the various FSP programs in Bangladesh reflected this dramatic change, one that appeared abrupt and possibly ill founded. The four main funding agencies remained connected to their respective geographic areas, but their programming took drastic and varied turns.

6. The new project: Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP)

There are very few published details on the program in this new form. The majority of publicly available data is in the form of ADB and World Bank project documents, which are sparse, laden with jargon, and largely based on quantitative data. Therefore, the bulk of the details on the SESP program below are based on documents I collected and interviews I conducted while at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in 2012-2013.

Though some elements of the FSP program language remained constant throughout the new program according to SESP project documents, the long-standing universal female approach was abandoned, and a pro-poor targeting scheme was

introduced in its place. In so doing, the program was reformulated and standardized to the more globally recognizable pro-poor Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) model. In this form, which persists to this day, the stipend is no longer made available to females nationwide. Instead, the so-called “poorest” families in each school are targeted. This new set of projects became known collectively as the Pro-Poor Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP).

Although several DSHE employees still commonly refer to the stipend programming as the *female* stipend project, and some program documents still have some female-focused language, the SESP objectives and mechanisms themselves are almost entirely poor-focused. The disconnect between discourse and practice here is significant, and will be explored further within the context of project reporting and representation in Chapter 5.

Officially, since 2007, the intended recipients of the stipend are now the poorest 30 percent of female students and the poorest 10 percent of male students in each class in each school (Bangladesh Ministry of Education, 2008). Once identified, these students must then attend at least 75% of school days and achieve 45% passing on SSC Examinations in order to receive the stipend. This general targeting of poor students was an approach adopted across the four agencies, with key differences in *how* the targeting is expected to happen.

6.1 Key differences between institutions’ approaches

The Government of Bangladesh relies upon a community-based targeting method. The Asian Development Bank has aligned their targeting methods with this GOB-

designed community-based approach in their geographic area, so in total, 335 out of 460 upazilas use this method.

My key informant describes this community-based targeting process as an “ongoing conversation” between schoolteachers, school management committees, and local elites (G. Masud, personal communication, April 13, 2013). Based on their collective understanding of their communities and schools, these groups are responsible for identifying the poorest students. Officially, these groups responsible for selecting stipend recipients are called the Stipend Selection Committee, but they are often comprised simply of the school’s preexisting management group, the School Management Committee (SMC).

SMCs are the governing body of private secondary schools in Bangladesh, and since over 95% of all secondary schools are private (from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.PRIV.ZS?locations=BD>, retrieved November 1, 2017), these committees are the most common model of school leadership and power in rural Bangladesh. SMCs are comprised of local elites, parents, and teachers in each community. The SMC model is intended to promote accountability within secondary school affairs, but often, their decision-making is subject to the whim of local elite and politicians (Khan 2014).

Officially, SMCs and the Stipend Selection Committees are not answerable to the government, but the government intends to retain some control through the ongoing process of accreditation. In practice, however, once a school is accredited and registered with the stipend project, the payment of girls’ stipends and tuition generally proceeds

automatically, without ongoing investigation into performance or community satisfaction (Hughes 2013).

In the GOB's community-based targeting method, the Stipend Selection Committee is solely responsible for the selection of students for the stipend. To this end, GOB SESP Project Officers developed several basic "pro-poor" criteria, which the local selection committees are expected to use to identify and select the poorest children, based on their inquiry into and understanding of the poorest families (G. Masud, personal communication, May 23 2013). The GOB does not set the exact measures or questions within these pro-poor criteria, and instead, school selection committees are expected to responsibly evaluate families according to the following general categories and guidelines, as outlined in the Development Project Proforma/Proposal for the FSP:

- a) Parents should have below 50 decimal land
- b) Parents' yearly income should below 30,000 taka
- c) Child of vulnerable groups (such as orphan) should be considered
- d) Child of insolvent freedom fighter should be considered
- e) Child of disabled parents (such as deaf, dumb physically disable), who has no income ability should be considered
- f) Victim of river erosion/houseless and insolvent families' child should be considered
- g) Child of low income labor (such as rickshaw puller, day labor etc. should be considered
- h) Chronic disabled student should be considered (DSHE 2011).

One of my key informants, who has visited over thirty selection committee meetings, described the process has "very inconsistent...selection committee members are clearly able to be influenced" (personal communication, June 10, 2017). Very little research has been conducted to investigate how exactly this process plays out across rural Bangladesh, but one study into this process found that selection committees do not consistently consider the factors outlined by the GOB. Rather than following the outlined criteria, in which families' relative poverty is assessed through conversation among community members and visits to families, the committee relies on their own perceptions, allegiances, and preferences. Since these selection committees hold significant local power, they were not held accountable for these decisions (Khan 2014).

This study found that political interference, school teacher corruption, SMC and selection committee misuse of power, negative influences from elected officials, negative pressures from local elite, gender bias, and misrepresented information from parents all contributed to inconsistent selection processes (ibid). Among selection committee members who responded to this study's questionnaire, over 30% admitted that they do not consider gender a priority factor in selecting students for the stipend (ibid).

In contrast to this community-based targeting method, the World Bank has attempted to use their oft-cited proxy-means testing (PMT) tool to identify the poorest households. According to the World Bank, the PMT is a targeting mechanism that collects various predetermined indicators of household wealth, and computes levels of poverty based on a formal algorithm (2005). The SESP PMT seeks to identify the neediest students by collecting and analyzing particular indicators of families' poverty (World Bank 2017). The World Bank explains that this tool is especially useful when numeric levels of income are not available or are unreliable (1995). In each use of a PMT, household wealth indicators that have strong correlation with household consumption are collected and inputted into the algorithm, and each household's wealth status is ascertained.

In the PMT's application to the SESP, heads of households are asked to travel to upazila district offices to fill out questionnaires based on the predetermined indicators, such as frequency of protein consumption, ownership of land, household composition, and occupation (Government of Bangladesh, 2011). These questionnaires are then processed through the algorithm, and those that score below the 50th percentile in each upazila are deemed eligible for the SESP program.

The degree to which households with female students are favored is unclear; program objectives outline the need to heavily target female students, but do not provide any formulaic mechanisms or exact action plans through which this happens. For example, SESP program objectives include the following: “attract new and retain existing students, especially girls” (Government of Bangladesh, 2013), “strengthen capacity of schools to provide an effective learning environment for girls by raising institutional awareness of gender issues” (Asian Development Bank, 2012), and “alter the community attitudes about girls’ education” (Pathmark Associates Limited, 2012).

Officially, the program language from the GOB states that the poorest 30% of girls and 10% of boys will qualify, yet in World Bank project areas, families that score in the lower 50th percentile on the PMT are eligible for the stipend. From here, the World Bank administration has the discretion to award stipends to any students from these families, boys or girls, with no formulaic emphasis for girls. The World Bank’s process to this point is very specific and quantifiable, but from the 50th percentile, no formulaic mechanism to select a larger proportion of female recipients exists. A very simple distribution within the eligible group could reflect the official protocol (3 female recipients for every 1 male recipient), but this practice is not in place. In this way, despite the World Bank’s emphasis on quantitative selection mechanisms, there is room for significant numerical disconnect between their methods’ outcomes and the stated program objectives.

Since the burden of application to the program (and corresponding proof of poverty through various indicators) is on the families themselves, selection bias and access could prevent some families from even beginning the qualification process. With

the traditions of “extreme patriarchy” (Kabeer 2003) in parts of rural Bangladesh, and disparate (but improving) perceptions surrounding girls’ place in education, the pool of families applying to the program likely includes more secondary school-aged boys than girls. From this pool, if the 50% poorest families are then considered for selection, it is highly unlikely that the final recipients will align with the program’s expectation of 30% girls and 10% boys. While the World Bank program areas often allocate more stipends overall, since up to 50% of applicants will become recipients (Hughes 2013), the percentage of the recipients who are girls is often below the GOB expectation of 30% (Khan 2014).

I spoke at length to DSHE employees about the processes surrounding this PMT approach, highlighting several complications in administration. Supposedly, there is first an annual “Information Campaign” in each subdistrict, through which local officials spread awareness about the program, eligibility, and application procedures. There are no official promotion materials shared among districts, and little accountability for this important step towards increasing access to the program. Next, families are expected to travel recently established SESP project offices at the subdistrict level in order to fill out application paperwork and discuss their eligibility. The establishment of these offices has created significant additional administrative expenses, because many staff are needed to enact this process (personal communication, May 23, 2013).

Throughout this process, significant engagement is required from the families in order to receive the stipend. First, families are expected to become aware of the program, understand their possibility eligibility, and make arrangements to travel to subdistrict

offices. This alone is likely excluding much of the most vulnerable populations that the pro-poor SESP seeks to serve (personal communication, May 29, 2013).

Khan (2014) observed this application process at eight subdistrict offices in Joypurhat district in North Bangladesh, and concluded that the institutional arrangements of this administration are not very sound. This study found that the staff at these newly established project offices lacked training on the background and purpose of the SESP program, and were not qualified to fairly monitor the application and selection processes (ibid: 36). In this district, within selection processes, heavy emphasis was placed upon landlessness, and type of agriculture (potato or otherwise). It was also found that the process was influenced by religious conservativeness, which resulted in preference for sending boys to school, and keeping girls home:

In this area, potato cultivation enables some people to earn more money than other traditional crops. On the other hand, lots of landless people live in Joypurhat, and they are very poor. They need assistance for educating their child. Stipend assists them very much to continue their education. Agrarian economy and strong social tie-up has more opportunity of external influence. Moreover, religious conservativeness pushes its people to hold female child at home and provide more facilities to boys. These external factors have some influences on selecting students for stipend (Khan 2014: 40).

A key informant describes this process in several upazila offices as inconsistent depending largely on the particular staff person conducting the intake, data collection, and analysis. The extent to which the published program proxy guidelines was followed varied tremendously between offices, and between officers. In some cases, the list of proxy measurements was used as a loose guide, and in others, the intake and processing was simply a casual conversation between people already known to each other. This knowability, and general public understandings of poverty across families, has clearly become a consequential aspect of navigating the application process (personal

communication, April 14, 2013). There are links here, to broader concerns in development over what we actually know, how we know it, the conclusions drawn from this knowledge. From these bases, programs become universalized and institutionalized, built on forms and ways of knowing that are not concretely based in nuanced understanding of development spaces.

In both SESP methods, the target population is burdened with demonstrating, performing, or documenting their poverty, and must follow specified behavior and protocols to be considered, a major turn from the universal mechanism of the FSP.

7. Key changes from FSP to SESP

This section will explore some key programmatic changes that have unfolded on ground in the transition between the FSP and the SESP. I will outline major critiques of how the SESP operates in comparison to the FSP.

7.1 Shift away from female-focus

The change from the FSP to the SESP was made abruptly, with enormously significant programmatic changes between the years of 2006 and 2007. I argue that the distinctions between the two approaches to improving access to education are quite profound, and that each has significant development effects beyond simple quantitative measures of school enrollment and completion. I argue that development decisions around these stipend programs are results-driven, and do not consider critical understandings of practices on the ground. My assessment critiques the programmatic change itself, and questions the processes surrounding the transformation of this homegrown development program into a globally recognizable model.

Specifically, I argue that both the act of discontinuing the female-centered educational approach and the ongoing process of targeting poor students are laden with unintended effects that actually constrain and burden the populations that they seek to serve. This happens in the way that families' levels of poverty are evaluated, whether through community conversations, or through paperwork and associated processes at the local stipend office. Families have to demonstrate and prove their poverty in various ways, and maintain that image in order to remain qualified. In contrast to the FSP universal targeting model, in which all girls were automatically considered, the SESP targeting requires families to first understand the possibility of the stipend for their children, then pursue application, demonstrate poverty, and continue to fit that profile. From there, if their children are successful chosen for the program, they are labeled as the school's "poor students," which could create significant stigma for the student and family. This could be exacerbated by the fact that stipend tuition rates have not increased in the life of the stipend programs, even though real tuition rates have increased (Lawson, personal communication, December 11, 2013, World Bank, UNESCO 2007, May 2014). This often results in non-stipend recipient families being charged more to make up this difference, which could cause further stigmatization and resentment between stipend families and non-stipend families.

Furthermore, I argue that by abolishing the universal female approach, much of the progress towards gender parity and female empowerment has been stunted, if not reversed. In the immediate term, with the change made between 2006 – 2007, the majority of the millions of girls who had been receiving the stipend would no longer qualify. Over four million girls had been receiving the stipend throughout many years of

the FSP (Asian Development Bank 2006), and at most, 30% of them would qualify under the SESP, due to the specific breakdown of the pro-poor targeting approach. The switch, therefore, effectively foreclosed the possibility of continuing to receive the stipend for over 2,800,000 girls nationwide. Though institutional reports do not highlight this, my analysis concludes that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of female students dropped out due to the revocation of the FSP. A key informant at DSHE described this phenomenon to me:

“So many girls dropped out. We did not really talk about it at the office. Families depended on that money for clothes and food, while children were not generating [income]. Families decided girl would no longer go to school” (personal communication, May 23, 2013).

In the long term, this change could have stunted or reversed progress towards female empowerment and gender parity. Impact assessments of the FSP had concluded that there was a wide range of positive impacts on Bangladeshi society that went beyond the oft-cited measurements of classroom enrollment and retention. Though such findings are sparse in the literature, they are significant. The World Bank (2003: 3) concluded that Bangladesh saw a “marked decline in the proportion of girls marrying at early age” and significant reductions in fertility rates over the same period (World Bank 2009a). The Asian Development Bank reports that the FSP programs “decreased child marriage, reduced early pregnancy, made girls self-reliant, increased girls involvement in co-curricular activities, and increased the trend to see boys and girls equally” (2002). These findings are sparse within reporting, and there is limited data to support these claims. While rates of fertility and early marriage certainly have been declining over the life of the stipend program, it is unclear to what extent these changes can be understood as caused as a direct result of female-focused stipend programming.

Liang (1999) found that the FSP had positive effects on attitudes and norms surrounding delayed marriage and childbearing. A 2001 Pathmark study demonstrated that the FSP had positive impact on women's increasing place in education and employment (Pathmark 2001: 16). This particular 200+ page Pathmark study is overwhelmingly focused on enrollment and retention-based findings, but lists significant additional benefits in a footnote: increased age in marriage, greater birth spacing, positive attitude to smaller family size, higher employment and earning rates for women, and *creation of a positive attitude among community leaders and the general population towards female secondary education* [emphasis added] (Pathmark Associates 2001). The relegation of such significant findings to a footnote, and the corresponding privileging of more concrete quantitative classroom data above it, is mutually constitutive of the tendency of international development initiatives to rely on readily-available measurable outcome data in making policy decisions. The decisions made within processes of program evaluation and reporting are very material in constructing future program iterations, and these deeply political practices will be explored in Chapter 5.

Mahmud (2003) notes that these were incredible achievements of the FSP, considering that rural Bangladesh society is understood to be patriarchal, and places value on women's seclusion from public spaces. The institutional shift away from this important female-focused agenda could have had far-reaching effects on perceptions and practices of female empowerment. There is centuries-old reliance on marriage and extended family cohabitation as the social structural backbone of rural Bangladesh, and the FSP appears to have been contributing to a widespread shift away from forms of what scholars refer to as the "extreme patriarchy of rural Bangladesh" (Kabeer 2003).

There is evidence of this subtle yet profound shifting towards a more equitable society in ethnographic impact studies of the FSP. I analyzed a 2001 report for such findings, and though sporadic, traces of society's shifting away from patriarchy are evident. This particular evaluative report was requested by GOB, in conjunction with Norwegian partnerships (NORAD), and conducted by Pathmark Associates. Results from focus groups of beneficiary families included the following quotes from participating parents:

"In the past, boys had narrow idea about girls' education. Did not recognize it necessary. Now situation is improved. More girls in classroom and more boys and men now interested in girls' education."

"This stipend program helped men possess fair ideas about female education. It has created impact on the attitude of people. People now feel spirited to send their girls to school."

"The government doing stipend program changes people's minds about girls getting education."

"Even if some community men and fathers are not in favor of sending daughter to school, boys and brothers are in favor of education of their sisters. Stipend has changed school situation. Girls are important alongside boys." (Pathmark 2001).

This shift in cultural attitudes towards female equality is extremely significant, and cannot be captured in quantifiable outcome data surrounding school enrollment rates. Nor should gender parity in classrooms be hailed as a complete success in achieving any degree of gender equality in society at large. In 2007, the World Bank boasted that the FSP enabled Bangladesh to achieve one of its Millennium Development Goals, gender parity in education, ahead of time (World Bank Progress Report 2007). It is as though this single quantifiable moment in classrooms represented, as is legible to international development agencies, gender equality at large. With this bullet item accomplished, there was now room for the program to take on new forms, and seek recognition as innovative yet again, this time aligned with the momentum of pro-poor and CCT interventions. This points towards the very material power of international reporting practices, such as a reliance on measurability and benchmarks, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

7.2 Complications in targeting scheme

Further, moving beyond this significant but understudied aspect of the change and the motivations behind it, the new stipend administrative systems put in place with the SESP are laden with complications. I argue that the administration of the pro-poor targeting scheme, although praised by international development institutions for its administrative efficiency (Lomeli 2008) and ease of program evaluation (Rawlings and Rubio 2005), is impractical and problematic in the Bangladesh context.

Specifically, I argue that the actual administrative processes of the stipend now place undue burden on the poor to meet certain bureaucratic and performance criteria, encourage unequal access through preferential patronage relationships, invite corruption, and stigmatize poor students and families. With this change, much of the stipend program's legibility and approachability were lost. The SESP ushered in complicated forms of targeting schemes, which vary across the country, and result in problematic processes and outcomes.

The objective of the pro-poor SESP is to restrict stipend allotment to the poorest families in each school. For students to be identified as poor and selected for the stipend, their families have to actively demonstrate poverty, and/or be perceived as such by certain decision-makers in their local areas. In this way, families must become active subjects of development in order to participate in the stipend program, but in ways that place undue burden on the poor. While the very logic of CCT programs more generally does, of course, outline conditions that need to be met in order to receive benefits, I am arguing here that the particular forms of targeting and administration leading up to participation in the SESP are problematic. Yes, CCTs are built around the logic that

services are offered to those willing to accept the burden of doing necessary performances to receive benefits. Following this logic, those with the lowest opportunity costs will take the time to do what is necessary to receive benefits. For the SESP, those necessary conditions, or performances, are the basic expectations of participation in the program: remain unmarried, attend 75% of school days, and pass final exams. My line of argument here is not pointing to those conditions, those fundamental to the CCT, as burdensome. Instead, I am pointing to the complicated processes of application to and selection for the program. SESP households must conform to, demonstrate, and prove certain measures of poverty.

Specifically, in the World Bank-funded areas, families are assessed and ranked according to their levels of poverty, as determined by the PMT model. As described earlier in the Chapter, the PMT scheme relies on an algorithm of various observable and reportable indicators of poverty. In order to be considered for a stipend in these project areas, households must first be made aware of this opportunity and the method by which they can apply. Families are then expected to travel to the District Office, an extension of the state, and demonstrate that they are “poor” in order to qualify for the stipend.

Supposedly, each family is welcomed and given assistance with the required paperwork, but Ministry employees and consultants are skeptical as to the extent to which this assistance exists. A key informant, a Bangladeshi consultant hired by the World Bank, explained to me that (of course) many poor families have difficulty traveling to the office and understanding the paperwork (personal communication, February 28, 2013). A lack of assistance, of course, could hinder illiterate and innumerate families in their attempts to document their poverty. The very notion of the poorest families traveling to

District Offices to articulate their formal income is inherently flawed, and unintentionally exclusionary, in a context where the poorest families include single-headed households, day laborers, subsistence farmers, and active members of strictly informal economies, all who may lack the means to travel to the District Office and may be unable to detail their household consumption according to predetermined indicators.

There is one extensive ethnographic inquiry into the selection processes districts using both the PMT and community-based targeting methods. This research was conducted 2005-2012 by Pathmark Associates, and several focus groups identified targeting and selection processes as a major weakness of the program:

- “Forms are distributed...many poor students simply fail to apply (4).”
- “Only families who travel to the upazila will be chosen for stipend (3).”
- “Due to influence of the powerful persons of the locality it is difficult to choose the poor students for the stipend (5).”
- “Due to the partiality of the chairman and other committee members many deserving candidates have been dropped from support (7).”
- “Chairmen and other committee members selected the girls not in keeping with the objective, rather with bias and their own choice (9).”
- “Influence of powerful people in each locality select the girls for the stipend (14).”
- “In preparing the list of girls for stipend the poor girls do not get priority (16).”
- “The most deserving girls do not get the stipend (9).”

And beyond these logistical and patronage-based considerations that may preclude the poorest families from accessing and navigating this process, families that do pursue qualification are subjecting themselves to new forms of governmentality and subjectivity. This poor-targeting process requires that poor families demonstrate poverty in particular ways in order to be absorbed into the government program, and subjecting themselves to new forms of citizenship through a process of disgrace.

In the remaining areas, those in which the SESP is controlled by the GOB, ADB, and NORAD, the poverty targeting scheme centers on community groups. The

community groups are largely comprised of School Management Committees, part of an informal system of school governance in rural Bangladesh dating back to the British Colonial period, and institutionalized by the Government of Bangladesh in 1973 (retrieved November 7, 12017 from http://www.educationboard.gov.bd/edb_rules_regulations_secondary_managing.php).

School Management Committees are comprised of teachers, parents, and local elites. These groups are expected to rely on their knowledge and understanding of their villages in order to identify the poorest 10% of boys and 30% of girls in each class. Most of rural Bangladesh lacks detailed socio-economic records (Al-Samarrai 2009), so this decision-making is deeply embedded in subjective, incomplete, and possibly biased assumptions. Description of this selection mechanism varies across GOB SESP project documents and across time, the most consistent of which was discussed in an earlier section. The extent to which the guidelines are followed across districts is unknown, and the guidelines themselves leave much room for local manipulation and inconsistency.

Given that much of the criteria are almost visual or aesthetic, and the remaining indicators are often widely known within communities, there is an additional selection dynamic around knowability. The program administrators likely know, or know of, a large portion of the families seeking qualification, so preconceived notions and aspects of knowability most certainly come into play throughout the selection process.

Below are excerpts from one example of program guidelines, taken from the GOB's 2011 *Revised Development Project Proposal for the Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project Proforma/Proposal (RDPP) Phase-4*:

Eligibility for receiving stipend: parents/guardians of academically eligible female and poor students should not be the owner of 75 decimal [land area equivalent to 3/4 of an acre] and more...the disabled, orphan children, children of insolvent freedom fighters, children from river erosional affected area and children from the distressed families will be given high preference....a comprehensive Survey Form will be used for the collection of information of the families of the students selected to receive stipend...School Management Committees will evaluate...upazilla level elected representatives, officials, educationist and parent representation will be involved in this verification process (GOB 2011).

Overall, accountability for selection is extremely weak, processes are unclear and inconsistent, and outcomes rely on local knowledge. The process is extremely vulnerable to favoritism, patronage and bribery. In placing the burden of selecting recipients upon School Management Committee, I argue that the SESP unnecessarily creates a decentralized bureaucratic web, allows local elites to intervene, and leaves room for gross misappropriation of funds. In this way, patronage politics interact with and complicate what had previously been understood as neat and standardized targeting tools and techniques.

In both the PMT- and the community- based selection processes, lists of selected “poor” students are then passed along to school principals. Principals in rural Bangladesh have long played key roles as political mediators and now have the final say in which students will be labeled “poor.” Herein lie additional complications to the transparency and effectiveness of targeting. School principals are now directly enacted as participants in the bureaucratic web of stipend decision-making and distribution.

The influence of these patronage networks and elite favoritism are evidenced in focus group data, published by Dhaka-based firm Pathmark Associates Limited in 2012. Pathmark had been commissioned to conduct an impact evaluation study of the Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project, Phase-3. The program at this time, of course, was

operating in its poor-targeting form, despite the continued use of female in its title. The following responses are from focus group discussions among teachers, parents, and community members. The participants were asked how the program could be improved:

“Measures to overcome weaknesses: intervention of influential people should be stopped.”

“The stipend program gets disturbed because of difference of opinion between Secondary Education Officers, Bank managers and the institutions.”

“Due to the influence of the powerful persons of the locality it was difficult to choose the poor students for the stipend.” (Pahtmark 2012).

It should also be noted that even if the poorest students in each upazila were successfully identified and targeted, discrepancies across upazilas would still persist. Depending on the funding agency in each area, anywhere from 10%-50% of poor male and female students are targeted, and levels of poverty vary tremendously between upazilas. The World Bank participated in a 2010 Bangladesh poverty mapping project, in partnership with the GOB Bureau of Statistics. This study concluded that poverty incidence in Bangladesh ranges from a low of 26.2% in one division, to a high of 42.3% in another, with the variance among upazilas even more pronounced (The World Food Programme, 2010). Extreme poverty, likewise, varies by over 20% across districts (ibid). Therefore, even successful targeting of poor students in each school or upazila would result in inconsistency across the country.

7.3 Complications in cash transfer

Unlike the direct transfer mechanism employed by the FSP, wherein recipients themselves were given personal bank accounts, stipends under the SESP are distributed through a web of intermediaries. As the World Bank had proudly reported in its

Empowerment Case Studies: Female Secondary School Assistance Project, Bangladesh

(FSP), “each stipend recipient was allotted a passbook and could independently transact and withdraw cash from the bank” (2002). Not only was this practice likely powerful in shifting norms within the male-dominated banking arena, and empowering girls with their own financial responsibilities and abilities, it was simple, direct, and lacked intermediaries. Leakages and hidden costs were virtually impossible, since school authorities, parents, and local elites were completely removed from the process. This phenomenal approach to disbursement should be highlighted, and the fact that this practice was completely abandoned with the change to the SESP program is extremely significant. Very few reports highlight this significant practice and change, and CCT practices globally rarely emphasize this disbursement option.

The World Bank (2009) notes that such direct depositing of CCTs to students is extremely rare, and though seemingly successful in Bangladesh, evaluations “don’t consider the differential impact of making payments to the students verses to their parents,” so no conclusions may be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the direct deposit to students (183). To date, no comparative study of the two mechanisms in Bangladesh has been conducted. Interestingly, and importantly, an education CCT program in the UK tested variant mechanisms of disbursement, one providing cash transfers directly to students, and one to the parents, and found the impact on participation to be twice as large when the benefit was paid directly to the student (Ashworth et al. 2002).

Under the SESP, cash is transferred from the Ministry of Education to DSHE, then to upazila offices, thana (sub-district) headquarters, and finally to school principals, who then distribute to poor households. Staff at DSHE described this complicated

mechanism to me as “a porous sieve” (D. Afroz, personal communication, February 28, 2013). I argue that this administration invites a host of complications and opportunities for abuse, such as favoritism, skimming, support without meeting criteria, ghost beneficiaries, manipulated enrollment statistics, pressure by non-poor and elites, informal payments to participate, and examination fraud to secure payment. These issues ultimately decrease the quantity and amount of stipends distributed to the poor families the program seeks to serve.

To date, there has not been a qualitative study of the SESP to trace such administrative practices, but there have been studies of a similar stipend program for primary education in Bangladesh. This Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP) has several similarities to the SESP in objectives, scope, and administration. The objectives of the PESP are to:

- Increase enrollment rate among primary school-aged children from poor families.
 - Increase the attendance rate of primary school pupils.
 - Reduce the dropout rate of primary school pupils.
 - Increase the cycle of completion rate of primary school pupils.
 - Enhance the quality of primary education
 - Ensure equity in the provision of financial assistance to primary school age children.
 - Alleviate poverty.
- (Tietjen 2003).

This same World Bank Report (*ibid*) notes that there were two additional objectives mentioned by officials from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education that were not listed in official program documents:

- Eradication of child labor.
- Empowerment of women.

These main objectives are very similar to the SESP, and the mention of additional objectives without official inclusion or formulaic mechanisms mirrors the SESP's incomplete work towards promoting female empowerment and gender parity in education.

The PESP seeks to target the 40% poorest pupils enrolled in grades 1-5, as identified at the school level by the School Management Committees (SMCs) with assistance from the head teachers. Once selected, in order to continue to qualify for and receive the stipend, students must maintain 85% attendance, and 50% on marks on annual exams. This targeting percentage goal, identification process, and conditionality are almost exactly what the SESP put in place, especially in the GOB and ADB project areas which depend upon the community-based targeting method.

Al-Samarrai (2009: 176) found that the program has failed to target the poor, and suggests that this has been due to the weaknesses and contradictions in the governance and administration of the program. Specifically, this research found that was “substantial capture of resources through mistargeting and lack of adherence to program criteria,” with 46% of stipend resources being allocated to the non-poor. A study by the Government of Bangladesh's Financial Management Reform Program reported that over 60% of School Management Committees responsible for recipient selection for the primary education stipend program admitted to bending official selection criteria in order to reward talented students, maintain high testing success rates, or accommodate pressure from local elites (FMRP 2007). These findings further emphasize the need to question the SESP's administration practices, and underscore significant disconnects between research and policy, and between various government program offices.

In addition to highlighting the need to assess the administration of the large-scale SESP project, these findings further emphasize the need to analyze why the government abandoned the previously successful direct transfer mechanism program, and shifted to one which had already been proven to be administratively complicated in the primary sector.

7.4 Production of new development subjects

Lastly, and importantly, I argue that the SESP creates new complicated forms of subjectivity within its target population. I argue that this expert-led development program intervenes into spaces of governmentality and citizenship, capturing and manipulating the agency of the people the program seeks to serve.

Here, I follow Li's (2007) assessment of development programs to improve livelihoods in Indonesia. She takes a critical stance of development technology schemes, seeking to expose the limits of expert knowledge, and expand future possibilities for understanding what development might do. She draws on Foucault (1991) and Escobar (1995) to define and theorize the limits and purposes of governmental programs of improvement and the power inequalities they perpetuate. Li asks how programs of improvement are "shaped by political-economic relations they cannot change, how they are constituted, that is, by what they exclude" (4). She explains that within development practice, experts devise technical interventions that often obscure structural injustices. Invoking Foucault's central emphasis on problematization, or how problems are defined and bounded so as to exclude alternative definitions, Li claims that a central effect of governmental programs is to "render technical" complex political matters. Here, she draws on Ferguson (1994), according to whom development "may also very effectively

squash political challenges to the system” by continually reframing political questions in technical and expert terms. Ferguson (1994: xiv), building on research in Lesotho, explains that development institutions generate their own discourse, which constructs particular objects of knowledge, and creates a structure around that knowledge. Interventions are designed on the basis of this structure, outside the place of intervention, and have complicated effects on the ground.

Especially relevant to my project, he explains that citizens’ involvement in development programs may provide certain immediate benefits, but institutional conditionalities inhibit other forms of organization, and tend to depoliticize more substantial political possibilities. Rose (1999) describes this moment as a “switch point,” during which a government program is absorbed into the realm of expertise, avoiding critical scrutiny, and turning an opening into a closure. Such broad de-politicizing effects are made possible to the extent that subjects become governable through them: that is to say: when subjects, such as poor families in Bangladesh, adopt the same problem definitions advanced by expert development discourse, they themselves participate in governmental programs without requiring direct state intervention.

Karim (2008) draws on this in her thorough account of microfinance in rural Bangladesh. She explains that since neoliberal trends have shifted social service provisioning away from the state and onto the private sector and civil society in Bangladesh, the questions of poverty and inequality now rest on technical management of development institutions. She argues that these questions belong in the public political arena, alongside justice and citizenship, but are instead defined, measured, and controlled by non-state actors and institutions. Her work demonstrates that this may leave the poor,

and especially women, excluded from political action and deprived of the capacity to articulate their own claims to citizenship.

Kabeer's (2005) work further interrogates the opening and closing of political possibilities through NGO interventions in Bangladesh. She explains that the widespread practice of NGO service delivery has created a culture of dependency between civil society organizations and their marginalized constituencies, which "diverts the energies of both away from their larger goals of transforming society and democratizing the state" (183). She argues when that poor and marginalized are engaged in NGO provisioning, they are also deprived of independent voice and agency. Otherwise, they are excluded altogether. Her case study focuses on one particular NGO, Nijera Kori, which is purposefully positioning itself outside of this exchange. Nijera Kori attempts to avoid creating dependency and instead facilitating the attainment of intangible resources, such as information, ideas, and knowledge, which could build the collective capabilities of the poor, and "their ability to mobilize as rights-bearing citizens on their own behalf" (190).

Hickey (2009) evaluates recent attempts within policy circles to respond to the claims that development has been universalizing and technocratic, obscuring the essentially political nature of many development problems. In response to such criticisms, international development institutions claim they are working to 'get the politics right,' and undertake systematic research to understand the local and national politics surrounding interventions (Chhotray and Hulme 2009). Hickey (2009: 474) explains that the IMF and the World Bank (2005) claim that their intervention strategies have become increasingly pro-poor, and do not impose externally devised policy agendas. Instead, their interventions actively support national governments in developing

their own strategies as a means of embedding a pro-poor focus within national political processes. This claim is in contrast to my case study, which traces a homegrown Bangladeshi program that was drastically reworked to align with the World Bank's favored development scheme.

My case study is situated within these development practices and critical theories, as international development institutions control the majority of the SESP practice. First, the complicated reality of poverty is understood as discrete, quantifiable, and solvable. Experts set the parameters of what it means to be poor, and positions those complicated realities as the problem that can be solved with a cash incentive to attend school. In so doing, the experts are naming the problem, and drawing boundaries around its understanding. This forecloses more nuanced understandings of poverty, which could include other conditions and structures of inequality that intersect to create and perpetuate levels of poverty. By naming the problem and outlining a simple solution, this "pro-poor" development scheme sequesters the complicated political, social, and economic conditions of poverty to one discrete space, made solvable by a cash transfer and increased education. By naming the problem in this way, only certain spaces for solutions are left possible.

By using poverty as a readily understood category, the complicated realities of the lives of rural Bangladeshis are reduced to measurable characteristics, demonstrations, and performances. Families who seek to participate in the SESP have to seek out particular channels of influence, demonstrate their own poverty, conform to program qualification expectations, and be selected by recently empowered local officials. In this scheme, decision-making regarding recipients and stipend distribution is decentralized, and now

occurs in new spaces outside the formal state apparatus, and thereby delegates state responsibility to unelected brokers. These “new state spaces” (Brenner 2004) incorporate school principals, local village elite, and poor students as development actors and subjects, who are actively transformed by their participation in the scheme. They are, I argue, rendered particular types of governable subjects who are solicited to act on terms provided by the scheme. Access to stipends is unequal, even when behavior is consistent; households and students who are perceived to perform as “the poor” are incorporated into new forms of governmentality, and those that do not are excluded.

I argue that program recipients are actively remade by their participation in the SESP. I claim that through the SESP, local patronage relations and the structure of the local state transform program participants from passive objects of development into active subjects of development. While it is this activation through economic incentives that is celebrated as a form of empowerment, I argue that the program places an undue burden on the poor. The requirements for households to prove and perform particular indicators of poverty, and what I hypothesize to be the likely necessity that households manipulate patron-client networks in order to receive the stipend, indicate that the target population is drawn into new forms of governmentality, with potentially profound effects on subjectivity and the experience of what it means to be poor and a development subject.

Generally, pro-poor CCT programs are considered neat, controllable interventions that can optimize outcomes by designing and adjusting targeting practices and monetary incentives, but I argue that the development subjects captured by this program are affected in complicated ways. While the SESP project may provide a child and family with valuable substantive benefits, I claim that in doing so, the state is

exercising a complicated form of governmentality over its citizens. By attaching conditions, defining goals, and requiring that families meet certain criteria, the state is managing citizens' agency, which may foreclose future political possibilities. These changing subjectivities of target populations, which represents a complex form of governmentality, has been little studied in the new global "best practice" that is the CCT.

By defining the problem and the solution through exact metrics, qualities, goals, and expectations, the program encourages particular forms of behavior, and denies potential entitlements to those who do not perform as they are expected. This may be the state or institution's attempt to capture the most vulnerable citizens, absorb them into the development scheme, and make them more governable. Or, it may simply be a symptom of false targeting, or the application of international targeting techniques that do not have the intended biopolitical effects in a country lacking rigorous population statistics.

Lastly, the results of these programs are represented in particular ways, to demonstration solutions in action, and success through quantifiable outcomes measurements. These questions of the politics of measurability and reporting will be explored in Chapter 6, but here, I argue that by attaching "success" to the SESP program is an oversimplification that obscures messy realities on the ground. Yes, the SESP can likely be credited for increasing secondary school enrollment numbers, but the extent to which this measure represents any growth among the important, but less tangible objectives such as dignity, empowerment, gender parity, or poverty reduction is entirely unclear. By naming the problem, setting the objectives, and intervening directly along those lines, reporting for the SESP can claim certain sweeping successes that, I argue, are not rightly representative of the broader goals of the intervention.

Overall, I argue that the SESP has complicated and consequential impact on rural Bangladeshis that occur well outside the legibility of official program documents, reports, and statistics. I argue that the SESP's targeting and governing of "the poor" may dictate their positionality and subjectivity, and foreclose opportunities for more transformative democratic possibilities. There is a great need to interrogate these lines of inquiry within development schemes globally, especially through the oft-celebrated best practice of the CCT.

8. Conclusion

The FSP had been a small homegrown NGO-driven program that scaled up slowly, and eventually became a nation-wide phenomenon with much international acclaim. Over the years, the decision-making space for changing administration of the stipend project involved complicated interplay between NGOs, civil society, the government, and ultimately (and largely) international institutions and expertise.

The SESP ultimately subsumed the FSP program, and changed it in problematic ways that detached it from its legacies of universality, originality, and pride. My findings indicate that the poor-targeting method distances the program from its long-standing community support, stigmatizes recipients and their families, and creates complications in targeting, and administration.

Schurmann (2009) predicted this phenomenon. Her study of the FSP did not cover the 2007 switch at all, but hypothesized that any changes made the FSP program that abandoned the universal approach and instead relied a targeting tool would "present other barriers. Targeting only the most excluded (for example, the ultra-poor, minorities, or most remote) would also be stigmatizing for recipients, expensive, in addition to being

unpopular and otherwise difficult to administer...strategic community support would likely be withdrawn (511).” I argue that these predictions have largely proved evident, and that the practices and administration of the SESP should be reexamined to best reach its program objectives and better serve its target population.

A similarly-administered primary stipend program, the PESP, had also scaled up over the years in alignment with pro-poor models. This program has been documented with more robust data than the SESP, and research has found that there has been substantial loss of resources through mistargeting, lack of adherence to program criteria, and favoritism from elite pressure (Al-Samarrai 2009, Bangladesh Financial Management Reform Program 2007). Though no such studies for the FSP or SESP have been attempted, this emphasizes the need to ask why the universal female-centered program was transformed into a format similar to the poor-targeting model that had proved administratively problematic at the primary level in Bangladesh. In Chapter 5, I will argue that these changes were not organic in rural Bangladesh, and are instead largely the result of international institutional reporting practices and corresponding expert discourse.

In addition to the significant logistical concerns, I argue that the complicated administration of the SESP has created new decision-making state spaces, in which some local citizens become extended apparatuses of the state, and stipend recipients and non-recipients experience new forms of subjectivity and governmentality. In this way, the SESP creates new development actors and governable subjects, and requires that beneficiaries perform as poor. Access to this program is unequal, even when behavior is consistent. Households must prove that they are poor to be incorporated into these new

forms of governmentality, and those that do not are excluded. I argue that both are problematic, and that a more inclusive, democratic, and supportive education incentive program could be envisioned.

Chapter 5: The work reporting does

1. Introduction

Both the FSP and SESP programs in Bangladesh can be understood as conditional cash transfers (CCTs), even though Bangladeshi practitioners and policy-makers do not refer to these programs as such. A CCT is a technology of development, as described in Chapter 3 as a technical intervention tool propagated by Development practitioners. Technologies of development, as understood through Li (2007), are schemes, tools, and programs for improvement that are shaped by political-economic relations, and may obscure structural injustices. In her assessment of development programs to improve livelihoods in Indonesia, Li exposes the limits of these expert-designed technologies, and expands future possibilities for understanding what development might do.

I situate my case study specifically within technologies of development that have emerged in the past 30 years, which are largely financial instruments, and have been met with particular acclaim and momentum within discourse, policy, and practice. Indeed, the design, implementation, administration, and rubric for measuring success for both the FSP and SESP programs are aligned with what is understood to be the CCT model, even though the FSP was originally a small homegrown project of two local NGOs in rural Bangladesh in the early 1980s, a decade before the term CCT appeared in development discourse. The interplay between the homegrown stipend projects in Bangladesh and international development discourse more broadly demonstrates the complicated ways in which a large-scale development program influences, and is influenced by, international “best practices.” The ways in which the FSP and SESP programs were reported upon and understood by international development institutions reflect and contribute to the

trajectory of the projects themselves, to CCTs as a technology of development, and to the Development industry at large.

The ways in which the FSP and SESP were measured, understood and represented by various local and international institutions reveals a mutually constitutive relationship between the programs themselves and the discourses surrounding them. In this Chapter, I will analyze the ways in which the FSP and SESP have been represented by various stakeholders: Pathmark Consultants in association with the Government of Bangladesh, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and Grontmij/Sweco Consultants. The practice of benchmarking, goal-oriented planning, and reliance on measurable outcome data is revealed through the changing ways in which program objectives and outcomes are represented. The various and changing measurements and representations of the FSP and SESP programs, I argue, reveal dynamic moments of power and influence between a development program and its international institutional affiliations; moments occurring at conjunctures which, if handled more democratically, could create openings for more productive and sustainable ways to understand and practice development within education, and beyond.

In 2007, as the FSP was transformed to the SESP, it was repackaged as the globally-recognizable CCT model, which was then promoted by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The SESP was presented as an iteration of the FSP, but the objectives and the administration of the program were completely transformed, in problematic ways as discussed in Chapter 4. At this time, the project and practice of development propagated by international institutions were turning towards results-based approaches with a reliance on demonstrated measurable impact, as will be discussed in

the subsequent section. With this, I will argue that the change towards a pro-poor CCT was specifically in alignment with these trends. I will argue that this demonstrates international institutional influence upon a local program, exerted through the effective packaging of an intervention as a proven best practice tool for the sake of development—a scenario in which the goals of development themselves are unquestioned as a truth in and of themselves. By understanding the CCT as a technology of development that has constructed and carried a particular set of truths, the role of institutional knowledge is revealed as a subtle yet powerful actor in shaping the trajectory of how projects around the globe are carried forward, especially in the recent way that the quantifiable administrative techniques and measurability of impact have led to specific changes, such as the shift from the FSP to the SESP.

Emerging from this discussion come three particular findings regarding the practice and proliferation of technologies of development. First, as explained above, the packaging of best practices and international institutional discourse have afforded a particular momentum to carry these projects around the globe with a powerful presence. Contributing to this phenomenon has been an increasing reliance on results-based planning and measurable outcome indicators of success. CCTs are packaged in a way that emphasizes their ability to deliver quantifiable results. The ways projects are measured and reported upon has defined development success in particular ways—such as percentage increases of enrollment and benchmarks of participation—that I interrogate below.

Second, I argue that the very notion of ‘best practices in development’ disregards the importance of each particular context, allowing no room for interventions to be

sensitive and responsive to local political and social cultures. Best practices work in discursive ways, packaged for global promotion. These technologies of development are rolled out to communities, rather than emanating from them. Policies, goals, and administration are not reflective of local social systems or communities. This results in a one-sided participation, which takes the form of conscription. By packaging best practice interventions and purposefully designing technologies that can be easily measured and replicated, the ongoing practices of development exhibit an unabashed disregard for variances across space and time. Neither obvious nor subtle cultural differences are of relevance to the design and administration of best practices across the globe, which forecloses possibilities for more democratic and place-based policies.

Lastly, I find that both of the above findings illuminate an important agenda of the World Bank and other powerful international development actors, in which the institutions seek to continually cultivate particular understandings and practices of development that ensure the institutions remain necessary, useful, and legitimate. Here, I follow Wade (1996) who argued that the Bank, and its discourses surrounding development, continually maintains legitimacy by creating illusions of certainty in research and policies, and Goldman (2005), whose work seeks to demonstrate the “ways in which the World Bank and its partners have worked to create a representation, analysis, and mode of action for the project of development that have become naturalized, legitimates, and durable (5).” Like Goldman (2005: 291), I seek to probe at a deeper understanding of the development myths at play, and work towards a more emancipatory set of relationships between the north and the south. Li (2007) builds on this in her framing of the development practice of “rendering technical.” She takes a

critical stance of development technology schemes, seeking to expose the limits of expert knowledge, and expand future possibilities for understanding what development might do. Here, she draws on Ferguson (1994), according to whom development “may also very effectively squash political challenges to the system” by continually reframing political questions in technical and expert terms. Ferguson (1994: xiv), building on research in Lesotho, explains that development institutions generate their own discourse, which constructs particular objects of knowledge, and creates a structure around that knowledge

Following the above, I situate my argument alongside this well-accepted idea that development agencies render themselves necessary and legitimate. I specifically argue that World Bank is constantly seeking the next “best practice” in an ongoing effort to not only stay ahead of the curve, but to create the curve. Based on my observations that the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF, I argue that a key component of widespread discussion at the World Bank is this constant search for best practices. The obsession with discursively arriving at a global-scale best practice forecloses the possibilities of discovering and supporting more diverse, place-based, democratic interventions. This coincides with the rise of measurability, and World Bank policies are designed to produce the reality it claims to be seeing, and measuring. By creating the next best practice, the World Bank is naming the goals, creating the measurement, and packaging the results.

2. Bangladesh as the World Bank’s hotbed for development

Bangladesh has been, and continues to be, uniquely positioned to play a very key role in the ongoing practice, trajectory, and proliferation of best practice interventions and technologies of development. Microfinance, the most widely cited and employed

technology of development, is understood to have originated in Bangladesh. As described in Chapter 3, microfinance emerged within the framework of the “Bangladesh consensus,” and provided a wide range of financial services to poor populations, such as savings, insurance, and transfers. In the 1990s, the “Washington Consensus” emerged, picking up microfinance and narrowing its focus to microcredit. This demonstrates how a Bangladesh innovation was picked up and modified by global development actors, absorbed into a wider practice of development technologies. I situate my arguments surrounding the emergence of CCTs alongside this story, understanding how the proliferation of CCTs are a result of global processes.

Bangladesh continues to be the paradigmatic site for the microfinance industry (Karim 2001). One of the most well-known Bangladeshis is Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank, who was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for his work pioneering the concept of microfinance. Indeed, since the 1990s, mention of Bangladesh in popular media most often includes ideas of microfinance, gender empowerment, and innovation in poverty reduction tools (in addition to moments of tragedy largely stemming from natural disasters or unsafe practices in garment factories).

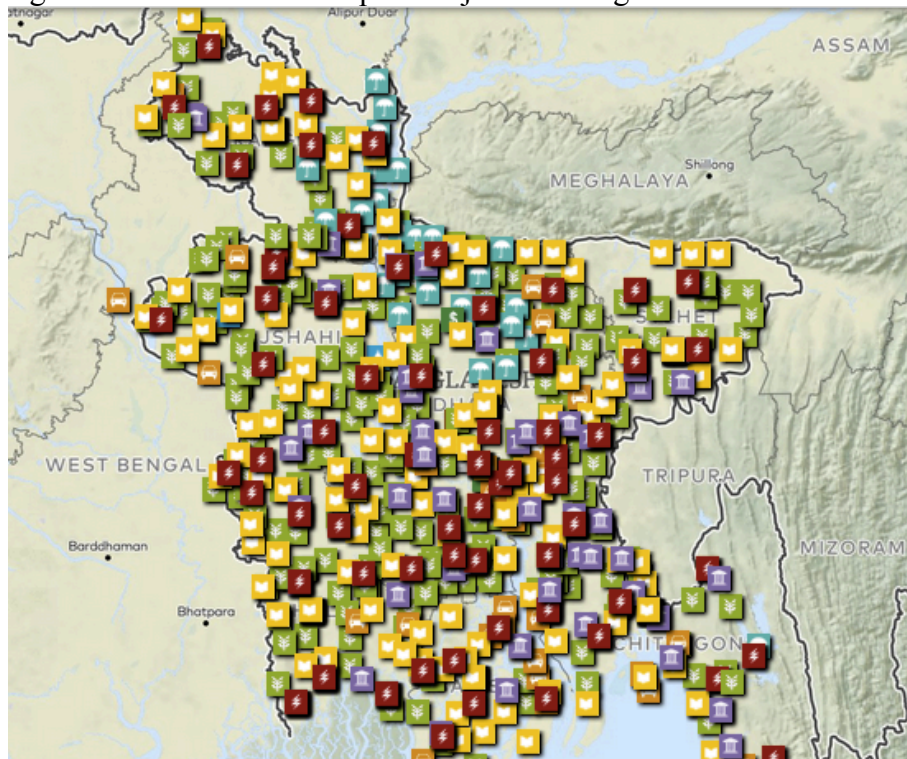
International development institutions were quick to latch onto the homegrown and unique oft-cited successes of the NGO sector in Bangladesh, specifically in ways related to microfinance, gender equality, female empowerment, child and infant mortality, and public health. Bangladesh became labeled as a hotbed for development (see Mesbahuddin 2010, Petrick and Juntiwassarakij 2011, Khan 2011). The history of innovation within the civil society sector, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, demonstrated that the rise of NGOs in Bangladesh was celebrated in a context of wider critiques of

statist approaches. The state in Bangladesh was continually in a semi-perpetual crisis, and NGOs took on a key role in development on the ground. This gave the World Bank and others a chance to test and show how civil society-led, non-statist development innovations could work. Bangladesh became a laboratory for development projects, the perfect testing ground for new technologies. This was evident in the growth of the Grameen Bank, BRAC, and other microfinance programs that received major international funding. This understanding, and corresponding sweeping narrative, further solidified the international development industry's firm hold on how social welfare programs would be carried forward.

This current narrative, understanding Bangladesh as a hotbed for development, is quite a departure from the images conjured just a few decades ago, when in 1974 former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger famously described Bangladesh as a “development basket case” (White 1999). At this time, Bangladesh was set in a position of structural weakness, with reprieve unlikely. The region's long history of exploitation, coupled with the aftermath of war (or genocide, see Payaslian 2015), difficulty of nation-building, and horrific natural disasters did not create much opening for social, political, or economic progress. This reputation remained throughout the 1980s, thanks to a continued presence in international media, not least of which stemmed from The Concert for Bangladesh, the benefit concert and ongoing fundraising campaign organized by former Beatles lead guitarist George Harrison and Indian musician Ravi Shankar (West 2008). Moreover, Chowdhury (1988) notes that international media throughout the 1980s continued to represent Bangladesh as the “perennial basket case,” a narrative that remained attached to Bangladesh into the early 1990s.

Indeed, Bangladesh had a secure position as a country highly in need of financial aid and technical intervention, right until the international development community shifted this discourse and began celebrating Bangladesh for unique development interventions. The narrative of basket case was replaced by that of a progressive testing ground for development; a country that had been both in need of and willing to host cutting-edge technical interventions for poverty reduction and social development. In both cases, the involvement of international development institutions was consistent. The map below shows the spread of current and ongoing World Bank projects in Bangladesh. This map is available on the World Bank website, pinpointing and categorizing specific projects for which the World Bank is funding and/or technical assistance.

Figure 5.1: World Bank Map of Projects in Bangladesh.



The World Bank is “developing” the whole of Bangladesh. Retrieved June 13, 2017 from maps.worldbank.org

This map, with the intention of providing a clear representation of projects across certain sectors, underscores the extent to which World Bank interventions in Bangladesh have become normalized. As is visible in the map, the whole of Bangladesh is “being developed” by the World Bank.

Given this, it would have been surprising if a large-scale CCT program did *not* happen in Bangladesh in the early 2000s. As described in Chapter 4, the FSP was a homegrown education program originally designed by Bangladeshi NGOs, later nationalized and administered by the Government, and was eventually absorbed, reformulated, and importantly, *relabelled*, as a CCT. CCTs operate with strict, clear, quantifiable and measurable administrative and outcome characteristics, and are favored by international institutions.

3. Gaps in understanding ‘female empowerment’

As will be explored below, the specific ways that program goals were defined, measured, and reported upon in both the FSP and SESP have material impact upon the ways that the program will be understood and carried forward in future. I argue that the switch from the universal female approach to the pro-poor approach was based largely upon quantifiable outcome data, and was not properly based in a grounded understanding of the experiences of stipend recipients and social fabric of rural Bangladesh. Part of this argument is situated at the intersection of qualitative and quantitative measuring and reporting, and specifically, the ways in which the abstract concepts of ‘female empowerment’ and ‘dignity’ are understood and reported upon. In this section, I will theorize and frame what these concepts mean in terms of my case study, and in the

subsequent sections, I will follow these concepts through specific reports on both the SESP and the FPS.

The idea of female empowerment has come to occupy a central place in poverty-oriented strategies in Bangladesh, especially visible through the explosion of microcredit and microfinance policies and practices. Outcome goals such as dignity, empowerment, and gender equality are very regularly included in policy plans and reports. These goals have a central place in mainstream development discourse, and within popular media. What is less consistent, however, is how these phenomenon can be measured, the extent to which conclusions can be drawn between certain policies and achievement or potential of “empowerment.”

A recent New York Times editorial highlights this phenomenon, pointing to popular examples of how female empowerment is quantified, promoted, and enacted through monetary donations from the West: “For only \$100, you can empower a woman in India. This manageable amount, according to the website of the organization India Partners, will provide a woman with her own sewing machine, allowing her to take the very first step on the march to empowerment. Or you can send a chicken. Poultry farming, according to Melinda Gates, empowers women in developing countries by allowing them to ‘express their dignity and seize control’” (Zakaria 2017: 1). These popular understandings of empowerment reduce the concept to an economic issue, separated from politics, and from the complex experiences of impoverished women.

Cronin-Furman, Gowrinathan, and Zakaria (2017) follow Ferguson (1994) in understanding how development discourse allows political decisions to portray themselves as technical solutions to technical problems, and trace the origins of the entry

of the concept of empowerment into mainstream development discourse. They demonstrate that currently, empowerment programming is explicitly depoliticizing, obscuring women's relationships to power and the state. The term originated in a different space, however, initially introduced into development discourse by feminists in the Global South, as a profoundly political project. This project was about "transforming gender subordination" and breaking down "other oppressive structures" and supporting collective "political mobilization" (Sen and Grown: 1987). Since the 1980s, the concept has been appropriated by mainstream development discourse, and has become "the lynchpin of an anti-politics, now part of the colonial/imperial project" (Cronin-Furman, Gowrinathan, and Zakaria 2017: 2).

The original conceptualization of empowerment came from a rights-based articulation of gender parity, but has now become limited to technical programming related to women's health, education, and violence. This collided with the rise of results-based measurable approaches to development, as will be explored in a subsequent section. Today, the concept is stretched and contracted to a point of complete ambiguity. It represents a wide scope of indicators—everything from school enrollments and access to mobile phones, to gender parity in political representation and percentages of female entrepreneurs. Due to this lack of definitional clarity, the means by which empowerment is measured and reported varies tremendously, with little accountability or consistency in understanding. In these technical schemes to promote gender empowerment, the complexities of the recipients are rendered invisible. Women in developing countries are reduced to passive subjects awaiting technical intervention.

When these schemes are enacted, tools to measure empowerment are extremely varied, often built on precarious assumptions, and produce conflicting conclusions. Both the definitions of, and the conclusions around, empowerment within these schemes require more articulation and elaboration in order to imagine more sustainable changes to women's subordinate positions. Kabeer (2001) points specifically to the contradictory findings within reports to evaluate the ability of microcredit schemes in Bangladesh to empower women. She evaluates six studies which each draw conclusions around the potential for microcredit schemes to empower women, and finds that much of their contrasting results arise from differences in methodology: "some studies relied largely on statistical data and significance tests for their findings while others relied on more qualitative, sometimes anecdotal, evidence" (Kabeer 2001: 66). My case study is situated at this intersection of qualitative and quantitative data, unpacking the different ways that local, national, and international reporting has been conducted, how empowerment is measured and represented, and what work these reports do in changing the ways that the program will be carried forward.

As will be unpacked within FSP and SESP reports below, the extent to which empowerment is conceptualized, measured, and represented varies tremendously. In some reports, certain quantifiable measures, such as increases in female enrollment, stands to directly represent female empowerment. In others, a few voices of girls receiving the stipend narrate aspects of their changing position, articulating some form of self-identified empowerment. Not all reports attempt to gather and represent these voices, and as I'll show below, those sections that do are often relegated to smaller spaces within the arena of reporting. Reporting, of course, inform future iterations of the program, and

so an unclear and inconsistent understanding of this key aspect of program goals inhibits the possibility for more inclusive and democratic ways forward.

Like within other development initiatives targeting female empowerment, there lacked a clear understanding of empowerment with project administration and reporting for the FPS and SESP. I argue that reporting for both the FSP and SESP fail to root the concept of empowerment within concrete experiences of gender struggle. In some reports, girls' voices are included as case studies, and begin to provide real experiences, struggles, and changes to substantiate the abstract concept of empowerment, or even more often, dignity. These girls' voices point to everyday changes in the way they are understood within their villages: whether their parents are proud that they go to school, the ways they are treated by boys in the classroom, the knowledge that they will be better off than their mothers, and whether or not they participate in family decision making. These voices are included in some reports, but are not directly contributing to overall program measurements. I argue that these voices are among the most important kinds of data that a CCT education program should attempt to collect, and which have direct and clear impact upon the ways that the program is carried forward.

Reporting and evaluation practices of the FSP and SESP should create openings for girls' to share experiences of how the program has, or has not, changed their lives, and in what ways. Girls' voices should be privileged in these reports, and categories and patterns can emerge from them. Measurement categories and tools should be opened up to allow for more flexibility, and create the space for more textured representations of the experience of being targeted and measured along lines of gender empowerment. Development programs must be evaluated on the basis of whether they influence

community-level transformation of patriarchal attitudes and practices, enable women to increase their potential for broader political mobilization, and create substantial and sustainable progress towards gender equality.

The World Bank consistently points to Bangladesh as a shining example of a country that has made great strides towards gender equality, female empowerment, and enhanced status of women. These are most often measured by quantifiable social indicators, such as fertility rates, gender gap in infant mortality, and female school enrollment. In the following excerpt from a 2008 World Bank report, such successes are highlighted towards making “impressive gains towards gender equality” (Das 2008). Quantitative findings are prioritized, and qualitative findings are considered “unexpected.” Certainly, the success of World Bank programs are not just about quantitative representations, and do hinge upon on experiences and changes that can only be captured through qualitative research. This report is an example of the World Bank nodding towards qualitative findings as providing important depth to the success, but relying primarily upon large-scale measureable outcomes:

Bangladesh stands out as the shining new example in South Asia of a poor country achieving impressive gains in gender equality. Between 1971 and 2004, Bangladesh halved its fertility rates. In much of the country today, girls' secondary school attendance exceeds that of boys. The gender gap in infant mortality has been closed. The scholarly work that came out of the micro credit revolution is based on large and unique data sets and high quality ethnographic work and has set a high bar for evidence-based policy proposals. Beyond a doubt, Bangladesh has made great progress in achieving gender equality and enhancing the status of women. Its success in girls' education, reducing fertility and mortality and the famed microcredit revolution are some of the gains that set it apart from its neighbors and other countries of its income level. When young women and their families were asked what this meant for them and how their lives were different from their mothers', the unexpectedly common theme was "finding a voice" or "being able to speak" or "being listened to" (Das, World Bank, 2008).

In this way, the World Bank points to scholarly qualitative and ethnographic findings, and includes representations from this important data, yet the crux of understanding success hinges upon quantifiable measures of fertility, enrollment, and mortality. The ethnographic data capturing the voices of young women followed a common theme around having a voice, and being heard. These findings are incredibly important to understanding what actual impact development programs had upon the lives of women in Bangladesh, and how these large-scale changes in fertility and education were experienced, and continue to be experienced, by the target population. That this finding was “unexpected” underscores the overreliance on quantitative data, and the disconnects between reporting practices attempting to measure and represent notions such as female empowerment.

The discrepancies in measuring and representing empowerment are especially poignant in unpacking the change from the FSP program to the SESP. As I’ll explore below, it is as though the single measure of increased female enrollments through the FSP allowed practitioners to check off the box for gender parity and female empowerment, and move on. To be sure, the concepts of “female empowerment,” “dignity,” and “gender equality,” are not without debate and cannot be reduced to simple definitions, but their complicated realities certainly cannot be measured by simple percentages of enrollment or examination passes.

4. Measurability

While tracing and understanding the ways in which evaluation and reporting of the FSP and SESP programs changed between organizations and over time, it is important to situate these changes within broader trends in how international

development is conceptualized, planned, and enacted. Indeed, the particularities in reporting for the FSP and SESP is both reflective and constitutive of the ways development practices have changed over the past twenty years. Here I will provide a brief view into the recent rise within international development's reliance on measurability and results-based planning.

Strathern calls this "audit culture" (2011), and edited a volume dedicated towards understanding these new ways of practicing, or performing, accountability. She describes this vast field of institutionalized expectations and instruments in which new forms of accountability are required for legitimacy. She feels these steadfast efforts towards producing and relying upon numerical accountability has acquired a new presence over the last two decades in particular, through the 1990s and early 2000s. This, of course, aligns with the years leading up to the transition from the FSP to the SESP, and this story provides an important case study in understanding the very material consequences these forms of knowing have had upon development practices.

In her 2011 article "Measuring the World: Indicators, Human Rights, and Global Governance," Sally Engle Merry traces the ways in which indicators have been rapidly multiplying as tools for assessing and promoting a variety of social justice and reform strategies around the world. She points to the increasing demand for "evidence-based" decisions for funding, and to the need for NGOs and civil society organizations to produce results which are quantifiable and measurable. In this space, there is an increasing reliance on "simplified numerical representations of complex phenomena" (Engle Merry 2011: 83). Specifically, the turn to indicators within the field of global governance brings with it new forms of knowledge productions, which have implications

for relations of power between rich and poor. Importantly, she argues that the “deployment of statistical measures often replaces political debate with technical expertise” (ibid: 84). This is of key importance to understanding the implications of my case study, in which the measurement of “female empowerment” no longer seeks to represent ideas of women’s potential for political mobilization, transforming gender subordination, or breaking down oppressive and pervasive structures (Sen and Grown: 1987), but is instead extrapolated from simple quantitative measures of secondary school enrollment.

In her recent edited volume “Metrics: What counts in global health” (2016) Vincanne Adams examines these trends and their implications within the field of global health. She points to complex transformations in the practices of audit, funding, and intervention, with a growing for and reliance upon quantitative metrics that make use of evidence-based statistical measures. She traces the history leading up to this practice, arguing that global health is “striving towards forms of knowledge that are distinguished from those found in an era of postwar, postcolonial international health.... the change is both a response to exigencies of finance, data and outcomes that have defined the postwar world, and a utopian proposition to escape, if not transcend, the problems and perceived lack of success of these arrangements and exigencies (ibid: 2). She argues that this kind of work often gets in the way of more effective programming. The focus of program design is on scale and measurement, and ignores phenomenon of custom, culture, and national political will.

She defines “metrics” as technologies of counting, but specifically technologies of counting that form global knowledge (ibid: 6). In this space, numbers are understood to

offer unbiased, apolitical truths. Zakaria (2017) argues that the idea that development goals, agendas, and outcomes can and should be apolitical is such a fallacy that it must be discarded. My case study is situated at this intersection within critical development studies and the rise in numerically-driven development programming.

Adams points to the reality that numbers can be misleading, or impossible to collect accurately, and other forms of evidence may be more reliable than those that can be portrayed through metrics. She argues that the process of pursuing “the empirical facts needed for metrics may entail a kind of violence to the empirical truths they aim to produce. Quantification strategies and the metrics we rely on to avoid politics often become a form of politics in their own right, frequently invisible to those who are being counted” (2011: 9). The focus and reliance on measuring enrollment and passing rates, for example, silences the voices of the objects of the education intervention.

Bowker and Star (1999) argue that numbers and metrics tell particular stories, demonstrating just one version of a complex reality, and revealing what those who produce them care most about. The agendas of the institutions empowered to collect and disseminate these numbers are instilled within the reports, as some variables are considered important, and others are excluded. Sangaramoorthy and Benton (2012) follow, arguing that metrics create sets of reason and truth that often displace other kinds of knowledge and other forms of evidence.

Following Scott’s arguments in “Seeing Like a State” (1999), I situate my case study within this space of simplification, in which certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision, making certain limited aspects of a complex reality more legible. This simplification makes the focus of study more measurable and

calculable, through focusing on particular indicators within the population. In so doing, the population becomes known by these only, and ‘simplified’ in terms that abstract away from all the other axes of difference that are possible. This renders populations legible and known in particular ways and maybe even reproduces the population in ways consistent with the metrics designed to describe them. So, instead of simply describing them, it recreates them in their image. Scott argues that the degree to which modern governments succeed or fail depends in part on their ability to create systems of quantification that render complex social phenomena comparable and countable.

In the context of my case study, as I’ll argue below, the growing trend to make development outcomes more measurable has restricted the possibilities for creating interventions that could produce more place-based and sustainable changes to important phenomenon such as “female empowerment.” Situated within the trend towards accountability and metrics, the ways that the FSP program has been measured and represented obscure other ways of understanding the experiences of the objects of the interventions. Cronin-Furman, Gowrinathan and Zarakia point to this specifically, noting that the “contraction of the scope of empowerment was cemented by the growing mania for measurement in the aid industry. Schools built, charcoal stoves distributed, and first pregnancies delayed all lend themselves much more easily to quantification than does women’s political mobilization” (2017: 2-3).

The ways the FSP and SESP are understood have been largely influenced by these trends, and as I’ll argue below, have foreclosed the possibility for richer forms of knowledge production through ethnography. Following Adams, I argue that ethnographic research enables a focus on individual case studies, enabling a focus on other kinds of

evidence; data that is may contribute to more truthful understandings of complicated realities (2017: 11). Ethnographic work can propose alternatives to the ways that metrics and evidence making are produced and reproduced. In this way, ethnographic research can not only provide alternative forms of knowing to supplement existing metrics-based truths, but may also being to unseat the metrics' hold on truth itself. In the case of the FSP and the SESP, the ethnographic work that was produced by local reporting practices was largely disregarded, with international firms' more quantifiable measures and truths more widely visible.

5. Performance of local reporting – Dhaka-based Pathmark evaluates FSP

Throughout the tenure of the nationwide female stipend project (FSP), 1994-2007 the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), specifically the Ministries of Education and Planning consistently commissioned focused evaluation studies and impact reports. These studies varied in scope and objective, but were requested at frequent intervals: 1995, 1996, 1998, 1998-2002, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2006, 2003-2004, and 2005-2008. All these stipend evaluation reports were conducted by one firm, Pathmark Associates Limited, a large consulting group based in Dhaka. These studies were conducted rather continuously over thirteen years, but reporting of this nature ceased when the FSP was absorbed into the SESP. These FSP reports were commissioned by the Government of Bangladesh, during the years that the project continued in its original form, and when the significant switch to the SESP administration was in place, and reporting came instead from international institutions. The FSP and SESP reporting practices tell different stories, and I will first examine those of the FSP.

Pathmark Associates Limited describes itself as a multi-disciplinary consulting firm with well-developed capabilities in several sectors: macro-economic analysis and management, physical infrastructure development, urban planning, socio economic studies, human resources development (education, health, population), environmental management and control, rural and agricultural development, and geological survey and investigation (from <http://www.pathmarkbd.com>). Since its establishment in 1986, Pathmark has successfully conducted 88 total projects, the majority of which (50) were executed for the GoB. Of these 50 projects commissioned by the GoB, financing originated from a diverse set of institutions. The GoB itself has financed 21 of these projects, while the remainder were funded by various international institutions and NGOs. The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have financed 17 and 6 reports, respectively (from <https://www.adb.org/projects/country/ban/sector/edu> and http://projects.worldbank.org/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=BD, retrieved September 1, 2017).

Of the 50 reports commissioned by the GoB, eight were either entirely focused on or included the FSP. These eight projects are listed below, in Table 4.1. I will incorporate pieces of several of the reports, but I will analyze one of reports in detail. For this report, I will unpack what methodologies were used, what questions were asked, and what findings were highlighted. This data will help understand how reporting practices both reflected and contributed to the trajectory of the stipend projects in Bangladesh, and CCT discourse more broadly. I chose to analyze this particular report because it is by far the most comprehensive, include data found in several of the previous reports, and cover several years of the FSP program. Also, this report is especially valuable because I had

access to a first draft and final draft, and a correspondence from the Norwegian Embassy, requesting some of the changes made between the two drafts. The report includes the most ethnographic data collected and published in any report on the FSP. This report is listed in bold in the chart below.

Table 4.1: Summary of FSP Reports

Project Title, Executing Agency, Period of Work	Service Provided
Secondary Education Sector Development Project (ADB TA No. 2908) Ministry of Education, GOB 1998	Asian Development Bank funded a sector review in the light of major shifts of eight year basic education and four year secondary education as recommended by new education policy. Both international and domestic consultants were engaged to study recent trends in primary and secondary education. The study helped in developing a realistic project document for the secondary education sector.
Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (ADB Loan No. 1690-BAN) Ministry of Education, GoB 2001-2006	The consultants identified four critical issues of secondary education in Bangladesh. These are: (i) weak policy and planning structures, (ii) poor quality, (iii) low internal and external efficiency, and (iii) limited access and equity and evaluated the present planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring and management structure of secondary education.
Second Primary Education Sector Project (ADB Loan No. 1521) Primary and Mass Education Division, GoB 1998-2002	The objectives of the project were to increase equitable access, develop quality of primary education, and strengthening the management, motoring and information system of primary education. Studies were undertaken to assist the Government in the areas of enhancing quality of education and capacity building at NCTB. The interventions on quality and capacity building were employed in the following areas: (I) NCTB institutional development and capacity building, (ii) curriculum and textbook improvement, (iii) textbook supply, and (iv) student assessment. Further, the team of specialists worked together to produce a cohesive, holistic and realizable project package to accomplish given objective and targets. Project had a component on development of learning materials on culture and life of tribal people.
SESIP Management Strengthening Component: Research Studies for Development and Pilot of a Model for Decentralized Management of	The services provided are: (1) review existing arrangements for planning, allocating, managing and monitoring the use of educational resources within the secondary education sector in Bangladesh, including a review of the present formal mechanisms for quality assurance; (2) assess the existing system for educational management in terms of stated government objectives; (3) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current system for managing educational resources, with particular attention to

Secondary Education (Study – 1 and Study – 2) Ministry of Education, GoB 2003-2004	accountability for the use of government funds; (4) propose a model for decentralized management of secondary education for piloting/training in three districts of one zone, including detailed guidelines and timelines for piloting/training; (5) Assess the capacity of government agencies and project management to absorb the workload related to the proposed arrangements.
Research Studies in the Specified Areas for Assessing the Impact on the Society on Female Stipend Programme Ministry of Education, GOB 1995, 1996	Research studies were conducted to investigate the operational realities, community expectation and level of acceptance of the financial assistance provided to girl students. Measures to improve operational factors have been suggested.
Design and Implementation of Pilot Scheme for Targeting Stipend Recipients under FSSAP Ministry of Education, GoB 1999-2000	The main objective of this project was to spread education among the girls. Specifically it aimed at: (i) increasing number of girls enrolment in grades 6–10; (ii) increasing number of secondary education teacher; (iii) providing occupational skills training to school leaving girls; (iv) promoting supportive environment for girls education etc. In view of the objectives, the study consultants accomplished the task of (i) structuring suitable questionnaire; (ii) fielded survey teams in the sample thanas to collect useful data; (iii) prepared and submitted reports on dropout of grade five passed girls; and (iv) identified the role of guardians, parents, local elites to motivate girls ensuring their enrolment etc.
Evaluative Study on Socio-Economic Impact of the Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FESP) Ministry of Education, GoB 2000-2001	The study assessed (1) the project contribution to educational outcomes in the project thanas compared to neighboring non-project thanas, (2) the project contribution in terms of increasing female age of marriage; (3) the extent to which the project contributes to delaying first marriage, lowering fertility rate, birth spacing, health and nutritional status of children; (4) extent to which the project created employment opportunity; and (5) to what extent the project has contributed to improving social status of female.
Impact Evaluation Study of Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project (Phase-3) Ministry of Planning, GoB 2005-2008	The major objectives for evaluation were to: (i) assess the implementation status of the major components of the project, (ii) find out impact of the project on beneficiary girls and (iii) identify strengths and weaknesses of the project and (iv) suggest measures to overcome to identified weaknesses.

Adapted from www.pathmarkbd.com, retrieved March 12, 2017.

These eight reports are spread across the 14 years of the FSP, and the most recent report covers a project period through 2008. Since this time, no Pathmark studies on the

stipend projects have been commissioned. While CCTs as a best practice intervention have spread, and a corresponding call for more rigorous evaluative inquiries has grown, this shift in reporting is extremely significant. To critically understand the work that these FSP reports did, how their discontinuation speaks to broader trends in development discourse, and how reporting for the SESP now produces different forms of knowledge and truth, I will first examine the FSP reporting conducted locally.

Specifically, for the remainder of this section, I will trace the use of various survey instruments and tools to depict how this local reporting defined and projected success, in order to understand how certain aspects of project performance are rendered visible, while others are rendered invisible, and how these performances of data themselves contributed to the stipend program's shifting focus. I will analyze the largest and most comprehensive of the largest Pathmark reports above, a copy of which I was given while placed in DSHE in Dhaka: the Evaluative Study on Socio-Economic Impact of the Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FESP) project period 2000-2001. From this point forward, I will refer to this document as Pathmark Report (2001).

Before unpacking the report itself, it is important to recognize the confluence of forces that contributed to the undertaking of this project by Pathmark at this particular time. Before approaching the data in the report itself, it is important to ask how the project was initiated, funded, structured, and administered.

This Pathmark Report (2001) was largely funded by NORAD, the Norwegian Agency for Development, a participant in the FSP since 1996. NORAD's participation is brokered through Norwegian NGOs partnered with Bangladeshi NGOs, and in this way, their position is more removed than that of the World Bank and the Asian Development

Bank, who intervene directly into decision-making and reporting. This, I argue, gave the local reporting agency more autonomy in designing and administering data collection, and compiling findings. Pathmark, a local Bangladesh-based firm, is in a position to be less influenced by the increasing importance of quantitative data that dictates much of the reporting conducted by larger global institutions. When I discussed Pathmark reports with Sweco consultants hired by the ABD, they described Pathmark's reporting practices as "less exact" than their own (personal communication, May 6 2017). They continued to describe what they meant by this, and they recognize that Pathmark's evaluation practices operate pretty independently, often open to following leads in data and collecting "large amounts of case studies" (personal communication, May 7 2017). The consultants chuckled about this, describing the lengthy ethnographic data collected, and implying that these findings were less rigorous and less useful than other forms of evaluation.

As this local outfit that is relegated to a space outside the competitive realm of international consultancy reporting practices, Pathmark has more space and time to employ qualitative methods. This has created a relative autonomy in the system of evaluation that it develops, and the reporting reflects that; among all the reports I collected, those conducted by Pathmark include the most ethnographic data. Their reporting is more amenable to local conversations and practices as part of data collection, not only because of this relative autonomy, but also because they are Bangladeshi citizens conducting the research.

5.1 The Case for Case Studies

This Pathmark (2001) report is organized into five sections: statistical tables, focus group discussions, case studies, questionnaires, and comments. The appendix

includes a list of schools surveyed. The sections that are most replicated in other government reports are the tables and statistical findings, but over 90% of the pages are dedicated to qualitative research and analysis.

Pathmark surveyed women across the spectrum of stipend involvement: those who do receive the stipend, those who did and no longer do, and those who never have. Questions were designed to elicit responses that would describe both tangible and intangible outcomes of participation in the FSP. Towards this end, questions are grouped into two categories: Basic, and Dignity. These conversations and reports were originally conducted in Bangla, and an in-house Pathmark translator later produced the English version. The use of the term “dignity” here is especially interesting, as a dimension of empowerment. Dignity was not defined, but is used consistently throughout the report. It seems to represent a category of data that go beyond measuring the immediate benefits of the stipend project. Those immediate measures, categorized as “Basic,” include data such as length of school enrollment, benefits to having the stipend money, and age at marriage. The dignity questions push beyond these immediate benefits, and probe into changes that were as direct a result of the stipend project. These dignity questions ask about decision-making within the household, women’s role as citizens in terms of local meeting attendance and voting, and degree of confidence in giving advice to other women. While dignity is not clearly conceptualized or defined, and the word dignity is not often evoked within the actual interviews or focus group discussions, the sections of the report that fall into this category are rich with valuable ethnographic data.

Below is a sampling of “Basic” and “Dignity” questions that were used in one-on-one interviews.

A sampling of interview questions (adapted from Pathmark 2001):

Basic:

While student did you do household work?

Why did you stop education?

How did you spend the stipend money?

How have you and your parents benefitted from this stipend program?

Did you register your marriage?

In your opinion, what is the appropriate age of marriage?

In your opinion, how many children should women have?

Dignity:

Do you attend any meetings without your husband?

Do any girls seek your advice?

To whom do you give your earned money?

Where are your husband's earnings kept?

Who purchases necessities?

Who makes decision on family affairs?

Do you participate in family discussion?

Do you go outside village alone?

Who makes decision regarding education of your children?

Was your opinion sought at the time of your marriage?

Did you contest in the last union council election? Or any other election? Did you vote in the national election? Were you influenced in casting your vote? By whom?

Up to what level do you want to educate your children?

Up to what level do you want to educate your daughters?

How do you get information regarding what is going on in the country?

Several respondents were used as individual case studies. As I'll discuss below, the length and quantity of these case studies were reduced at the request of the Norwegian Embassy, who requested that less qualitative data be included in the final draft. This is evidenced in the difference between a preliminary draft, and the final draft, as well as in a correspondence between the Embassy and Pathmark Consultants (Bery and Hasle, "Dear Mr. Mowla," November 28, 2000). Even with the edits, this report remains the most extensive ethnographic data from the history of the FSP. The final report of these case studies uses few quotes, and are mostly narrative.

The following excerpts from case studies, which are written as narrative tales by Pathmark, attempting to capture the voices of the respondents. Some direct quotes from the girls are included. The original draft of this report included lengthier quotes from the girls themselves, but the final draft was edited to include mostly summary narratives of their conversations, changing the voice significantly. These stories emphasize the importance of the female-focused program as one that does not only incentivize female students to stay in school, but also has encouraged the slow but steady shifting of attitudes towards female rights writ large. It should be noted that for each of the girls in this section, their biographical data includes their names, their fathers names, and their village/upazila/district; mother's name is apparently not important. I will discuss several of these case studies in detail:

First, Samsunnahar, daughter of Md. Shamsul Haque, in Chandpur District. Her parents are poor day-laborers, and she credits the stipend program as the reason she was able to go to school. Her father died while she was in class VI, and she almost dropped out, but the stipend increase with moving to class VII was just enough for her to stay. She “devoted herself to the studies with more enthusiasm and interest...the difficulties had almost been removed. She was capable to manage her education expenses with the stipend money. In class nine, she purchased quality books with the stipend money in order to achieve satisfactory results in the SSC examination. She then married and had a baby, losing the stipend, and stays home looking after the baby at her husband's home. Nevertheless, she still highly desires that someday she will start studying again, to be self-reliant, and to show her baby that education for females is important (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 2). In her own words:

In the past, parents were unwilling to send their daughters to school but nowadays, this attitude has been changed because of the stipend program. People are now more cautious than before on education. They realize that there is no other way to get rid of poverty without proper female education. -Samsunnahar (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 2).

The idea of this shift in parents' attitudes towards supporting female education in order to reduce poverty is a very significant aspect of the FSP, and is frequently evoked throughout this report. This is an important phenomenon that is not captured by more quantitative data focused on enrollments. This changing attitude could contribute to more sustainable gender equality, as part of an ongoing shift in the patriarchal norms in the social fabric of rural Bangladesh. This would take time, of course, and I argue that removing the female focus in 2007 may have stunted this progress.

Next is Ripa Rani Sharker, daughter of Nolini Ranjan Shaker, from Gopalganj District. She was a very bright student, but her brother had to work very hard for them to afford her primary education, because "at that time, [before the stipend] women's education was not encouraged in the society but she fought against it" (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 3). When she reached class six, she began to receive the stipend. Her story, described by Pathmark:

The stipend most of all pushed her mentally, gave her the support that she could study with her own stipend money, which made her a self-dependent person. She is part of a changing concept about women in education. Thirst for education has become a common phenomenon to the Bangladeshi women. They are participating in the activities concerned to build up the nation...women's education is increasing as government has taken steps for providing stipend to the female students. An educated woman can solve many of the society's problems as well as personal problems (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 3).

Ripa Rani Sharker herself spoke of the importance of her education: "a literate mother knows how to build up her child properly and how to increase family income. She wants to educate her children up to a higher level. Now the concept is changing about women in education. If women are educated, they will serve our society" (Ripa Rani Sharker, Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 3). Ripa describes how she, as an educated mother,

will be more likely to send her own children to school. This is an important aspect of the FSP. There are obviously important phenomena related to sustainable gender equality happening beyond the classrooms, which the most widely cited reports do not attempt to capture. I argue that the abrupt change in 2007 was not grounded in these important aspects of change. Just because classroom seats had been filled by 50% females does not mean that gender equality in education had been achieved, nor did it indicate that it would continue.

Next, Rehana Parvenn, father deceased, Gopalganj District. Rehana began receiving the stipend in class six, but her father, a poor farmer, died of a heart attack. “She was almost undone at that time, but reception of the stipend was a ray of hope, which encouraged her mother to let her study” (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 11). The narrative explains that Rehana finished school through her BA degree, grateful for the stipend throughout. She married a man who loved her for her educational qualification, and no dowry was given to her husband due to her education. Her father-in-law wanted dowry, but her husband denied his hopes and explained that an educated wife was a dowry itself. Rehana felt great pride for this (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 11).

The pride that Rehana felt and expressed is a very important aspect of participation in the FSP program, and was part of broader shifts towards greater gender equality. During these years of the FSP, females were the sole recipients of the stipend, and every single female had the opportunity to qualify. This universal approach had the ability to be inclusive, and contribute to large-scale shifts in the perceptions of female education and worth. When this approach was abandoned and the SESP began making stipends available only to the poorest students in each school, I argue that this female-

focused momentum was lost. With the focus on poverty, the pride felt by recipients would undergo a significant shift, possibility even moving into a space of stigma and shame, as later reports would document. This completely changed the possibility of pride for universal female education. The Pathmark narration of Rehana's life continues:

Rehana Parvenn now has a job. Stipend increased her status as she could continue her study, and her job is now a symbol of prestige in the society. She plays the role of catalyst to the rural women for health and family program. She sits in on local elite meetings, government extension agents, etc. They respect her as an educated woman of the society. She feels pleasure and pride when she sits in on meetings. (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 11).

In her own words:

This is the empowerment I received from my education background – and that is why I believe my stipend played a significant role as a root of my achievement. As I am educated I can easily communicate with the health messages and disseminate it among my community.” (Rehana Parvenn, Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 11).

Rehana credits her ability to receive an education to the stipend project, and feels that her education makes her a “symbol of prestige in the society.” She “feels pride,” for her role in the community, and recognizes that she has achieved a great deal. She highlights the importance of these feelings she has about herself, and recognizes that her family and community respect her for these same reasons. These are incredibly important phenomenon happening outside the classroom, and this report attempts to represent these important shifts both in women's own self-esteem, and the ways that she is regarded by her community. These sentiments are data that could help policy-makers measure and understand the ways the abstract concept of “empowerment” may be an outcome of participation in the program.

Lastly, Tahmina, daughter of Nurul Islam from Chandpur District. She was born to a very poor landless family, and was going to drop out class VIII, and was instead "waiting for the final goal of a common Bangladeshi girl—preparing for father in law's house" (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 9). Instead, she began to receive the stipend, and was able to stay in school through her HSC examination. Pathmark highlights this contrast-- between education and early marriage—and credits the stipend for allowing Tahmina to stay in school and avoid the inevitable marriage that would come otherwise. Another respondent, Hasina, was not able to stay in school and instead married very young, and Pathmark engages her story as part of a wider issues of structural violence against women. The position of the Pathmark report on women's education and early marriage is made very clear through these narrations. In this sense, the autonomy of Pathmark coupled with the narration-style case study makes the reporting vulnerable to the positions of those doing the reporting.

Pathmark narrates other important aspects of Tahmina's story as follows:

Due to the stipend program, women are accepted in different jobs, their decision-making capacity has been increased, they can play their new role in socio-cultural forums. Tahmina got education with the stipend, and now the community respects her, she is posed with the feature of an educated woman. She reads the newspaper every day and disseminates the highlighted stories to women cooperative members. Modern knowledge is transmitted to her community through her power bestowed by education. They can understand and fight local problems. Reception of stipend was a ray of hope. She is also a member of a local women's association (Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 9).

Pathmark credits the stipend for allowing Tahmina to stay in school, notes that with her education has come respect from her community, literacy, access to news, and modern knowledge. Tahmina is even able to support other members of the community to engage with local political issues, and empower them to fight back. In her own words:

Due to the introduction of the stipend program, women are playing a political and social role...in the last local election, I along with other literate women played an important role in selecting the leaders who could take action for our own interests. Women are able to play their political and social role in Union Parishad. I spread modern thinking among my people...this sharing of information empowered us so we can fight for our local problems (Tahmina, Pathmark 2001, Annex 3: 9)

In this interview, Tahamina articulates real aspects of her life and her role in the community that speak to the blanket objective of "female empowerment." This type of data collection and reporting is crucial for understanding what the experience of receiving the stipend has been, and in what ways it may be contributing to gender equality outside of the classroom. This is real data that can contribute to understanding how policies are playing out on the ground, and provide real place-based substance to the abstract concept of empowerment. As described in the empowerment section above, the theoretical framework within which gender subordination may be best transformed is through concrete and sustainable changes such as supporting collective political mobilization (Sen and Grown: 1987). That is exactly what Tahamina is describing, in her own words. This kind of data is not collected or represented in most FSP evaluations, but is fundamental in evaluating in what ways increased female enrollment in secondary schools may be contributing to wider goals of female empowerment.

While I do argue that these qualitative findings are extremely valuable to understanding the complicated experience of participating in the FSP, I also argue that the specific methodological tools used to collect this data were vulnerable to influence from various parties involved in data collection. While I did not interact directly with anyone who produced this Pathmark report, I point to aspects of their methods which could be interpreted as less rigorous.

For example, the narrations of some individual case studies are used project up to nation-wide systemic injustices. Here I look at the story of Hasina. Her narration, by Pathmark, explains that she was born poor, and the stipend was not available when she was of school age. Instead of going to school, she got married. Now, as a mother, she is able to send her daughters to school because of the stipend program. She is described as feeling very proud of her daughters, and hopes that they will graduate secondary school and possibly get jobs in garments factories. The narration continues: “this stipend was not only a financial support, it was a symbol of encouragement and recognition of women’s rights to get educated” (Pathmark 2001 Annex 3: 13). While statements like these may be very accurate, such strong claims made so frequently in the case study narrations leave the reader with the sense that in the process of transcription and translation, some sentiments regarding systemic realities may have been projected, as opposed to clearly articulated by the individual women. The quotes from the women themselves certainly point towards these broad changes in the social structure of Bangladesh, but the narrations seem to include analysis and projection more than is appropriate for a case study.

This is clear again in Hasina’s story, as the narration points to “the inner urge, sufferings and frustration for unmet thirst for education for a housewife like Hasina has the same story line prevailing in all of rural Bangladesh” (Pathmark 2001: 38). Again, this may point to very real feelings and experiences shared by many Bangladeshi women, but including it as part of Hasina’s story seems to reveal a bias from those involved in report. Rather than keeping the case studies filled primarily with the interviewee’s voices, the narrations leave much room for interpretation and projection. In this case, Hasina’s

experience is tied to the structural violence and patriarchal oppression of women across Bangladesh. While possibly not untrue, drawing this conclusion within a case study is projecting individual women's experiences as representative of nationwide injustice. In several sections of several case studies, such as Hasina's, the narrations of individual women read as though the women themselves each pointed to systemic injustice. While the connections are completely valid, and even important, they may be better suited for an analysis than within case studies themselves.

Such aspects of this kind of report have likely contributed to the international development community's reluctance to value them. I argue, however, that the data are still extremely relevant, even if interpreted with biases in mind.

As described above, the reporting conducted by the local firm is rich with ethnographic data, which I argue could be useful towards understanding the phenomenon of "empowerment" experienced by women who receive the stipend. The qualitative findings tell a very strong story supporting the female-focused project, exemplifying how the stipend builds confidence and a sense of autonomy among the girls that goes far beyond financial stability or clear developmental benchmarks. These stories are rich in accounting for experience in a way not captured by numbers. These stories speak to the dilution of pervasive patriarchal practices and the slow but steady empowerment of women. The pages represent the pride Bangladeshis exhibit when discussing the FSP.

Such sentiments were echoed by Ministry staff throughout my time in the office. Despite the fact that the FSP was replaced by the SESP eight years prior to my time there, the office still refers to the stipend as the "female stipend project" (personal communication, December 10, 2012). Ministry officials and staff are clearly extremely

proud of the female-focus, which is indeed still included as an objective of the SESP, even though the actual administration and targeting mechanisms of the SESP are focused on poor students, both male and female. When I first began to compile an understanding of how the FSP worked, and how the SESP programs are currently functioning, I would ask Ministry staff how exactly the SESP was still able to prioritize women. Consistently, my informants would become visibly disappointed, and admit that the actual functioning of the stipend project has gotten more complicated, and females are no longer so easily included. Often, these conversations would jump back to fond recollections about how well the FSP operated: the ways bankers traveled to different villages to administer the girls' checkbooks and withdrawals, and the pride felt by parents who could afford to send their daughters to school for the first time (personal communication, January 14, 2013). Indeed, it is clear that the female-focus was a key component of both the administration and the lived experience of the stipend project, as expressed by administrators and participants.

When a first draft of this report was complete, Pathmark passed it along to the Norwegian Embassy, as part of the process ascribed by NORAD. This first draft was heavy with anecdotal evidence, long individual case studies, and rambling testimonials that paint a picture of how the stipend project has affected local girls and their families. As discussed above, this data does not all follow a similar format, and much is written in a conversational and honest tone that often conjures emotions in the reader, and sometimes relies heavily on heartbreaking tales as a tool for impact. As will be discussed below, the Norwegian Embassy requested that much of this be edited down, and the final version of the report excludes much of the interview text within the case studies. For

instance, the case studies discussed above were originally 2-3 pages in length in the first draft, and included several paragraphs of women's voices. These were substantially cut for the final draft.

For example, the following quote were included in the original draft, but not the final draft. This is Hasina Begum, who had to drop out of school when her father forced her to get married. The stipend project was not available when she was of school age. She discusses that her daughters do use the stipend and go to school:

This stipend was not only a financial support, it was a symbol of encouragement and recognition of women's rights to get educated. After a few years, when my daughter was reading in class VIII, my husband wanted her to get married. I stood against his wish. I did not want my daughter to go the way I had to. Instead of all his attempts my husband did not succeed. Now my daughters are studying for HSC examination. I believe they will lead their life independently and will be able to enjoy full human rights. So this stipend was a blessing in my life (Hasina Begum, Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 8).

As discussed above, this ethnographic data could be very useful in trying to understand the lived experience of the FSP program, and especially the ways that it is contributing to improvements outside the classroom, such as "women's rights," and "encouragement" for women.

The Norwegian Embassy, upon reading the first draft of this report, wrote a formal letter back to Pathmark, requesting certain edits: "based on the wealth of qualitative data, please edit findings and be more precise" (2001: 1). Here, the influences of the global reliance on qualitative data, and corresponding tendency to keep qualitative findings to a relative minimum, is able to be enacted through official conversation between a Northern embassy and a local firm. This one simple request, to make data more precise and less qualitative, strips important texture from the ethnographically-rich report, and produces a product that is more legible to donors, more readily streamlined to

simplified data, and importantly, sterilized in such a way that it becomes open to the stricter design features of pro-poor CCTs. By removing several ethnographic accounts of female stipend recipient experiences, much of the potential for understanding the lived experiences of the recipients is lost. Certainly these understandings could help assess the program's ability to contribute to "female empowerment," but much was lost in the editing of the report. Nonetheless, even with the reduction in qualitative findings, this final report from Pathmark (2001) remains vastly different from those produced more directly by global institutions, as will be examined below.

This report represents a space mitigated by several perspectives: those of NORAD, Pathmark, GOB, and many beneficiary voices. This report represents a balance of agendas and positionalities; a snapshot of the FSP six years before it was reconfigured to the SESP. Importantly, this was the second-to-last report on the FSP or SESP ever commissioned from Pathmark.

This report is unique in the extent of qualitative methods and analysis that are presented; most of the reports on the FSP are heavily based on quantitative data, as will be explored below. In the case of the FSP, I argue that local reporting was less restricted by international expectations of measurability and reliance on numbers and this left open the possibility for collecting more place-based information – in this case, the participants' feelings and experiences associated with pride, empowerment, and dignity. I argue that this shows the value of conducting, supporting, and publishing qualitative research on the FSP. Further, in interrogating the 2007 transition from the FSP to the SESP, I argue that an emphasis on qualitative and mixed-methods data could have contributed to better-informed decision-making around this significant change. Without the inclusion of

ethnographic stories of experiences, understandings of the program performance of the FSP were reduced to measurable outcome indicators, which came to represent development truths of success that obscure more complicated phenomenon experienced on the ground.

Despite the wealth of ethnographic data produced by Pathmark, I argue that decision-making around the FSP and SESP relied largely upon reports produced by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and their international consultancy firms. The majority of the data the Ministry keeps on file, all in English, are produced by these outfits. The Pathmark reports, including the one discussed above, are considered supplementary. Important to this understanding, this rich 2001 Pathmark report was not cited by any World Bank or ADB reports that outlined the new SESP program and its suggested merits. When I discussed the report above (Pathmark 2001) with ADB-hired consultants from the firm Grontmij, they described the report as lengthy, cumbersome, and poorly translated. There was a sense that the local reporting was not given nearly as much credibility as those produced by international firms (personal communication, May 8, 2017). This dismisses the importance of local knowledge, and local methodology, which is more responsive to nuances in how programs are being experienced. Conversations I had in the Ministry and in visiting consultants indicate that international reporting is given more credibility overall, and more power within decision-making around administrative changes. This, I argue, is a fundamental reason why the change from the FSP to SESP was made quickly, and with little regard for the consequences associated with the significant shift in its target population.

5.2 Patriarchy Threatened

The Pathmark (2001) report is also valuable in understanding aspects of the 2007 change from the FSP to the SESP. As explained in previous Chapters, during the final years of the universal-female FSP, many classrooms had become 50-60% female. This is largely considered a very positive outcome of the FSP, and this very statistic is often evoked to celebrate the FSP as an unqualified success. It is also possible, however, that this breakdown may have been perceived as a “reverse gender gap,” and could have contributed to the decision to change the female-focused program.

The Pathmark (2001) report captures some villagers’ concerns surrounding the rising enrollment of females, and the corresponding shrinking representation of males in the classroom. This could have set off an alarm: were females overtaking males in education? Would the education of females complicate marriage arrangements? Is patriarchy changing too quickly? Following the report, focus group discussions did elicit an anxiety surrounding the exclusion of boys. Community members and teachers were asked:

What do you think about the fact that girls are getting stipend while boys are not getting stipend under this program?
At present only girls get stipend. What is your opinion about exclusion of boys from the stipend program? (Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 1).

Of the 14 ‘community leaders,’ ‘ordinary community persons,’ and ‘girl beneficiaries’ asked these questions, three responded in ways that represented an anxiety around the continued “exclusion” of boys:

“Boys should not be deprived of the stipend facilities” (community leader, Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 3).
“Boys should get stipend because the boys despair when the girl villagers get the stipend” (ordinary community person, Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 8).
“As boys do not get stipend it has serious bad impact in the society” (beneficiary girl, Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 18).

While the majority of the respondents (11 of 14) did not indicate that boys should start to receive the stipend, these three voices are pointing to a very real anxiety around the female focus. The report does not analyze these results at all, but I posit that the sentiments reflect concerns surrounding the perceptions of both general and specific threats to the patriarchal social fabric of rural Bangladesh. Rates of early marriage and fertility were declining during these years, which were categorically considered successful outcomes of the FSP, but were not necessarily completely welcomed by all Bangladeshis. With girls' enrollment surpassing that of boys, concerns surrounding arranged marriages for the increasing numbers of educated girls could have felt a threat to traditional arrangements.

A beneficiary girl responded that the exclusion of boys had “serious bad impact on the society” (Pathmark 2001, Annex 2: 18). That is a very strong sentiment, and that dynamic should be investigated. Was she treated differently by her male peers because she was receiving the stipend and they were not? Was her family concerned about arranging her marriage? Were her siblings or neighbors resentful of her? Were the gender power dynamics in households shifting in ways that triggered concern? Was there fear that educated women would begin to occupy male workplaces? Without privileging voices like the above, and designing further research to probe into this sentiment, it remains unclear. I argue that this kind of data, attempting to capture the real experience of being an object of this development program, is very useful in designing the ways that the program will be carried forward.

I also find the questions probing into this gender aspect of the FSP to be a bit leading, and their framing is relevant. Asking respondents how they felt about the

“exclusion of boys” indicates a negation action being brought upon boys, where the FSP was not designed to exclude boys, but to include girls. It would be as though a question about affirmative action in the United States asked how one felt about the “exclusion of white people” from the affirmative action program. Affirmative action, like the FSP, was designed to address deeply-rooted structural injustices by creating more access and opportunity for a subordinate or minority group, which should not be understood as excluding the dominant or majority group.

Nevertheless, donors and international development institutions were aware that classrooms had largely achieved gender parity (at the moment), and shifted focus in 2007. At this point, Bangladesh had supposedly achieved its Millennium Development Goal 3A of “gender parity in education” ahead of time, and with this box checked off, it was time to move onto the next intervention. According to a World Bank Press Release, “World Bank Helps Bangladesh Improve Secondary Education, Benefiting 13 Million Students,” the Bank had been supporting the secondary education sector since 1993, “through an innovative and globally renowned stipend project that dramatically increased girls’ enrollment. Today, Bangladesh is among the few low and low middle-income countries to have achieved gender parity in secondary education. The next challenge is to...ensure that poor children, both boys and girls, complete grade 12” (Qimiao Fan, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, from www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/12/18/world-bank-helps-bangladesh-improve-secondary-education-benefiting-13-million-students, retrieved 2/2/18).

Despite the many Bangladeshi respondents’ attachment to the female-focus, as projected in the lengthy Pathmark (2001) report, a perception of successful completion

was used to justify switching to a new target population. A snapshot of classroom parity should not be understood to indicate broader goals of empowerment and equality, but in the case of technologies of development, they often do.

By 2005, discussions in the Ministry of Education began to point towards including boys in the stipend project. Pointing towards the 50-60% of females in classrooms, the Ministry claimed the FSP could be considered a success. Unfortunately, this paid no mind to the quality of education, female outcomes after graduation, shifting attitudes towards gender equality, or the obvious possibility of widespread female drop out without the universal stipend availability. Nor did this major change outline the administrative difficulties that would arise with a pro-poor targeting scheme, especially problematic in the Bangladeshi context, as outlined in Chapter 4. In fact, the Pathmark (2001) report had estimated the percentage of girls who would drop out of the stipend were removed, with nearly one in five in class ten saying they would be forced to do so and similar numbers from class six onwards:

Class	Percent that would drop out
vi	15.8%
vii	17.2%
viii	27.8%
ix	11.7%
x	19.6%

In the looming shift from FSP to SESP, no regard was given to the obvious impact this change would have upon females. Several government employees bemoaned the 2007 transition, explaining to me that the change should have at least allowed girls receiving the stipend to be grandfathered into the program until graduation. As discussed

in Chapter 4, my key informants in the Ministry explained that many girls dropped out in the 2007 change, and it was disappointing, but not widely discussed. Throughout my many conversations over several months inquiring into the change, it became clear that there was a very strong attachment to the FSP. Government employees, and community members were very proud of the female-focused project. There was pride around the feeling that the program was homegrown, and immense satisfaction around the rising status of females. The transition was discussed as inevitable, but undesirable.

As noted in Chapter 4, several World Bank reports had pointed to the FSP as “undeniably successful” (Raynor & Wesson 2006) and “most impressive” (Hossain 2010). Two years after the change to the SESP, however, one World Bank report (2009) claims that “except for Bangladesh, the CCT programs for which we have targeting outcomes have sharply progressive incidence” (84). This publication does not elaborate on the specific reasons why the Bangladesh CCT was considered regressive, but one can guess that it is simply because it did not include poor boys. The World Bank pointed specifically to the FSP as a regressive “failure by standards of social assistance” (39). Claiming that the FSP was regressive for not including boys seems misrepresentative, but perhaps this was an attempt to retroactively justify the significant changes made from the FSP to the SESP.

6. Performance of international reporting - the World Bank and Sweco evaluate FSP

Answering these questions requires delving into the various ways in which World Bank and Sweco evaluation and reporting was commissioned, conducted, and represented, tracing the evolving tools with which success has been measured and

documented. By unpacking the data presented in these reports, I will demonstrate how these surveys produce knowledge and contribute to ongoing shifts in best practice interventions. I will demonstrate how international reporting protocols, data tables, and measurement indicators in best practice interventions both reflect the broader discourse of development interventions and do work in directing the trajectory of such practices. The following section turns to the quantitative spaces of these reports, which I argue had more power in producing understandings of the performance of the FSP. Throughout, the performance of these international reports will also be examined, compared and contrasted to those of Pathmark, as detailed in the preceding section. My intention is to demonstrate that the very structure and approach of these reports, that is, the questions that were asked, dictate how outcomes of success are presented, understood, and built upon. The work of evaluations themselves help construct powerful truths and sets of knowledge that are very material in the proliferation of best practice interventions.

In this section, I will first analyze a Sweco (2005) report alongside the Millennium Development Goals, and World Bank webpages, and will then analyze the World Bank's report that is most comprehensive and widest in scope: the "Implementation Completion Reports."

Before analyzing the reports, I will briefly address a couple noteworthy aspects of the process through which consultant firms are selected by the ADB and WB. First, call for proposals is issued, and firms compile application with specific team members. Team members' credentials are described at length, pointing to the specific ways each member contributes to the team. These indicators are very technical: experience with conditional cash transfer program evaluation, proxy means testing, data analysis, regression analysis,

software skills, etc. Each of these indicators are assigned a varying degree of points, depending on the perceived importance of the skill involved. Firms often pull in outside consultants to strengthen their applications, as needed, to maximize total team points. What is missing from these rubrics of criteria are any place-based, contextualized, culturally-sensitive indicators. There are no points awarded for familiarity with Bangladeshi culture, experience in rural agrarian villages, knowledge of the Bangla language, or prior work history in a Muslim-majority country. This underscores the growing emphasis on the technical and systematic ways of doing development, and supports the world-is-flat epistemology that serves as the basis for the growth and legitimacy of technologies of development.

The changes made from the FSP to the SESP are an important case study in understanding how certain aspects of development practices have changed, and especially those related to conceptualizing and measuring success towards best practices. As described above, there has been a steady rise in results-based approaches, and a corresponding reliance on demonstrated impact. Programs are increasingly measurable, with goal-oriented and results-based designs. The introduction of the Millennium Development Goals is indicative of this shift, and play a key role in the moment of change for the stipend projects in Bangladesh.

The Millennium Development Goals were introduced in 2000, at “the largest gathering of world leaders in history,” during which certain “time-bound and quantifiable targets for addressing extreme poverty” were agreed upon (from <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>, retrieved June 17, 2017). Among these goals

was to eliminate gender disparity in secondary education, as part of Goal 3: Target 4:

Indicator 9, as shown below:

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Indicators:

9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education

10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old

11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

(from <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>, retrieved June 17, 2017)

The very conceptualization of these goals as the dominant measures of development and progress indicate the pervasiveness of quantifiable understandings of success. In my particular case, the supposed moment of attainment of a third-tier goal was presented as a World Bank headline representing conclusive success in the attainment of gender parity:

RESULTS: Girl's enrollment in secondary schools in Bangladesh jumped to 3.9 million in 2005, from 1.1 million in 1991, including an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas. This has enabled Bangladesh to achieve one of its Millennium Development Goals ahead of time—gender parity in education. (From documents.worldbank.org, originally published 2007, retrieved June 17, 2017).

The compelling statistics is used to create a truth about a development success; the rise in female enrollment between a certain time period paints one very specific understanding of reality: that the rate of increased female enrollment has fully achieved an important aspect of gender equality. There is the sense that this achievement is full, complete, and stable, rendering invisible any existing complicated realities in the way this change has been experienced both in and outside the classroom, and implying that the success towards female empowerment is irreversible.

The World Bank projects this story of success through numbers and images, which construct a truth. In the following image, featured alongside a World Bank headline “Stipends Triple Girls [SIC] Access to School,” a school-age girl is shown writing on a slate in what one assumes to be a government school. This image is featured prominently on the webpage, serving to promote the program and the success as a visual rhetoric. Declaring success, and connecting the statistics to a picture, tells a promotional story about the successful completion of an important project. Of note, this image was original published in 2007, right when the shift from the FSP to SESP removed the female-focus. It is as though this moment in time is projected as having fully achieved gender parity, and the work towards female empowerment is no longer necessary.

Figure 5.2: Visual Rhetoric from the World Bank



(From documents.worldbank.org, originally published 2007, retrieved June 17, 2017)

Indeed, within the spaces of enumerating goals, indicators, and outcomes, international development institutions point to increased enrollment and SSC exam passing rates as a sweeping indication of success towards broader ideas of gender equality. In Sweco’s final report on their 2005 analysis of certain aspects of the FSP

program, the “facilitation and acceleration of a smooth transition to a more gender-sensitive and equitable society in rural Bangladesh” was listed as a “super goal” (Carl Bro International 2005: 3). To demonstrate progress towards this goal, Sweco relies solely upon SSC results supplied by BANBEIS, highlighting the steady increase of percentage of SSC passing students that are females (see Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1: SSC Results from 1996-2005

Year	Appeared		Passed		% of Pass	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
1996	464,267	196,781	197,811	69,236	42.6	35.2
1997	716,865	303,824	368,803	149,782	51.4	49.3
1998	722,300	307,860	346,435	139,107	48.0	45.2
1999	837,220	362,875	457,252	194,485	54.6	53.6
2000	918,045	402,873	381,762	161,745	41.6	40.1
2001	786,220	334,255	276,903	112,868	35.22	33.71
2002	1,005,937	441,024	408,979	166,349	40.66	37.72
2003	921,024	409,623	330,766	137,640	35.91	33.60
2004	756,387	341,594	363,270	157,058	48.03	45.98
2005	751,421	347,815	394,993	173,468	52.57	49.87

(Reproduced from Final Draft Report, Promote, Sweco, 2005)

As shown in the table, the percentage of passing SSC students who were female fluctuated from 33.6 to 53.6, and did not follow a strictly linear increase. In fact, the lowest year was 2003, during which only 33.6% of passing students were females. This is just four years before the removal of the change to the SESP, and although the percentage increased in 2004 and 2005, those are shaky grounds upon which to draw conclusions surrounding lasting change in rates of success for females in secondary school. Even if

numbers could be relied upon to represent complicated realities on the ground, these numbers provide weak evidence.

This same section of the Sweco report notes that although “it is difficult to assess the attitudes of girls towards school in absolute terms, using certain indicators, we can make solid inferences regarding the attitudes of girls and boys” (Final Draft Report, Promote, Sweco, 2005: 10). This assertion is not supported by further evidence, or details of what indicators are used and inferences drawn. The text both acknowledges that it is difficult to assess the attitudes of girls (with their methodologies), and claims to be doing just that.

To be sure, as explained above, there are no conclusively best ways to measure changes in practices of “female empowerment” and “gender equality,” but they certainly cannot be measured by simple percentages of examination passes. Such measures render invisible the experiences of the girls on the stipend, and do not seek to understand aspects of their lived experiences such as how they were treated by their teachers and peers, whether their education lead to any real changes in their communities’ attitudes towards them, how their household dynamics shifted, and whether they experienced more employment opportunities after completing school. During my time in Bangladesh, these were the aspects of the lived experiences that students, teachers, and parents talked about most. Yes, it was recognized that overall, there was an increase in female enrollment, but that was not the focus of the villagers’ understanding of the FSP. As explained alongside the Pathmark Report above, the beneficiaries’ stories of their own experiences focused on aspects of their lives and identities outside that classroom that were in flux.

This international reporting relies on locally-collected data, primarily collected and published through BANBEIS, and is rarely supplemented with qualitative data. This is in stark contrast to the evaluation and reporting of Pathmark, as explained above, which attempts to supplement numerical findings with rich qualitative data, albeit methodologically scattered. Both entities are relying on largely the same repository of qualitative data, but the international reporting uses it to extrapolate powerful narratives and jargon-laden discourses, whereas Pathmark adds extensive, though imperfect, qualitative fieldwork. The BANEBIS data is used in particular ways, and the World Bank's narratives created around these numbers create powerful understandings; projections of unqualified success based upon these numbers, which are widely reproduced through headlines on their webpages and materials without further context. These constructed stories of success and development truths then have significant implications upon how development interventions will be carried forward.

As understood through international reports and publications, Bangladesh had achieved gender parity in education by 2007, largely through the FSP. The logic then followed that focus could switch to the next vulnerable constituency on the World Bank's agenda, the poor.

The World Bank's most comprehensive report on the FSP is its 2003 "Implementation Completion Reports." The stated goals of these reports are twofold: "first, to ensure the integrity of the Bank's self-evaluation process, and to verify that the Bank's work is producing the expected results, and second, to help develop improved directions, policies, and procedures through the dissemination of lessons drawn from experience" (World Bank PPAR 2003: 2).

The main goal, therefore, is to monitor and evaluate the project's performance, as understood through the lens of that project's stated goals. As such, both the original project goals and the evaluation report are conducted by World Bank officials, a situation that contributes to the ongoing trend of results-driven interventions. This first part of the evaluation's agenda is to confirm that the project is performing as expected. In this way, the evaluation is conducted within the paradigm of the Bank's understanding of success. By limiting the range of performance metrics, this keeps the legibility of program success closed to broader understanding and interrogation. In so doing, the World Bank framed success in ways that excluded other definitions. Objectives, and corresponding evaluations, are defined in strictly numerical terms: total numbers of enrolled females and percentage increases of females passing exams. These reports do not open the space for understanding what these experiences meant for the objects of development; instead, the objects matter only in that they are counted.

Such reports are conducted annually by the Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (OED) on about 25 percent of the Bank's operations. In selecting which projects will be evaluated, the Bank gives preference to those that are innovative, large, or complex, and those that are likely to generate important lessons. The program was nationwide, innovative, and had achieved noteworthy success in terms of female education indicators: enrollment, retention, and pass rates. Approaching a project with the intention of crafting important lessons learned, however, can confine the evaluation to certain predetermined outcome indicators. In this case, this report framed gender and success in particular ways, which has profound impact on how simplified lessons for best practice will be understood and represented. This speaks to Scott's (1999) discussion of

the process of simplification, reducing populations to be known only by certain indicators. In this way, by outing the agenda and measuring numbers only within that space, the World Bank was able to recreate certain images of the female students, rather than seek to describe their actual lived realities.

These reports contribute to larger-scope Project Performance Assessment Report (PPAR), which are based on a review of the aforementioned Implementation Completion Report and fieldwork conducted by OED. PPARs are a compilation of relevant project files and other documents, interviews, and “in most cases a visit to the borrowing country for onsite discussions with project staff and beneficiaries” (World Bank 2003). After a multi-step approval process internal to the Bank, the PPAR is sent to the borrower for review, and the borrowers' comments are attached to the document that is sent to the Bank's Board of Executive Directors. PPARs have followed this format since 1985. This format, which places the borrower's voice as a footnote to the completed project, forecloses any possibilities of true conversation, reflection, and collaborative articulation of success. In this way, the Bank continues to dictate the ways in which projects are understood, measured, and carried forward, both in particular instances, and in the ways these reports contribute to lessons learned, which are intended to be applied elsewhere.

This particular PPAR, evaluating the FSP in 2002-2003, is based upon a compilation of the Implementation Completion Report (ICR), Staff Appraisal Report (SAR), Credit Agreement for the project, and project files. An OED mission visited Bangladesh in June 2002 to conduct fieldwork to collect other pertinent information. World Bank staff visited 12 schools on this mission, and interviewed two government employees. The scope of

this fieldwork is in contrast to the Pathmark Study (2001) detailed above, in which 140 schools were visited. The relatively small data sample minimizes the importance of field-based and qualitative data, and places larger importance on the quantitative data points reproduced from previously published project documents.

The story this report tells represents just one intervention into the complicated reality of the FSP. The World Bank serves as the author of these project documents and the corresponding PPAR, and so the particular facets of the World Bank's understanding of and agenda towards the FSP is readily apparent. By way of summary, the PPAR describes the FSP as follows:

This complex, innovative, and highly acclaimed project gave tuition and stipends to all girls in low-literacy areas of Bangladesh to help those in the poorest areas attend secondary school and graduate from grade 10. Over the life of the project, enrollments of girls in supported schools more than doubled, and overall about 1.6 million girls received stipends. Also, donor and government funds helped expand stipend awards to girls in all rural areas, an event that has greatly increased access to secondary schools in rural areas.

This report renders invisible particular aspects of FPS operations and outcomes, the obscuring of which has profound impact on how the project was understood and carried forward. The entire history of the FSP project is represented by the increase in enrollment, and does not attempt to offer a more comprehensive picture of what this increase has meant on the ground. In conducting the field study component of the PPAR (2003), the World Bank staff visited 12 schools. One problem with the program, as cited in the final PPAR, is that official school reports claim that 90 percent of students attended at least 75 percent of the time, but repeated classroom observations by Bank missions in various schools showed attendance at 50-60 percent of enrollments, and some classrooms had no space or teachers to accommodate the students enrolled. Here, the

report begins to detail challenges and inconsistencies with the program and points to “ghost beneficiaries” as a key problem. While indeed there may be incentives for headmasters to “cook the books” to allow more beneficiaries to remain qualified, the PPAR’s methodology and response are questionable. The problem is identified based on just 12 schools, a sample so small it cannot be seen as representative of the nationwide-program. Further, the report notes in a footnote that “admittedly, better than-average schools were probably sampled, because the mission could only travel about 100 kilometers from Dhaka, in areas that are somewhat better off than more rural parts of the country” (PPAR 2003). Regardless, this 2003 report concludes that schools are overstating student enrollments to maximize tuition revenues. Yet the program was changed a few years later towards an administration system in which the entire sum of program money (tuition and stipend) is transferred directly to headmasters, empowering them as extensions of the state, granting them more decision-making power, and sending the money through their hands. Given that the issues of “ghost beneficiaries” and “cooked books” are identified as key problems, why wouldn’t the next iteration of the project work to address and mitigate this, or at the very least, not restructure in a way that could exacerbate it? A Bank-financed study estimated financial leakage in 2003 of stipends at 30 percent, yet the Bank-led decision in 2007 would channel more funds through those leaky pipes. The usefulness of findings such as this, as shared in the 2003 PPAR, seems relevant in regard to learning lessons for future program changes, yet future program changes reflect a contradictory logic.

The report outlines additional findings that could have led to improved program design and administration, yet none of them seem to have informed the decisions

surrounding the major 2007 program change. First, it was found that stipend amounts were too small to truly cover school related expenses, and therefore some girls were dropping out and forfeiting the stipend in order to work. Indeed, as explained in Chapter 4, the amount of the stipend itself is quite low, both in relation to overall household expenditure and as compared to other education stipend programs globally. Monthly stipends were as low as 60 taka per month (less than \$1 USD). The amount of the FSP stipend has not changed since 1994, despite a rise in the costs of transportation, books, uniforms, and tutoring. There would seem to be a strong case and compelling reasoning for increasing the stipend amount, but no such measure was undertaken. The World Bank has been and remains in complete control of the SESP amounts in their project areas since 2007, but the actual stipend amount remains unchanged.

World Bank assessments of the FSP do not attempt to understand how and why the FSP was so successful despite these extremely low stipend amounts. They readily identify that they were low, and consider the program a sweeping success. I argue that much of the success of the program lies in the emphasis on the females focus: the amounts were low, yes, but the intention was explicitly and only to support women. This focus, even with little money attached to it, represented and contributed to important changes pushing against traditions of patriarchy in schools, households, employment, and marriages. These more nuanced understandings of the experiences that came through the FSP are not included in the international reporting of the FSP.

This report then moves into a list of additional specific “procedural difficulties” within the administration of the FSP, yet the World Bank’s subsequent SESP program does not necessarily address these challenges, and may in fact exacerbate them. Again,

the report highlights the possible overstatement of girls' attendance and performance, and possible inflation of grades. The report claims that "several" of the school visits revealed two registries, one for FSP reporting and one for internal use. "Overwriting in attendance registers ranged from 5-88% in 7 of 12 schools visited" (PPAR 2003: 25). Further, the change to the SESP program instituted even more statistic-based conditions for stipend qualification and receipt, which will only further encourage such misrepresentation of data.

Next on the list, the report notes that teachers or headmasters are likely taking commissions from the female students who receive the stipends. Here lies one of the more glaring disconnects between supposed FSP administrative difficulties and SESP program administration. Throughout the life of the FSP, stipend money was transferred directly to female students. The World Bank (PPAR 2003) reports that even with this direct transfer, some portion of stipend money was extracted from females as commission for teachers and headmasters. Rather than addressing this problem structurally, the SESP administration actually shifts stipend transfers directly to headmasters for distribution at their discretion, which clearly allows more room for directing monies away from students.

By way of addressing this practice, in which teachers and headmasters skim money off the stipend program, the World Bank (PPAR 2003) explains that the government often delays the salaries for school employees, so school personnel have little choice. Government employees are accustomed to supplementing their meager salaries by leaking some money away from school programming. Perhaps this can be understood not so much as corruption, but rather as a common practice for survival. In

this way, these development interventions labeled as stipends for the poor are actually knowingly serving a secondary purpose. The implications for this go beyond a mislabeling of purpose, of course. First, it reinforces the practice of government and school employees skimming financial benefits away from students, even though these students and their families have gone to lengths to prove themselves poor in order to qualify. In so doing, the development intervention, which is supported by local, national, and international institutions, relies upon the demonstrated needs of poor students and families, yet does not intervene strictly into this space. Instead, students bear the burden of continually demonstrating need and serving as the subjects of development, both in practice and in reporting. The students, therefore, are subjected to their position within the development scheme, proven and labeled as poor, even though part of their benefit is somewhat knowingly supporting another un-labeled purpose. This undermines the entirety of the development scheme, especially since the administration of the stipend monies was reworked in a way that would directly accommodate this misuse to a larger extent.

This all leads to the question of how the SESP administrative changes were arrived upon, and in what ways the reporting practices leading up to the change created certain narratives and truths about how this development should be carried forward. I argue that the most visible understanding of the FSP are based in the numbers-driven story created by the World Bank and the MDGs. After unpacking the ways that both local and international reporting attempted to assess and demonstrate project performance, I will now argue that the discourse emanating from development expertise, in the form of metrics and best practices, introduced and justified the change from the FSP to the SESP.

7. The Change to a CCT: The Power of Numbers, Discourse, and Technologies of Development

Specifically, the World Bank's representations of the stipend projects have worked to legitimize the role of international institutions and validate and justify the projects' changing trajectory toward a more standardized CCT form. The FSP, a universal female-focused project, was awarded a Gold Star for Development and applauded for achieving one of Bangladesh's Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Gender Parity in Education, well ahead of time (World Bank International Development Association, 2009). The World Bank applauded the FSP for achieving gender parity in education, publishing reports that "Stipends triple girls' access to school," and citing figures such as girl's enrollment in secondary schools in Bangladesh jumped to 3.9 million in 2005, from 1.1 million in 1991, including an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas...girls' enrollment spiked 67 percent in 17 years...female enrollment, as a percentage of total enrollment, increased from 33 percent in 1991 to 48 percent in 1997 and close to 55 percent in 2008...girls pass rates soared, Secondary School Certificate pass rates for girls in the project area increased from 39 percent in 2001 to 62.8 percent in 2008" (from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/848621468218411714/pdf/9278002007Feb2010Box0385367B0PUBLIC.pdf> retrieved April 11, 2017).

By citing these statistics in the same report that praised Bangladesh for achieving part of its MDG ahead of time, these numbers are meant to directly represent promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. By rendering these concepts as technical measurements of enrollment and graduation, the World Bank is able to point to gender

parity in education as a complete and commendable success, and move onto its next technical intervention. It was at this moment that the locally-developed FSP was absorbed and reformulated into a pro-poor CCT, the global standard recognizable in Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Familia in Brazil. In these ways, Bangladesh had been situated as a site for innovation, and a pioneering force in the development world. Around the time that the FSP was changed to the SESP, the World Bank reported that:

The (FSP) program has proven groundbreaking in addressing girls' access to education and is widely recognized as a pioneering undertaking...a number of other countries, learning from the Bangladesh experience, have implemented similar stipend or conditional cash transfer programs with (World Bank) IDA support. Having achieved gender parity at the country level, the Government is now focusing more on reaching economically and geographically disadvantaged girls, as well as poor boys, under a new project—the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project—also supported by IDA. (from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/848621468218411714/Stipends-triple-girls-access-to-school>, retrieved June 11, 2017)

In this report, the World Bank is acknowledging the Government of Bangladesh's work in attaining improved education equality, taking partial credit for this and future achievements, and framing this moment as the perfect time to stretch into new spaces of need, pointing to “economically and geographically disadvantaged girls” and “poor boys.”

Pointing to the FSP as a total success, legitimized by compelling statistics, renders invisible the many complicated ways in which the stipend program was unfolding on the ground, effecting participants in ways not captured by the quantifiable outcomes. Development targets are seen as fixed endpoints, without imagining the possibility of any backwards movement. Rather than addressing shortcomings and critiques, in ways that could deepen and expand any gains in gender empowerment, the World Bank checks off

a box of gender parity and moves into a new space of development innovation. In this way, the development discourse surrounding initiatives in Bangladesh creates the space for the World Bank to continue to heavily influence the trajectory of programs, applaud Bangladesh as a leader in development globally. By so doing, development institutions are framed as responsive to and inclusive of country-led programs.

The report analyzed above was conducted in the years leading up to the 2007 change from the FSP to the SESP. I argue that the strong story of success built by the quantitative reporting that took center stage represented the FSP as no longer necessary, and created the space for the change. Into the space came a more globally-recognizable way of doing education programming, one which is specifically designed around quantitative objectives and outcomes: the CCT, a technology of development.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a technology of development is an expert-designed monetary instrument that pairs certain techniques and knowledge towards a specific end. Microfinance and land-titling are two such technologies which gained momentum in recent decades, and had great impact upon development practices and understandings. Those that become widespread are continually examined and improved upon with the goal of creating models that can be replicated elsewhere for optimal development outcomes. These are then commonly referred to as best practices within development discourse. CCTs are one of the most recent technologies of development to emerge, and have gained the particular momentum associated with becoming a best practice. Nancy Birdsall, president of the Center for Global Development, a nonprofit research group in Washington, claimed that "these programs [CCTs] are as close as you can come to a

magic bullet in development (2006)." This particular discussion was in reference to CCTs in Mexico, which were being held up as replicable models for projects across the globe.

This section follows the discussion of technologies of development presented in Chapter 3, and argues that the momentum and legitimacy carried by CCTs made it possible for a the homegrown nationwide FSP to be completely transformed.

One particular way that technologies of development have become especially prevalent is that they stem not just from powerful actors, but from powerful ways of knowing the world. The World Bank, along with other international financial and development institutions, have become not just sources of financing and assistance, but strong "knowledge spaces," (Griffin 2006: 1) that are able to legitimate particular development programs in ways that they become "development truths" (Lawson 2007). The World Bank in particular has emerged as the absolute global authority in development knowledge. As worked through in Chapter 3, the World Bank began to call itself a knowledge bank during the basic needs era, and rebranded itself thusly under Wolfensohn's presidency. The idea that there is a production of development truths in and beyond the World Bank is widely accepted within development studies, and with this, I argue that the recent rise in metrics-driven policies and expansion of technologies of development led the FSP to change to the SESP.

Goldman (2005: xviii) explains that he undertook his sociological institutional ethnography into the World Bank especially because of this phenomenon; the Bank has become so hegemonic that it has determined the very parameters within which we speak and act in the name of development, despite its own abysmal failures. This institutional ethnography is based in the production of 'green science' inside the World Bank

headquarters, and explores the related practices in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in relation to a particular dam. Based on fieldwork and interviews, the book provides a close examination of the inner workings of the Bank, and its ability to continually grow its reach despite criticism. His main argument centers around the World Bank's ability to continually acquire greater authority and global power despite a poor track record.

Goldman (2005: xiv) believes that this may be the Bank's single most remarkable accomplishment: it has made its worldview, development framework, and data sets those that people around the world choose above all others. Throughout his book, Goldman demonstrates that World Bank loans are made towards development projects due to this image. The Bank is able to sell its knowledge, through technical training, capacity building, measurement and assessment, funding, scalability, and governance.

When the FSP was reconfigured to the CCT model, the administration, measurement, evaluation and reporting of the stipend project was rendered extremely technical. No longer were program practices reflective of the culture of rural Bangladesh, as they had been for the original FSP. Now, administration revolved around the World Bank's proxy means test, evaluation involved jargon, and reporting required quantifiable bottom lines, as described in Chapter 4. With this, the GOB was left little choice but to hire experts to conduct such tasks. When the CCT model was brought in to reconfigure the stipend program, the technical needs involved in its administration and maintenance were not aligned with the GOB's way of doing development. I asked the hired consultants at the Ministry to describe this transition, and the way that their role had changed. One Sweco consultant, hired by the ADB, replied:

It's completely unrealistic to ask Bangladesh to produce so many technical evaluations and reports. The local guys [Pathmark] can't do that...it's not their language. This forces the hiring of consultants...ADB, World Bank, and us [Grontmij]. There's no other way, and it gives the locals very little ownership or involvement, yet they are expected to remain grateful (personal communication, February 11, 2013).

Further, as outlined in Chapter 3, the SESP operations are no longer uniform throughout the country; since 2007, each of the four donors dictates how the stipend will be administered in "their" particular districts. Among other complications, this lack of streamlining means that there are different reporting protocols at different times throughout each school year. Reports have become less qualitative, more quantitative, and more easily packaged for donor legibility and best practice modeling. Such measurability seems to have become a program goal in and of itself. Yet while this appears more readily measurable and understood for quick legibility and replication, it is obviously ill-suited for local Bangladeshi practitioners and consultants. There is a constant need for highly technical measurement and reporting, in various formats, and therefore a constant reliance on hired foreign expertise.

Chapter 6: CCTs as patronizing: Concluding thoughts and future research

While critical development studies are slowly starting to question whether the universal conditionality of CCTs is necessary (see Baird et al 2013), CCTs are still considered credible, legitimate, and necessary poverty reduction and social safety net tools, thanks largely to continued promotion and positive evaluation by the World Bank (see Sugiyama 2011, García and Moore 2012, Ancelovici and Jenson 2013). It is only small, discrete aspects of CCT mechanisms that are being called into question, with the goal of tweaking program design, targeting, and administration, all towards improving the structure of the technology. Lacking from this small but growing critical literature, however, is any work towards questioning the notion of CCTs themselves. There is very little work towards understanding the complicated ways in which CCT programs may subject recipients to restricted agency, weaker forms of citizenship, or patronizing state apparatuses. Here, with my case study in mind, I argue that CCTs as a practice may be problematic, and take into question the very notion of state and non-state institutions requiring certain behaviors be followed in order to attain rights-based social services.

While previous Chapters have detailed the ways in which this particular CCT case study was created and is performing in problematic ways, this concluding thought takes a broader view, taking into question the very idea of assigning conditions to monetary incentives through CCTs, writ large. CCTs, as discussed in Chapter 3, have emerged as a powerful technology of development, as did land tenure, and microfinance. This particular development technology, however, is unlike the others in that the ideological basis for constructing incentives, conditions, and outcomes is rooted in an academic understanding of behavioral economics. This is a significant departure from previous

development technologies, and it further reconstructs program participants into development subjects. I will argue that this conditioning forecloses more democratic and participatory development outcomes. First, I will revisit the behavioral economics basis around which CCTs were first imagined.

In a 2008 World Bank working paper (de Walque), CCTs are explained as relying on the (reliable) principle that behavioral change best occurs when appropriate behaviors are reinforced and rewarded. With careful design, therefore, the use of conditionality can and does encourage healthy behavioral change. The paper notes that although in-depth examination of the necessity of conditionality has been very under-researched, strong evidence supports the continued use of CCT programs for direct impact on health and school outcomes, over time and space. The World Bank's most cited book focusing on CCTs, cited throughout this dissertation (Fiszbein et. al. 2009), explains that "there is also a body of evidence from recent research in behavioral economics that suggests that people often suffer from self-control problems and excessive procrastination, in the sense that their day-to-day behavior is inconsistent with their own long-term attitude toward the future (for example, see O'Donoghue and Rabin 1999: 50)." This particular framing of CCTs, as helping impoverished people who suffer from self-control problems and procrastination, points towards the crux of my argument in line of future research, highlighting that CCTs may enact complicated forms of state paternalism.

A subsequent 2009 World Bank Policy Research Report (Fiszbein, Ariel and Schady) concedes that perhaps in-depth critical and qualitative research is indeed lacking, but nonetheless, "there are, in fact, a number of good reasons for attaching conditions to targeted cash transfers" (46). By continually privileging the "good outcomes" and

underscoring the quantitative evidence supporting measurable development successes, the World Bank reinforces the legitimacy of CCT programs, even though critical studies are lacking.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the World Bank continues to provide overwhelming academic and policy theories to justify the integrity of CCTs as a legitimate, scientific, controlled technology of development. These theoretical underpinnings, paired with highlights of measured outcome data (Aber and Rawlings 2010) create a powerful narrative of CCTs as both well-researched and worthwhile. These academic justifications extend the CCT's original theoretical underpinning as a carefully designed mechanism utilizing understandings of behavioral economics.

Understanding the growth and accessibility of behavioral economics is an important part of understanding the widespread acceptance of CCTs as a technology of development; CCTs are predicated upon the belief that controlling certain incentives can encourage better behaviors, leading to better outcomes. With this pervasive assumption, CCT beneficiaries are subjected to certain forms of control and experience weaker forms of agency and citizenship, in exchange for basic social services.

Now, alongside this ongoing story of praise and success for CCTs around the globe, I point to the ways that a CCT program in New York City has been received differently. New York City Mayor Bloomberg administration's attempted to administer CCTs to certain poor populations from 2007-2010. This pilot program is often considered the first CCT project in a developed country (Ricco 2010). Called "Opportunity NYC: Family rewards," included incentives such as giving \$20 per month to each adult and child who enrolls in Medicaid—a government healthcare program that is already free,

\$25-50 per month to students for attending school, and \$100 to parents who took their children to the dentist. These and other incentives could total up to \$5,000 annually per family (Riccio et. al 2013).

Though there was certainly praise for this program, it was also immediately, this program was met with much criticism. The immediate and swift critique to this CCT in a developed country stands in contrast to the widespread praise of CCTs in the global south. The following excerpts capture such critiques:

Opportunity NYC borders on offensive -- the idea that a person can be bribed into doing better in school or being a better parent...it sort of suggests that poverty is a lifestyle choice, that somehow if we're just given a nudge, that we can choose not to be in this condition, or choose for our children to do better in school, or choose as parents to provide better child care. It comes out of the idea that poor people are almost sort of culturally and inherently dysfunctional. Not because of structural circumstances but because of their own personal failings (Griffith 2009).

Yet for a program modeled on the idea that intergenerational poverty is, at least in part, a "behavioral" problem that can be modified through free-market incentives, there have also been challenges. Unsurprisingly, some behaviors are much easier to change through cash incentives than are others -- in part because poor people don't have much control over the institutions and conditions that shape their lives. Opportunity NYC reflects an understanding of poverty as a cultural problem (Goldstein 2009).

CCT programs are sort of isolated and concentrated interventions that don't change the structure and system that poor people live in (Griffith 2010).

In New York City, almost 50 percent of African American men are not currently employed. We have nearly 200,000 young people who are neither working nor in school...those numbers can't be addressed with incremental incentive programs (Jones 2009).

NYC program will try to buy good parenting (McMahon 2007).

This program assumes that poor New Yorkers are so unable to act in their best interest that they will not even take advantage of an existing, well-publicized government program without the promise of additional short-term cash (Gelinas 2007).

These reactions and critiques among policy-makers, academics, and journalists reflect a very different response to CCTs than that of international programs in developing countries. Immediately, the NYC program was considered by many to be condescending and controversial (Bosman 2010). These responses touch on the idea that CCTs are, by design, patronizing and condescending to targeted poor populations. Agency is constricted, predicated on the idea that policy makers know what is best, and should incentive certain behaviors accordingly. These critiques also point to the ways that CCT programs ignore larger structural and systemic causes for poverty, a notion largely ignored in the global development discourse around technologies of development. Meanwhile, as this US-based program was being critiqued, CCTs underway in developing countries—often propagated by US-based institutions—continued to be praised.

The critical reactions to the NYC CCT program echoes my broader argument seeking to understand CCTs as patronizing, but it is not an argument that has gained any traction in the global development sphere. On the contrary, development institutions in the US have been propagating and celebrating CCTs in the Global South for decades, and continues to do so. My argument aligns with that above, but I ask: why is this question not asked of CCTs happening elsewhere? Why is attention called to this potentially very negative aspect of CCTs only when it is unfolding in the US? How has reporting and measurement for the NYC program different from those elsewhere?

At these point, these questions remain unanswered, and point to a productive line of future research. A very small literature of critical assessments on CCTs is just beginning to reveal the complicated and potentially harmful effects these poverty

reduction schemes may be having on both beneficiary and excluded populations (yet all the while, the World Bank continues to publish papers and reports that further strengthen the narrative of CCTs as effective, altruistic, and worthwhile tools of poverty reduction (see Honorati 2015, Lindhert 2014). While most critical publications focus on the quantifiable ways that CCTs are performing, and perhaps highlight the need to improve targeting methods, more efficiently administer benefits, or better structure transfers towards longer-term outcomes, a few pieces have emerged which harshly critique the very notion of conditioning cash transfers, and argue that the effects upon recipients may be actually be largely negative. I situate my argument alongside these emerging critiques, connecting them to my case study and to the ways in which the NYC program has been received.

There have been exactly two such scholarly articles, which are critical of the fundamental mechanism of CCTs. Ruckert (2009) and Freeland (2007) argue that CCTs, as development of technology, are actually cruel and punitive. These two articles have been cited 23 and 74 times, respectively (googlescholar.com, retrieved July 27, 2017). This is in comparison to the World Bank's 2009 seminal text praising CCTs (Fiszbein et. al. 2009), which has been cited 1577 times (googlescholar.com, retrieved July 27, 2017). Clearly, the role of these critical pieces within the discourse surrounding CCTs is, thus far, extremely small. There is very little work to understand the way in which CCT target populations are potentially patronized by partaking in the conditioned agreements. Is it patronizing to tell caregivers how make decisions around their children's education, health care, and nutrition? Studies on the experiences of CCT recipients are not asking these questions.

Situated alongside my case study, I outline these emerging ideas as future avenues for research, seeking to better understand the complicated ways that CCTs are developed, operate, and produce new subjectivities within targeted participants. Specifically, this research will question the extent to which CCT recipients in very different experience changing subjectivities, and whether or not the broader programs are understood or represented as patronizing. I seek to trace the different ways that CCTs have been imagined, understood, operationalized, and received in the global north versus the global south, and further interrogate the role of discourse and expertise in perpetuating certain truths in development.

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