

Imagining ‘Demand’ for Girls’ Schooling in Rural Pakistan

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Abstract

This study explores the normative frameworks through which selected parents, students, teachers, and education activists in three villages in rural Pakistan understand and articulate the value of girls' schooling. It argues that within the dominant analytical paradigms of human capital theory and neoliberalism, researchers and policymakers have tended to conceptualise 'demand' for schooling in terms that are narrowly focused upon measuring and boosting enrolment, and thus have failed to capture whether and how shifting enrolments correspond to shifting norms and to the broader imaginative regimes through which differently located actors experience and produce the gendered value of schooling. Typical analyses of 'demand' for girls' schooling have mostly focused upon what factors of schooling provision are most likely to increase parents' willingness to send their daughters to school, and thus inadvertently conflate 'demand' with 'supply' and reveal very little about whether or how such factors influence normative evaluations of girls' schooling by parents, children, teachers, and others across various contexts where enrolment is on the rise. This oversight hinders efforts at comparison that are critical for planning and interpreting transnational initiatives for achieving gender equality in and through schooling.

To improve upon this trend, this study illustrates a) the normative evaluations that underpin selected instances of 'demand' for girls' schooling in three villages in rural Pakistan, and b) how these normative evaluations have changed over time and in relation to particular interventions. Using data from seventeen weeks of fieldwork spanning two villages in the southern Punjab and one in Gilgit-Baltistan, the study explores perspectives about the value of girls' schooling in relation to the key themes of marriage, employment, and *purdah*. By bringing this data into comparison with mainstream discourses about 'demand,' the study highlights the limitations of those discourses and charts a path for further comparative inquiry. Findings illustrate how normative perspectives about girls' schooling are differentially contested and transformed over time even as enrolment trends converge across contexts, and suggest that researchers and practitioners concerned with promoting gender equality in and through schooling should lend greater attention to the social interactions through which 'norm-making' occurs. This sort of attention to 'norm-making' can reveal new opportunities for intervention, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it inspires humility by demonstrating that all normative evaluations of schooling – whether emerging from education 'experts' or from farmers in rural villages – reflect socially and historically situated notions of personhood, none of which is more 'natural' than any other.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Gendered Schooling Norms Across Contexts

1.1: Setting the Scene: Shifting Evaluations of Girls' Schooling

In March 2011, early on in my fieldwork in the agrarian village of Mulweer in the southern part of Pakistan's Punjab province, I visited the home of a sixteen-year-old female student named Nasreen.¹ I knew that Nasreen was one of just a few girls who were currently approaching the completion of Class 10 at the local NGO school, and that she and her classmates were the first girls in the history of the village to complete this many years of formal schooling. Like most residents of the village, Nasreen's parents were farmers who worked land that they did not own, and neither had attended school in the past. Indeed, most of Nasreen's female peers in the village had never been to school or had dropped out after just a few years. Yet on the whole, girls' school enrolment in the village had risen dramatically in recent years, and Nasreen was on the leading edge of this change. I was curious to hear from her and her family about the path that had led to this point.

In the dusty courtyard outside of the family home, I sat with my interpreter across from Nasreen and her parents on *charpai* (beds made of wood and woven rope) as Nasreen began to tell her story. Several other members of Nasreen's extended family observed us with curiosity. Speaking in Saraiki, Nasreen explained that her schooling career had begun with parental authorisation but then proceeded in secrecy. When she was a young girl, her parents sent her to daily classes at the nearby mosque where she would study the Qur'an with other girls. Soon afterwards, on her own volition and

¹ To protect the anonymity of research participants, I use pseudonyms for all people and villages referenced in this study. However, to allow informed readers to better contextualise these research sites, I do not use pseudonyms when referring to the districts in which these villages are located (e.g. Rahim Yar Khan and Ghanche) and the cities to which they are adjacent (e.g. Sadiqabad and Skardu).

unbeknownst to her parents, she began attending classes at the local boys' government school. At the time, no girls' school existed in the village, so it was rare but not unheard of for young girls to attend the government school with their older brothers. As her parents' oldest child, however, Nasreen doubted that her parents would grant her permission, and so for three years she went to school in secret while her parents thought she was at the mosque. Then, in 2005, a locally-founded and internationally-funded NGO opened a tuition-free girls' school in the village, and the teachers at that new school, aware of Nasreen's studies at the government school, encouraged her to attend. Nasreen confessed to her parents that she had been secretly attending classes at the boys' government school for three years, and asked permission to enrol in the new NGO school. To her surprise, they offered their support.

At this point in Nasreen's story, I asked her parents to recount this decision from their own perspectives. Her mother voiced her general hope that schooling would help Nasreen get a job in the future. As he translated this statement into English, my interpreter, Tahir – a male accountant employed by the local NGO in question – said to me, in English: "She [Nasreen's mother] hasn't got any proper idea about education; she is just saying that."² Meanwhile, Nasreen's father explained that it is difficult for children in the village to prosper economically if their families do not own land, but that even so, he had heard from a neighbor that the new NGO school was good quality, and that this had influenced his decision to support Nasreen's enrolment years ago. Yet the decision was controversial, and for years, Nasreen's father faced criticism for his ongoing support of Nasreen's schooling.

² Interview 1. All interviews are catalogued in Chapter 5.4, and other sections of Chapter 5 offer extended discussion of interview methods and approaches to translation, interpretation, and analysis.

A particularly controversial issue was the question of Nasreen's marriage plans. When I asked Nasreen whether she expected that at some point she would need to leave school in order to get married – as was the case with many girls in Mulweer who attended school – she replied that she was not interested in marriage, because she wanted to become a doctor. Her father endorsed this view, saying that he would not pressure Nasreen to marry, and that he would do everything possible to support her continuation of schooling beyond Class 10, the highest level available in the Mulweer.

I realised, of course, that the issue was probably not so simple, and that these assertions from Nasreen and her father perhaps understated the extent to which they were concerned about when Nasreen would marry, and to whom. As an employee of the progressive local NGO and a foreign researcher of education, Tahir and I were anything but a neutral pair, and I recognised that what Nasreen and her family told us was likely to have been shaped by their sense of what Tahir and I would want to hear. On the other hand, it was clear that Nasreen had already deviated from the local trend of early marriage, and this was interesting in its own right – as was the fact that she and her family were proud to tell us about it, and the particular ways in which they did so.

When I asked Nasreen's parents to explain why so many girls in Mulweer either did not go to school or left school after a few years in order to marry, they were quick to portray their neighbors as more conservative than themselves. They explained that many parents in Mulweer “want their children to spend their lives the same as they did,”³ and they contrasted this stance with their own desires to create a better future for their daughter. Yet at the same time, they also insisted that change was in the air, and that

³ Interview 1.

some of these more conservative parents had begun to think differently after seeing the example of girls like Nasreen. In the words of Nasreen's father:

There were some relatives who fought with me. One person said you should send your daughter up to Class Five only. But I continued to educate her, and now when she passed Class Five, they are saying 'Oh, you did very well.' They were saying in the past you should not educate your daughter, but they changed. [...] There was no awareness of education. They have just seen the change in this decade, especially for girls. They've become more aware.

-Father of Nasreen⁴

This statement makes explicit a basic theme which runs throughout the brief exchange excerpted above, and which is central to this study: perspectives about the value of girls' schooling are divergent and dynamic, and simple measures of enrolment or participation can hardly begin to capture this complexity. Nasreen belonged to a small cohort that had been attending formal school for almost ten years, an unprecedented amount of schooling for girls in the village – yet beneath the fact of her ongoing enrolment was a much more complex process of shifting and contested norms, and this process was one in which Tahir and I were inextricably involved.

My glimpse of this dynamism raised a number of compelling questions. To begin with, why had Nasreen assumed as a young girl that she needed to be surreptitious in her pursuit of schooling, and that her parents would not support her enrolment at the boys' government school or subsequently at the NGO school for girls, despite their support of her attending classes at the local mosque? How, in other words, did Nasreen and her parents differently understand and value these various types of schooling? Next, what sentiments, assumptions, and power dynamics underpinned Tahir's dismissal of

⁴ Ibid.

Nasreen's mother's capacity to 'properly' understand the value of girls' schooling? How was Nasreen's mother's aspiration that schooling might lead to employment refracted through the local context of persistent inequality in land ownership and wealth distribution? What alternative aspirations and social interactions seem to have motivated Nasreen's father to support her schooling? What processes led to the change of attitudes – or 'awareness' – that Nasreen's father reported observing amongst his own relatives, and what factors emboldened him to initially resist the disapproval of these relatives? And finally, what were the implications of my own presence here as a researcher from a well-reputed foreign university, and how did my questions about perceptions of schooling play into the broader contestation and transformation of such perceptions?

1.2: Beyond Enrolment and Outcomes: Towards an Understanding of Gendered Schooling Norms

This study is about how people such as Nasreen and her family evaluate girls' schooling,⁵ and how these evaluations change over time and across contexts. The use of the term 'evaluate' is meant to gesture towards an ongoing process that includes but is not limited to conventional analyses of economic costs and benefits. Playing on the double meaning of *value* as both a quality of a thing (for example, the value of an asset) and the normative stance of a person (a person's values), the study explores how the value of girls' schooling in a given context is made and re-made through the intersecting

⁵ The use of the term 'schooling' throughout this study refers to what happens in formal schools, and thus must not be conflated with the broader concept of 'education.' Although the two terms are obviously related and are often used interchangeably in popular discourse, I strive to maintain a distinction between them and to focus my attention upon how people apprehend and evaluate actual schooling opportunities rather than various ideals of education. Of course, it is possible that one's evaluation of a given schooling opportunity will be based upon one's broader thinking about the value of education, and thus any attempt to parse the two terms is perhaps tenuous at best – but nonetheless, the distinction is important for my broader analysis. In Chapter 5.5, I discuss how I sought to maintain this distinction when translating to and from Urdu and other languages.

evaluations of differently situated people. I argue that to a certain extent, such evaluations are always normative: quite unlike calculations informed by the laws of arithmetic or physics, evaluations of schooling follow no universal formula; they refract and inform social and political norms and concerns that are dynamic and contextually contingent (see Stambach 2000: 2). In this sense, my consideration of how people evaluate girls' schooling is an exploration of the processes through which gendered schooling norms are made, contested, and ultimately (though not always) transformed.

I argue that this attention to how schooling norms emerge and transform is conspicuously absent within many academic and policy-oriented discourses about 'demand'⁶ for girls' schooling. Such discourses purport to be about how people apprehend schooling opportunities, but I contend that they often focus too narrowly on the question of *whether* parents will decide to send their daughters to school, and not enough on the normative evaluations that underpin such decisions. In what follows, I critique the ways that researchers and policymakers have tended to use the term 'demand,' and I suggest that these discourses reflect a number of broader problems in education research and policy, including an obsession with measurability and an assumption that most or all people who pursue schooling do so because of the inevitable and obvious desirability of autonomous, economically productive personhood. Accordingly, I ask two core questions that these discourses often overlook. First, how do particular parents, daughters, teachers, and administrators understand and articulate the value of girls' schooling? Second, how have these evaluations changed over time? How,

⁶ A note on punctuation: throughout this study, single inverted commas (quotation marks) are used to remind readers that a given term or concept is polysemic and that its multiple meanings are under consideration. Double inverted commas are used to reference an exact statement by an author or an interview respondent.

in other words, do people encounter, contest, and ultimately ‘make’ schooling norms? I ask these questions with reference to the particular themes of employment, marriage, and *purdah*,⁷ and apply them to my fieldwork across three villages in Pakistan: two in southern Punjab, and one in Gilgit-Baltistan. I also apply these questions to much broader processes of ‘norm-making’ that include institutions and individuals located far beyond the geographic focus of my fieldwork but that come to bear, I argue, upon the various ways that people in my research sites perceive and contest the value of girls’ schooling. Implicit throughout my asking of these two questions is a third question, this one more methodological in nature: how can researchers or policymakers who seek to detect and understand ‘changes in demand’ (or lack thereof) best approach these shifting schooling norms? Throughout my asking of these three intertwined questions, I work to shed light upon the perspectives of the marginalised individuals and communities upon whose experiences the study is based.

I show that different respondents diverge dramatically in their normative evaluations of why girls should or should not go to school, and in the ways that their perspectives about schooling are intertwined with ideas about employment, marriage,

⁷*Purdah* (or *pardah*), literally ‘veil’ or ‘curtain,’ refers to the common South Asian practice of maintaining some degree of physical or symbolic separation between women and all men who are not their immediate kin. The expectations of maintaining *purdah* generally apply to girls after they begin adolescence, and continue throughout adulthood. In the most traditional sense, *purdah* refers to the practice of women staying inside the home at all times. However, in the many contexts and circumstances where it is considered acceptable for women to leave the home (e.g. to work in the fields or as teachers, or to attend a wedding or a funeral), the concept of *purdah* also applies to the maintenance of other physical and symbolic boundaries, e.g. through veiling or through separating male and female spaces at a wedding. It is important to note from the outset that my usage of the term does not refer to the specific practice of keeping women inside the home, but rather to broader ideas and practices through which family respectability is linked to the maintenance of appropriate restrictions upon women’s movement and visibility beyond the household. Of course, what constitutes ‘appropriate’ is a matter of ongoing reinterpretation, and this is something I explore in detail in the empirical chapters of this study. For more on *purdah* and restrictions upon women’s mobility in South Asia, see, for example, Jacoby and Mansuri 2011; Jeffrey 1978; Mughal 2014; Oommen 2005; Sokefeld 2014; Weiss 2010, 2011.

and *purdah*. For example, in sharp contrast to Nasreen's parents, many other parents who send their daughters to school in the same village maintain that formal employment is unlikely or even undesirable for their daughters, and that the primary benefit of schooling is to prepare their daughters for the responsibilities of being good housewives and mothers. Likewise, the female principal of Nasreen's NGO school argues that schooling should primarily prepare girls for domestic duties, and thus that boys and girls should not learn the same things in school. However, this perspective does not sit easily with the public discourses of the NGO, which emphasise principles of gender equality and empowerment for women. Similarly, while Nasreen's father insists that he will not allow her schooling trajectory to be derailed by pressures to get married, many other parents argue that the core value of sending their daughters to school is that this will make their daughters more marriageable, and thus that they will terminate their daughters' schooling as soon as they find a 'good match.' Meanwhile, some parents articulate the conviction that schooling will help their daughters develop good manners and become more respectable, but other parents express the concern that schooling – despite its practical benefits – will cause their daughters to become (or to be perceived as) promiscuous and in violation of *purdah*.

I suggest that background characteristics such as socio-economic status and religious influence seem to account for some but not all of this divergence, and that evaluations of girls' schooling, far from being mechanistic or neatly rational assessments of economic costs and benefits, emerge from ongoing social interaction and contestation and thus are marked by qualities of indeterminacy and fluidity. In Nasreen's story, for example, the basic fact of her impressive record of school enrolment and achievement

believes a much more complex story of divergent perspectives, precocious personalities, and contested values – between parents and children, between spouses, between neighbours, and indeed, between the funders or employees of national or transnational education initiatives and those they purport to serve (or research, for that matter). Stories such as these disrupt the assumption that enrolment alone can be taken as a reliable indicator of how and what people think about schooling, and invite more careful consideration about how divergent evaluations of schooling emerge, transform, and ultimately shape people's decisions and experiences.

In this way, the study helps chart a path on which education researchers and policymakers can move beyond simply understanding how to boost girls' enrolment and achievement in school, and towards a fuller understanding of how different individuals, families, and communities collectively understand, construct, and contest the normative value of girls' schooling. On the theoretical level, the study adds nuance to scholarship about how gender is dialectically re-imagined and reproduced through schooling processes and the discourses that surround and substantiate them. On a more practical level, it offers a description and explanation of how schooling norms emerge and change over time, and thus an assessment of the limitations and possibilities of policy interventions aiming to change such norms. As Unterhalter et al. have noted in their extensive literature review of interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality (2014b: 1), norm-changing interventions are “under-researched and under-resourced,” and this study helps begin to fill that research gap. Yet in a more basic sense, I share the concerns of many other scholars who have questioned the ethical and epistemological basis (not to mention the practical difficulty) of interventions aiming to

promote some gender norms over others (see, e.g., Abu-Lughod 2002, 2013; Bano 2009; Lyon 2010; Waljee 2008; Vavrus 2000), and thus my goal here is not to offer a playbook for changing gendered schooling norms in Pakistan, but rather to offer a snapshot of what some of these norms ‘look like’ and of the complex processes through which they are contested and transformed – often in directions not entirely expected or desired by education advocates or policymakers.

I situate this project within the broader literature assessing the implications of gradual global progress towards achieving the international goals of ‘Education for All’ as defined in Jomtien in 1990 and reaffirmed in Dakar in 2000 and Incheon in 2015. After decades of broad-based development efforts and a more recent surge of gender-targeted interventions, many indicators show a gradual reduction in quantifiable gender gaps,⁸ but less is known about the gendered norms, expectations, and interactions with which such changes are intertwined. In this sense, Pakistan is but one among many countries in which slow but steady movement towards ‘Education for All’ raises critical questions about how or to what extent visible changes in girls’ school participation are entwined with less-visible changes in how people think about and enact the gendered value of schooling.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative have directed useful attention towards the project of achieving universal

⁸ For example, numerous studies document a gradual rise in girls’ rates of participation in school, the labour force, and political processes, as well as a gradual decline in gender-based differences in rates of child survival. Women or girls still account for roughly 64% of the world’s 774 million illiterate adults, 52% of the world’s 59 million primary school-aged children who are currently out-of-school, and 61% of the 28 million children who are expected never to gain access to schooling, but it is important to emphasise that most of these gender gaps have actually decreased significantly over the course of the past two decades, as primary and secondary school enrolment rates have surged around the world, generally at a faster rate for girls than for boys. See UNDP 2006; UNESCO 2003, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015; United Nations 2010a; World Bank 2011a.

primary school enrolment, but it is hardly novel to point out that enrolment alone means very little, and that the pursuit of quantifiable targets defined by the MDGs and EFA has often come at the expense of broader reflection about shared (or fractured) values and the pursuit of social justice (see Black and White 2004; Unterhalter and North 2011; Unterhalter et al. 2011). As researchers and development actors shift their attention towards the ‘post-2015 agenda’ and questions of how to define and achieve ‘quality’ education in low-resource settings (see, e.g., Enns 2014; Unterhalter 2014a), it is increasingly necessary to understand the complex and shifting norms that shape whether and how parents and community leaders will offer their long-term investment and support for girls’ schooling. Conventional analyses of enrolment trends and the measurable inputs and outcomes of girls’ schooling are obviously useful and important in many regards, but they often fail to elucidate how particular people in particular contexts apprehend, contest, re-imagine, reproduce, and enact particular normative evaluations of girls’ schooling, and how such evaluations both reflect and produce the lived experience of schooling and gender in these contexts.

This study takes such processes as its primary focus. The empirical content of the study includes data that I generated⁹ over the course of seventeen weeks of fieldwork across three villages in 2011 and 2012. In the previous ten years, each of these three villages was the site of a different gender-targeted schooling intervention and a corresponding rise in girls’ enrolment rates. I chose to work across these three villages rather than only in one because I was interested in comparing gendered schooling norms across contexts that varied in background characteristics such as exposure to different

⁹ The notion of ‘generating’ rather than ‘collecting’ data is discussed further in Chapter 5.

forms of foreign ‘aid,’ the nature of available schooling opportunities, degree of rurality, and availability of non-agricultural employment opportunities. Research methods included semi-structured interviews, basic questionnaires, and informal unstructured observations among parents, students, teachers, and other educational actors.¹⁰

My level of understanding was bolstered by my conversational proficiency in Urdu and my prior experience researching schooling amongst Muslims in South Asia,¹¹ but I should emphasise from the outset that I was anything but a fly on the wall. My experience was heavily mediated by the organisations and individuals upon whom I relied for gaining access to schools and households and for interpreting my conversations with respondents who did not speak English or Urdu (which is to say, most of them). In many cases, such as the exchange with Nasreen’s family cited above, my interpreters made little effort to suspend their own normative views about whom and what schooling ‘should’ be for. At first I sought to avoid such dynamics, but eventually I came to see them as simply another form of data yielding insight towards my questions about how evaluations of schooling diverge across contexts and how they are made and contested through ongoing social interaction. It should be obvious to readers that my answers to these questions have emerged from my own subjective position as a researcher, but I maintain that this is an asset, not a liability, and that the core contribution of the study rests not on the ‘objectivity’ of its answers but rather on the

¹⁰ Methods and site selection are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

¹¹ In a regional and topical sense, the present study grew out of my three months of fieldwork in 2008 focused on schooling in Muslim communities in the Indian cities of Hyderabad and Srinagar. This earlier project had itself emerged from prior experience working and observing in Indian schools in 2004 and 2006. I began learning conversational Hindi during these earlier research projects, and, given that spoken Hindi and spoken Urdu are nearly identical (despite being written in different scripts), it was relatively easy for me to become conversational in Urdu in preparation for my first trip to Pakistan. I became increasingly comfortable and confident with spoken Urdu over the course of my fieldwork, and have continued practicing until the time of writing, but I am not fluent.

rigour of its questions and the ways in which these questions chart a path for further inquiry.

1.3: Rethinking 'Demand' for Girls' Schooling

The brief excerpt from my conversation with Nasreen's family illustrates multiple axes along which perspectives about Nasreen's schooling have diverged and shifted in recent years. Contrary to what might be assumed from the fact of Nasreen's completion of ten years of schooling or from the broader trend of increased girls' enrolments in Mulweer, the backdrop of Nasreen's schooling career has not been any sort of universal enthusiasm based upon a coherent collective assessment of the costs versus benefits of girls' schooling. Indeed, different members of Nasreen's social world diverge sharply in their perspectives about how much schooling – if any – girls should attain, and towards what ends this schooling should lead. These divergent perspectives about Nasreen's schooling reflect a broader process through which people contest and produce the meanings of schooling and gender in Mulweer and in other contexts to which it is linked in various ways.

As I heard more stories like Nasreen's, what struck me was a sense that these instances of divergence revealed an important level of complexity that was missing from most discourses about girls' schooling in international policy narratives, popular media, and education research. In the world I inhabited as a graduate student of comparative and international education and more broadly as an American interested in international 'development,' the dominant conversations about girls' schooling seemed to be about inputs and outputs – that is, about how to get more girls into school, and what positive

outcomes could be anticipated as a result of this schooling. Within this stream of discourse focused on ‘investments’ in education, ‘barriers’ to enrolment, and various forms of ‘returns,’ ‘deliverables,’ and ‘measurables,’ analyses of how people actually apprehend and evaluate particular schooling opportunities seemed limited to – and by – the key concept of ‘demand.’¹² As I tracked the recurrence of this term throughout the literature, I became convinced that common analyses of demand for girls’ schooling tended to obscure more than they elucidated. It was with a sense of irony, then, that I began thinking of my own inquiry as being about demand: I recognised the term as multivalent, polysemic, and generally incapable of capturing the complexity that underpinned decisions about schooling, yet this was exactly why I wanted to interrogate and add nuance to it.

My primary interest in the concept of demand is in exploring how it has emerged and traveled through various educational research and policy discourses, and thus the critique that I develop over the next several chapters (in particular in Chapters 1.4, 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2) is not meant to establish a single ‘correct’ definition of the term but rather to explore how researchers and policymakers have used this term and how this usage refracts broader trends and tensions in the sphere of education. Yet for the purpose of establishing a baseline framework for my critique, it is worth pointing out here that the concept of demand takes on meaning only in relation to the concept of supply, and that, in the simplest possible terms, the distinction between the two is that a ‘supply curve’

¹² For ease of reading, I try to minimise the use of scare quotes throughout this study. It should be clear from the outset that I do not imagine the concept of ‘demand’ to be linked to a single, stable referent, and that that my analysis deconstructs this concept while also employing it as a shorthand way of referring to the evaluative processes that underpin schooling decisions. On occasion, I use scare quotes to emphasise the multivalency of this concept, but the reader should not assume that an absence of scare quotes indicates that the meaning of the concept can be taken for granted.

represents a given product or service that is available, while a ‘demand curve’ represents how people apprehend this product or service. A given point of intersection between two such curves represents the amount of the product or service that people will consume (or invest in¹³), and how much they will pay for it. Researchers readily acknowledge that the distinction between curves is only theoretical, and that in the messiness of real life it is difficult or impossible to measure demand independently of supply, since the two inevitably shape each other (e.g. Johnson 1999; Sheehan 2012 [1973]: 19; Stiglitz 1974: 349). Likewise, researchers acknowledge that any demand curve “is drawn on the assumption of ‘other things being equal’” (Blaug 1970: 174) – that is, the tastes of consumers as well as the real and perceived returns of schooling – and that this condition of *ceteris paribus* is never realistic for more than a moment in time. Yet even if unquantifiable and abstract, the notion of a ‘demand curve’ is potentially useful, it seems, as a theoretical construct representing the constellations of taste, bias, and normative evaluation that shape the ways in which a given person or group of people apprehends a given schooling opportunity. This conceptual distinction allows us to understand a given instance of school enrolment as a point of intersection between a given supply curve and demand curve, and thus to understand changes in enrolment as the result of a shift in at least one of these curves – but not necessarily both.

My basic critique is that researchers and practitioners who purport to investigate demand are in fact focused mostly or exclusively on understanding (and ‘stimulating’)

¹³ The question of whether or to what extent schooling is a consumption good or an investment good has been the source of much debate amongst economists of education (e.g. Schultz 1963; Sheehan 2012 [1973]: 21). This debate revolves around the extent to which people regard schooling as something with an immediate return (a consumption good) or a long-term return (an investment good). Framed more broadly, this is a debate about how people understand the benefits of schooling, and the present study is an extended consideration of the same question.

the quantifiable background factors which determine enrolment, and thus they lend little energy towards understanding the larger ‘demand curve’ along which a given point of intersection (enrolment) is situated. Consequently, the normative, affective, aesthetic, and socially meaningful ways in which people think and talk about schooling are overshadowed by a quest to identify the measurable factors which determine enrolment – even if these factors actually tell us more about what is being supplied than how people apprehend it, and thus do not take us very far in our understanding of demand per se.

A brief passage from Sheehan’s *The Economics of Education* (Vol. 54) perfectly exemplifies the trend I am describing. Sheehan notes that researchers of demand for schooling are generally trying to understand the relationship between “a complex set of institutions which comprise the educational system [supply] and an even more complex set of institutions and variables which we call society [demand],” and in particular to understand how this relationship determines the *amount* of schooling that a given group of people will consume or invest in at a given moment (2012 [1973]: 20). This definitional statement would imply that Sheehan is interested in unpacking the social norms that are undoubtedly part of the “complex set of institutions and variables which we call society,” but it turns out that Sheehan actually wants to *avoid* this complexity whenever possible:

What shifts in demand remain to be explained, when price, income, and quality changes have been accounted for are usually ascribed to changes in consumers’ tastes. Hopefully, directly measurable influences account for a great deal of the variations to be explained; if one is left with ‘changes in taste’ as the main explanatory variable, then one may feel (somewhat justifiably) that one is not

much more enlightened than before. (2012 [1973]: 19)

This passage is remarkable (and typical of economists' research about demand) in its myopic obsession with measurability. Sheehan acknowledges that "shifts in demand" might have something to do with "changes in consumers' tastes," but he transparently hopes to identify "directly measurable" factors rather than deal with the murky norms, values, relationships, and aspirations that shape "taste." It is unclear whether Sheehan is aware of Bourdieu's extensive sociological consideration of taste as a shifting marker of class and identity (1984), but it seems clear that Sheehan considers this sort of analysis to be either unimportant or impossible. The point is that even as economists routinely acknowledge that the relationship between school and society cannot be captured by a simple measurement of quantifiable economic costs and benefits – that is, they acknowledge that this relationship is shaped by norms – very few studies of demand actually attempt to develop a qualitative understanding of such norms, and thus revert to quantitative modeling while acknowledging that 'cultural factors' create a sort of unpredictability. This is the entry point for the current study.

One could reasonably argue that the term 'demand' is simply not meant to capture the norms and perspectives I seek to describe, and that I would be better off leaving the term alone. Yet the term is useful here – necessary, even – for at least one basic reason: the term appears with great frequency within the broader academic and policy-oriented literature about girls' schooling,¹⁴ and this study explicitly aims to

¹⁴ Chapter 3 provides a thorough explication of dominant trends in the conceptualisation of 'demand' throughout educational research and policy documents. For now, suffice to say that the concepts of 'supply' and 'demand' appear frequently within research about schooling in 'development' contexts, and that the case of girls' schooling in Pakistan is no exception, e.g. Aslam 2009, 2009a; Anzar 1999; Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Bano 2008; Black and White 2004; Brock and Cammish 1997; Gazdar 2001; Hamid 1993; Hamid and Siddiqui 2001; Handa 2002; Jensen 2010; Johnson 1999; Lu 2012; Mahmood

critique and improve how this term is used. If at some point the term is jettisoned completely, the present study will be no less relevant as a substantive exploration of how particular individuals evaluate girls' schooling and how such evaluations change over time. For the moment, though, it seems that the best way to respond to a problematic trend in the literature is to address this trend on its own terms.¹⁵ What is at stake here is not simply a semantic question about how to define the term 'demand,' but rather a substantive question about how to understand the different norms and evaluations that are entwined with decisions about girls' schooling – and how, accordingly, this more nuanced understanding can inform education policy and practice.

Thus, in what follows I present my reading of stories like Nasreen's as a rejoinder to how educational researchers, policymakers, and commentators have tended to understand and mobilise the idea of demand for girls' schooling. I argue that within the historically interconnected paradigms of human capital theory, rate of return analysis, and neoliberalism, different actors have generally used the concept of demand as a measure of *whether* students will enrol in school, and under what conditions, but have rarely explored *why* this is so. Framed by the overarching emphasis on inputs and outputs, typical analyses of demand explore what conditions or interventions are likely to increase or decrease the likelihood that parents will send their daughters to school.

2004; Saqib 1997; Sathar et al. 2000, 2003; Schultz 2004; Shaikat 2009; Winthrop and Graff 2010; World Bank 2005, 2005a.

¹⁵ The authors of a 2006 OECD report about demand for schooling have taken a similar stance, and articulate it as follows: "[We might question] the very suitability of the economic terminology of 'demand' and 'supply' when applied to education, a language which many in education strongly resist. This is an understandable concern from those working within traditions which find this language an alien one. But, such a reaction is not grounds enough to reject such perspectives if it amounts to resistance for reasons of association not substance. Such terminology has become a *lingua franca* in policy analysis, however much some may wish otherwise. To use this *lingua franca* is not about privileging the economic grounds for education over non-economic ones, and indeed 'demand' is as much about rights, wishes, and participation as it is about seeking any material benefits which may accrue to educational attainment" (OECD 2006: 19-20).

Although useful, such analyses reveal very little about how parents actually perceive the schooling opportunities in question, and limit the concept of demand to little more than a predictor of enrolment under given conditions of supply. This analytical trend constrains comparative exploration of whether and how evaluations of schooling diverge across actors and contexts even as school enrolments appear to be converging. Put differently, this common approach treats context-specific factors – the pressure to marry, for instance, or interpretations of *purdah* or perceptions of economic opportunity – as ‘barriers’ that students must surpass in the enactment of their meta-cultural demand for schooling, rather than as constitutive features of particular schooling landscapes within which contingent instances of demand emerge and transform.

Intent to break from this trend, my initial interest was in comparing the divergent evaluations of schooling that seemed to be at play within villages like Mulweer. In the early stages of my research, I focused exclusively upon people like Nasreen and her family: people who lived in the three villages in rural Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan where I was spending my time, and whose evaluations of girls’ schooling – whether enthusiastic, skeptical, or uncertain – were intertwined with the recent rise of girls’ enrolments in those contexts. To lend further structure to my inquiry, I focused specifically on ideas about marriage, employment, and *purdah*: three themes that emerged from my fieldwork as fundamental contours of the social landscape in which my respondents encounter and reimagine normative evaluations of schooling. I wanted to know how differently situated actors evaluated girls’ schooling opportunities in relation to these themes, and how these different evaluations did or did not influence each other.

In the case of Nasreen, for instance, I was firstly interested in divergent evaluations within Nasreen's family – between Nasreen and her parents, or between Nasreen's father and her mother, or between her father and his relatives. Secondly, I was also interested in divergences between Nasreen's family and other families in Mulweer. Why was Nasreen's father so supportive of his daughter's schooling while other fathers in the village remained deeply skeptical? Moreover, why did Nasreen's father value her schooling in the particular ways that he did, and what could account for how he diverged from other fathers who also supported their daughters' schooling, but for apparently different reasons? In what ways, if any, were these patterns in schooling norms linked to differences in religious interpretation or economic status, and how (if at all) did such norms shift and shape each other across those axes of difference? Thirdly, I wanted to explore divergence across my different research sites. How, for example, did Mulweer compare to other villages in terms of social expectations regarding when, how, and whom a girl should marry, and how were such expectations entangled with demand for schooling?

All of these questions amounted to a basic interest in how ideas about the value of girls' schooling are contested and reinterpreted across space, time, and relationships of power. Yet crucially, I soon came to see that this same core question could be applied to the broader discourses in research, policy, and popular media from which I was attempting to depart. What assumptions about the meanings of schooling and gender informed hegemonic international discourses about demand for girls' schooling? What sort of evaluative frameworks underpinned the broader discursive emphasis on inputs and outputs? How did these evaluations change over time and across transnational

networks, institutions, and hierarchies? How, finally, were shifting schooling norms in Mulweer intertwined with broader normative assumptions animating educational research and policy, and what was my own role in this process?

With such questions, what began as an investigation of gendered evaluations of schooling in a few villages in rural Pakistan quickly expanded to include a broader inquiry into the transnational flows of policy, research, media, funding, and power through which the value of schooling is differentially imagined, produced, contested, and experienced. Thus, I explore demand for girls' schooling along multiple axes of comparison: I compare normative evaluations that inform schooling decisions in particular sites in rural Pakistan, thereby adding nuance to how researchers and policymakers have tended to understand the concept of demand for schooling, and at the same time I question this very concept and compare how and towards what ends it has been mobilised within broader discourses about education.

1.4: Comparison, 'Demand,' and the Neoliberal Social Imaginary

My interest in these multiple axes of analysis builds upon the work of a number of scholars who have called for new approaches to the comparative study of education. The development of my own inquiry as described above – from comparing different 'local' instances of gendered schooling norms to eventually comparing how such norms emerge and transform on a 'global' scale – perhaps mirrors a larger shift underway in the study of education and in the social sciences more broadly, a shift in which the very notions of 'local' and 'global' have been destabilised. The shift involves conceptualising globalisation in terms of the movement of ideas between differently situated (and often migrating) people, rather than simply as the movement of policies or resources between

bounded institutions or nation-states. Likewise, this shift involves thinking about the movement of ideas as something that is ongoing, contested, and multi-directional, rather than simply up or down a series of vertically-nested ‘levels’ from multinational institution to nation-state to individual (see Ferguson 2006: 10).

This theoretical shift draws from Appadurai’s call for more attention to the “flows” and “ideoscapes” that characterise “cultural dimensions of globalisation” (1996), and from the work of others who, like Appadurai, have underscored the importance of the imagination as a shifting and contested space in which globalisation unfolds (e.g. Anderson 1983; Ferguson 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Steiner-Khamsi 2012; Taylor 2004). Building from a recognition of the nation-state as an “intensively managed fiction” (Ferguson 2006: 10), these approaches look more closely at how policies, practices, and norms emerge and transform through transnational and sub-national processes in which the nation-state is not the only (or even the primary) significant player (see also Ball 2012; Carney 2009). However, the incorporation of this shift into comparative education research is somewhat more recent and still very much underway.

As Carney argues in his groundbreaking article about educational “policyscapes,” the field of comparative education research has been strongly shaped by the agendas of international agencies promoting economic reform, and researchers have often taken these agendas for granted rather than critically approaching them as dynamic forces embedded in the “new imaginative regimes” made possible by globalisation (2009: 66). Carney calls for more attention to these regimes and their *ongoing* interaction in shaping the production, enactment, and experience of education policy and

practice across time, space, and power – pointing out, in other words, that educational phenomena are shaped by multi-directional flows of ideas and values as much as they are shaped by policy mechanisms dictated by a given state or institution. For Carney, this means recognising the “cornerstone” role of liberal and neoliberal ideologies within the globalisation of education policy (2009: 68), and adapting research approaches to better account for “the increasingly shared imaginative landscapes of globalisation” (2009: 84).

Carney’s call for more attention to the “imaginative regimes” within which education policies take form and play out is akin to Popkewitz and Rizvi’s attention to “generating principles that order what is seen, acted on, and thought about” (2009: 8), and to Stambach’s suggestion that anthropology and critical theory can make important intellectual contributions (albeit in different ways) by “unpack[ing] the assumptions of our modeling” and elucidating the “generative arguments and cultural schemes that give rise to what people consider are absolutes” (2008). In a similar vein, Unterhalter (2014: 112-115) notes that comparative research about gender and education has been somewhat “constrained” by a historical tendency to “add” gender as a new axis of comparison within existing frameworks for thinking about education, rather than question how these frameworks mobilise particular concepts of gender. Unterhalter calls for researchers to “document education agents (learners, teachers, managers, policy negotiators, parents) ‘doing gender’ and the historical location of the process of education gendering” (2014: 121). This vision of a renewed research agenda builds upon Carney’s suggestion that comparative education researchers must grapple with “the very question of comparison itself” (2009: 66) in order to account more fully for the contexts

in which educational policies, practices, research, and experiences are embedded and intertwined.

Unterhalter observes that the present is a “generative moment” for thinking more broadly about how particular ideas of gender have been employed in different forms of educational research, policy, and practice (2014: 119), and some of her own work provides a useful model for this sort of broader comparison. Tracking the concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ across numerous international rights frameworks – from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to meetings in Beijing and Dakar to the MDGs and EFA goals – Unterhalter and her colleagues demonstrate that different actors have understood and deployed these concepts in a range of fragmented ways (Unterhalter 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2012; Unterhalter and North 2011; Unterhalter et al. 2011). In the “minimalist” conception, gender equality is understood as merely a “line” needing to be crossed, whereas in more “maximalist” frameworks, gender equality is understood in terms of a “net” of power relationships that need to be restructured, or even more broadly as a sort of discursive “fuel” that, if purged of toxic stereotypes, could set alight a dramatic transformation of gendered identities (Unterhalter 2012, 2014). Unterhalter points out that the MDGs, with their focus primarily upon quantifiable gender parity rather than broader conceptions of equity, equality, or justice, constitute a “minimalist” approach. Crucial to the present study is the finding of the *Gender, Education, and Global Poverty Reduction Initiatives* (GEGPRI) study that “there is only a partial connection between...global policy aspirations for gender equity...and various sites of enactment” (Unterhalter et al. 2011: 11). In other words, the GEGPRI study highlights significant disjunctures between how the value of girls’

schooling – along with the broader meaning and value of ‘gender equity’ – is imagined at the level of “global policy” and how it is imagined and experienced by people like Nasreen and her family and neighbours.

These arguments set the stage for my consideration of the imaginative landscapes within which families like Nasreen’s apprehend gender-targeted education policies, programs, and goals that are purportedly ‘global’ in scope. The call for new approaches to comparison is a call to do more than simply ask how different ‘global’ efforts to support girls’ schooling achieve (or do not achieve) their stated goals in different contexts. It is also a call for researchers to explore what ideologies and values have underpinned the creation of such initiatives, how they have claimed ‘global’ resonance, and how or to what extent these ideologies and values have been adopted, adapted, or resisted as they have traveled across contexts. Our attention to these processes – which I will later introduce as processes of ‘norm-making’ (see Chapter 2.5) – can serve as both a lens and mirror: offering a clearer view of the landscapes on which ‘global’ change unfolds, and also reflecting our own role within these landscapes as researchers and as individuals who travel and share ideas in speech, writing, and action, often from privileged positions of power (see Oppenheim and Stambach 2014).

Carney, Rapple, and Silova (2012) emphasise that this sort of reflexivity is needed in order for researchers to uncover the embedded assumptions and ideologies that they might otherwise take for granted and thereby reinforce, albeit inadvertently. The authors argue that some scholars who use world culture theory to explain the apparent global convergence of educational practices are actually *producing* a form of ‘world culture’ through their uncritical presentation of the ascendancy of particular

(liberal and neoliberal) ideas and values as historically inevitable (2012: 380-381). In other words, the authors show how a particular framework for understanding schooling norms and trends – a particular imaginative regime, we might say – can itself become normative, in this case by presenting as “products of cultural consensus” trends that are in fact linked to the “often coercive spread of neoliberal ideology in education” (2012: 381). Accordingly, the authors suggest that researchers must “think afresh about how and under what conditions ideas travel, transfer, and take form as practices,” and to recognise their own analytical frameworks and values as embedded in this landscape of ideas (2012: 387).

Anderson-Levitt responds to similar concerns as she calls for researchers to explore “how received knowledge gets generated” so that they might develop “tools for noticing and questioning hegemony” (2012: 452). As with Carney et al., Anderson-Levitt urges education researchers to recognise the notion of ‘world culture’ as contested and situated in particular historical and political contexts, rather than as a taken-for-granted source and product of contemporary schooling practices. Anderson-Levitt emphasises that “culture does not act” (2012: 444), and that attempts to theorise cultural convergence should specify who does the acting, and how “world culture is locally produced in social interaction” (2012: 441). Thus, she deconstructs the image of a monolithic ‘world culture’ spreading uniformly across the earth, but simultaneously emphasises that power matters – including, of course, the power to conduct academic research (2012: 450) – and that asymmetries of power shape the ways that particular ideas travel and transform. This is not an outright critique of world culture theory, but rather a call for closer attention to “how the sausage is made” (2012: 452) – that is,

attention to how different imaginative regimes shift across time and geography, and how such flows are both contextually contingent and shaped by transnational hegemonies.

Taken beyond the ongoing debate about world culture theory, which is relevant but peripheral to the core concerns here (see, e.g., Anderson-Levitt 2003; Meyer et al. 1997; Ramirez 2003; Wiseman 2008), the key import of this argument for the present study is that education researchers interested in the worldwide uptake of mass schooling should not assume that converging school enrolment trends necessarily indicate a convergence of normative evaluations of schooling. Instead, researchers should work to understand such evaluations as contested, contingent, and located within broader ideoscapes in which researchers' own analytical frameworks are also at play. The popular concept of 'demand' is one such framework: a lens through which researchers and policymakers have sought to conceptualise the evaluations that inform decisions about schooling, but also a reflection of particular normative assumptions about the meaning and purpose of schooling and how people should apprehend it. It follows, then, that even as I work to enrich typical understandings of demand for girls' schooling by exploring the nuanced evaluations that underpin trends in enrolment, I also unpack the concept of 'demand' itself and explore the implications of this concept within the imaginative landscapes where schooling norms emerge and transform.

Unpacking the concept of demand in this way means recognising its economic undertones and questioning its linkages with prevailing trends in education research and policy. Following the work of Carney (2009) and Carney et al. (2012) discussed above, and also of numerous other scholars who have critiqued the hegemony of the "neoliberal social imaginary" (e.g. Ball 2012; Rizvi and Lingard 2010), I approach common

discourses about demand for girls' schooling as particular threads of a larger imaginative regime, ascendant for the past several decades, in which it is assumed that the principles of market efficiency should serve as a blueprint for policy and 'development' more broadly. This particular way of thinking is perhaps most evident in policies encouraging privatisation and deregulation – policies built around the notion that the market tends to work in the social interest, and the government does not (see Ball 2012; Enns 2014; Fennell 2008; Harvey 2005; Keshavjee 2014; Klees 2008, 2008a). However, as Ferguson points out alongside his call for scholars to be more specific with their usage of the term 'neoliberalism,' it is useful to discern between neoliberalism as a macroeconomic doctrine or a range of policies and neoliberalism as "a kind of rationality evident in particular ideas of governance and citizenship" (2012: 170-171). It is this latter meaning that informs my effort to critique and expand upon prevailing discourses about 'demand' for girls' schooling.

Ferguson characterises this neoliberal rationality as revolving around the assumption that citizens operate like miniature firms – responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently making choices that will lead to economic prosperity (2012: 172; see also Farmer 2003: 5). With regard to the particular topic of schooling, this imaginative regime builds on the frameworks of human capital theory and rate of return analysis to conceptualise schooling decisions as being driven by rational actors pursuing economic mobility through formal employment in the labour market (see Bergeron 2008; Fennell 2008: 37; Klees 2008, 2008a). This way of thinking manifests in common discourses about demand for schooling in which it is taken for granted that schooling is a path to employment, economic prosperity, and individual

‘empowerment,’ and that schooling decisions are – or should be – based upon rational calculations of economic costs and benefits.

It is easy enough to identify this particular way of thinking about demand at work within the rationale for particular education policies – for example, policies that attempt to maximise ‘efficiency’ by introducing school vouchers or withdrawing public funding for education and implementing user fees to whatever extent ‘demand’ will allow, or policies that encourage the proliferation of low-cost private schools (see Carnoy 1998; Klees 2008a: 313; Tooley and Longfield 2015). Yet aside from the questions of whether and how particular concepts of demand for schooling have shaped particular neoliberal policies, the more basic argument here is that common discourses about demand reflect aspects of the ‘neoliberal social imaginary,’ and that the hegemony of this way of thinking creates its own priorities, blind spots (see Keshavjee 2014), and oversimplifications worthy of closer interrogation.

This study works to elucidate the complexities that such an optic overlooks. My analysis shows that many mainstream discourses about demand for schooling have served the agendas of policy regimes fixated upon growing enrolment while also maximising ‘efficiency’ through mechanisms including ‘public-private partnerships’ and ‘cost recovery’ via user fees (see Chapter 3.2). These discourses hinge on the assumption that most parents evaluate schooling opportunities with a lens that is primarily focused on economic prosperity and individual ‘empowerment,’ and thus that demand for modern mass schooling is more or less latent and inevitable. The implication is that different instances of demand are like tributaries of a river, some of which are blocked by various ‘cultural barriers,’ but all of which are driven by the same current,

and all of which, if allowed to run freely, will lead towards the same convergent endpoint of rational, educated, economically prosperous individual personhood. I propose instead that we imagine different instances of demand as different currents of an ocean – linked to each other, without a doubt, but often orthogonal, in tension, and responsive to different (social) geographies. In such an image, contextual features such as parental concerns about marriage or *purdah* are not ‘barriers’ to demand; they are a part of it, part of the landscape within which evaluations of schooling take form. I suggest that thinking about demand in this way can open up new possibilities for understanding the different ways that schooling is valued – both by parents and students who encounter schooling opportunities ‘on the ground,’ and by the web of policymakers, funders, researchers, and others who design and implement education interventions and ultimately ‘evaluate’ their progress towards particular outcomes.

Comparative education research has a crucial role to play in this process of exposing and disrupting hegemonic assumptions about the value and purpose of girls’ schooling. Critically examining such assumptions is necessary because, implicitly or otherwise, these assumptions shape different conceptions of “global obligation” with regard to gender and education, and they underpin the formation, deployment, and evaluation of national and international educational policy agendas (Unterhalter 2011: 19-20, 2014: 113). Thus, I share Unterhalter’s conviction, quoted above, that there is much to be gained by documenting how different educational actors are “doing gender” (2014: 121). I argue that overly economistic ways of thinking about demand for girls’ schooling inform (and are informed by) particular ways of “doing gender,” and I highlight the limitations of their embedded assumptions by bringing them into

comparison with the perspectives of people like Nasreen and her family – people for whom the evaluation of schooling is anything but a neat calculation of economic costs and benefits.

1.5: Research Questions, Aims, and Rationale

To sum up, then, this study is oriented around two basic questions:

- What normative evaluations inform demand for girls' schooling in selected sites in rural Pakistan?
- Through what processes and in what ways have these instances of demand changed over time?

Each of these two questions has a different aim and a different underlying rationale. The first question seeks description; the second seeks explanation.¹⁶ Each question thus draws upon different types of data and, correspondingly, upon different sets of epistemological assumptions. I discuss these assumptions at further length in Chapter 5.

The first question aims to provide a descriptive account of how selected parents and children understand the value (or lack thereof) of sending girls to school. The rationale for such an aim is two-fold. First, a 'thick description'¹⁷ of evaluations of schooling can provide a useful qualitative benchmark against which future 'changes in demand' can be assessed. Second, and of more immediate usefulness, a qualitative reading of demand for girls' schooling can reflect and predict broader trends in the

¹⁶ In addition, as noted above (Chapter 1.2), the asking of these two questions implicitly raises a third question, more methodological in nature, about how best to understand gendered schooling norms and the processes through which they change. In a sense, the structure of this entire study models an answer to this third question: rather than attempt to measure barriers or outcomes, I focus on how particular people describe, contest, and re-imagine the value of girls' schooling in relation to the particular social worlds in which they are embedded. In Chapter 2 (especially 2.4) and Chapter 5, I offer a more thorough discussion of the rationale and implications of this methodology.

¹⁷ I borrow this term from Geertz's (1973) basic notion of the capacity for ethnography to make human behaviour intelligible to the cultural outsider by locating it in its wider context of assigned meaning.

social construction of gender and personhood that are not visible in typical assessments of the inputs and outcomes of girls' schooling.

In other words, because it is possible that what people *want* can evolve separately from what they are actually able to do, cross-sectional or longitudinal studies seeking measurable outcomes correlated with girls' schooling might be blind to more subtle patterns in gendered social norms that perhaps foreshadow broader transformations yet to come. For example, a case in which many parents express the hope that their daughters' schooling will lead to future employment opportunities might offer a glimpse of possible changes that would not be evident from more conventional measures of current female employment. Conversely, studies linking girls' schooling to dramatic outcomes such as significant improvements in women's health or income might be blind to the possibility that men in such cases retain the exclusive power to make important life decisions for their spouses and their children. In these cases, turning the analytical lens towards how people value girls' schooling and envision girls' futures can help better illustrate the ways that basic gender hierarchies and power relations might stay the same even as indicators such as female income or life expectancy change dramatically.

The second question aims to understand to what extent demand has changed, and through what mechanisms. In other words, it asks how or if gendered schooling norms have changed in relation to specific educational interventions and the larger social, political, and economic contexts in which these interventions occur. This question anticipates the theoretical attention towards processes of 'norm-making' that appears in

Chapter 2.5 and provides a useful framework for analysis throughout subsequent chapters.

The use of the term ‘instances of demand’ in the second question is a deliberate attempt to signal that this study does not aspire towards generalisability in any conventional sense. The instances of demand at the empirical core of this study are not meant to stand for ‘rural Pakistan’ at large or anything else beyond what they are: a few instances, selected and explored through a process that was conscious and deliberate but also arbitrary and undoubtedly influenced by my own presence and bias as a researcher. The finer details of the sampling process, the overall research design, and the epistemological assumptions at its core will come to light in Chapter 5. For now, the words of Geertz provide a fitting reminder of the overall rationale for this study and the questions that guide it:

Its use is neither as a sample of something nor as an epitome of something, but as an instance of something: a case in point. The value of looking hard at it and what has been happening to it recently is that of all instances: after doing so one may see in other instances matters otherwise occluded. Examples instruct, they do not prove. (Geertz 2010: Ch. 9)

1.6: Why Pakistan, Which Pakistan, and Why Rural Girls?

Chapter 4 provides a detailed introduction to Pakistan and the contexts for this study, but it is worth pausing for a brief moment here to better situate the three villages where my fieldwork was based. The three villages share the characteristics of being poor, rural, and economically oriented around farming and/or raising animals; beyond that, they are quite different in terms of ethnic composition, exposure to urban and foreign influence, and other crucial background characteristics.

The two villages in southern Punjab, Mulweer and Abid, share the trait of being located in the relatively fertile plains of the Indus River, and both are highly dependent on irrigation – a crucial distinction from rain-fed (*barani*) agricultural areas elsewhere in Punjab. However, Abid differs notably from Mulweer in its ethnic diversity (it is home to a significant population of Hindus) and its proximity to a nearby city and associated job opportunities. The northern village of Ghande diverges from both Abid and Mulweer in terms including geography (mountains rather than plains), remoteness (no phone signal, and much further from the nearest city than either Mulweer or Abid), economy (pastoral rather than agrarian), language (Balti rather than Saraiki / Punjabi), religious influence (Shia / Ismaili / Nurbakhshi Islam rather than Sunni Islam and Hinduism), and exposure to Western tourists and foreign NGOs including the hugely influential Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and its Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. These three villages are not meant to stand for ‘Pakistan’ as a whole, or even any stable entity that we can identify as ‘rural Pakistan.’ Pakistan is enormously diverse in ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic terms, and it should be clear to readers that my findings from two villages in southern Punjab and one in Gilgit-Baltistan are not meant to elucidate schooling norms, in, say, a Khowar village in Khyber-Patunkhwa (see Marsden 2005) or a Balochi fishing village in Sindh (see de Groot 2010) or a Pathan village in a rain-fed agricultural region of northern Punjab (see Lyon 2004). In the final measure, these villages stand only for themselves, and indeed, one of the focal points of this study is the extent to which gendered schooling norms are non-uniform even within a single village or family, let alone on a broader regional or national scale.

Having said that, there is still much to be gained by taking a step back to briefly discuss macro-level trends in schooling, gender, and ‘development’ in Pakistan. At the least, this sort of broader framing provides a useful backdrop for understanding the villages where I conducted fieldwork. More than that, though, this broader framing allows us to locate these villages in relation to larger trends that reach far beyond their specific contexts. In other words, even without assuming that the specific trajectories of shifting schooling norms in Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande are representative of ‘rural Pakistan’ in general, understanding these villages in relation to regional and national trends allows us to grasp what makes them unique as well as what parallels they might share with other villages in Pakistan or in other contexts marked by similar levels of poverty and inequality.

Twenty-six percent of Pakistan’s population lives in what UNESCO defines as “severe poverty” (UNESCO 2014: 182), and this widespread economic deprivation is entwined with a broad sense of disenfranchisement and distrust towards national and state governments: in Gallup Poll data collected from 2007-2013, only 16% of Pakistanis said that they were satisfied with their government’s efforts to deal with the poor (UNESCO 2014: 222). To put this statistic in regional context, it is worth noting that this level of dissatisfaction with the government is significantly worse than that reported in India (39%), Nepal (34%), Iran (58%), and China (68%), and marginally lower than that reported in Afghanistan (20%) (UNESCO 2014: 220-222). Among 187 countries ranked in UNESCO’s 2013 Human Development Index (HDI),¹⁸ Pakistan lands in position number 146 – the lowest in South Asia, but by a relatively small

¹⁸ The HDI is calculated using data that reflects life expectancy, knowledge, and general standard of living (UNESCO 2014: 171).

margin. However, when Pakistan's HDI score is disaggregated by gender to create a 'Gender Development Index' (GDI) showing the ratio of female to male HDI, Pakistan is among the worst in the world: its GDI score of .750 surpasses only Yemen, Niger, and Afghanistan, and is well below the South Asia regional average of .830 (UNESCO 2014: 178).

This broad trend of gender inequality in Pakistan can be tracked throughout most indicators for human welfare, and schooling is no exception. By some projections, Pakistan at its current rate of annual enrolment growth will not achieve universal primary school enrolment until the year 2100 (Pakistan Education Task Force 2011).¹⁹ Data from 2005 suggest that fewer than one in three adult women are literate, that barely one in four school-aged girls are enrolled in secondary school, and that both of these national averages drop considerably for girls and women in rural areas (World Bank 2005). Data reported in 2012 show that girls and women comprise two-thirds of Pakistan's 5.1 million out-of-school children and two-thirds of its 49.5 million adults (UNESCO 2012). Pakistan received the world's third-largest share of foreign aid in the latter half of the twentieth century – no less than \$58 billion – but it remains among the worst in the world on a number of human development indices, particularly with regard to the health, education, and general welfare of women (Easterly 2003; UNESCO 2003, 2010, 2010a; United Nations 2010; World Bank 2005, 2005a). Statistics such as these have led most researchers and policymakers to focus on the task of simply increasing girls' rates of enrolment and persistence in school, and such initiatives may indeed be necessary and justified. However, the recurring attention towards the factors driving

¹⁹ It should be noted that this projection varies significantly by province: it predicts that Punjab will achieve universal primary enrolment by 2041, Balochistan by 2100, and others between these extremes.

girls away from and out of school risks distracting from the fact that many of Pakistan's educational gender gaps have shrunk dramatically over the past twenty years (UNESCO 2003, 2010; World Bank 2005), and thus risks missing the opportunity to explore the subtleties of this historic shift.

Recent data suggest that the primary and secondary net enrolment rates for girls in rural Pakistan are roughly 56% and 12%, respectively (Government of Pakistan, 2008).²⁰ Although significantly lower than the corresponding rates of 74% and 21% for rural males, these statistics actually indicate a tremendous increase since 1985, when the primary and secondary net enrolment rates for Pakistan's rural girls were only 21% and 2.5% (Government of Pakistan, 2008: 60; Mahmood 1992: 732). In other words, gender gaps in rural primary school enrolment rates have shrunk by over twenty percentage points over the past two decades, and gender gaps in rural secondary school enrolment have shrunk by nearly 5% during the same period – a much less striking jump, but a jump all the same (see Figure 1.5.1). This increased proportion of girls in school appears all the more striking when one acknowledges that Pakistan's total population has nearly doubled during the same time period (United Nations 2010: 179).

²⁰ Without controlling for urban/rural differences, the same dataset reports a total female secondary NER of 21%, and a total male secondary NER of 27% (Government of Pakistan, 2008: 60); UNESCO statistics from the same year report female secondary NER to be 28%, and a male secondary NER to be 37% (UNESCO 2010a). UNICEF data from 2013 report female primary and secondary NER to be 65% and 29.2%, respectively, and male primary and secondary NER to be 79% and 39.7%, respectively (UNICEF 2013). Regardless of the discrepancies between these datasets, the main points are that a) female enrolment lags behind male enrolment at all levels; b) enrolment rates for both males and females drop off precipitously in the transition from primary to secondary school; c) in cases where urban / rural data is available, rural enrolment rates are significantly lower, especially for girls, but d) nonetheless, all data suggest that the past two decades have brought tremendous growth in enrolment rates for boys and girls across all levels and locations.

	1985 primary	2008 primary	1985 secondary	2008 secondary
Rural Female NER	21.1%	56%	2.5%	12%
Rural Male NER	60.0%	74%	16.4%	21%
<i>Gender Gap</i>	<i>38.9%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>13.9%</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Change in Gender Gap</i>	<i>-20.9%</i>		<i>-4.9%</i>	

Figure 1.5.1: Growth in Male and Female Primary and Secondary Net Enrolment Rates, 1985-2008

Needless to say, Pakistani girls' rates of educational enrolment and attainment are alarmingly low when considered in absolute terms or in comparison to other countries in South Asia and beyond (see Lloyd et al. 2007: 101), and calculations of net enrolment rates offer only the crudest sketch of changing patterns in school participation. Girls in Pakistan continue to lag behind boys at all levels of educational enrolment, and these disparities are exacerbated by poverty and rurality (Lloyd et al. 2007: 105; UNESCO 2010: 68). Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the past two decades have yielded substantial changes in the rate at which Pakistani girls attend school: UNESCO reports that Pakistan's Gender Parity Index (GPI) for secondary education jumped by over twenty percentage points in the 1990's alone (2003: 7), and the World Bank reports that primary net enrolment rates for poor rural girls grew by nearly 200% during this period (2005a: 46).

The speed and scale of this ongoing transformation in the rate at which girls attend school makes Pakistan an ideal place to explore questions about how or to what extent this shift in school participation has been accompanied by a shift in gendered schooling norms. My focus upon girls' schooling is not meant to imply that boys' schooling is any less important, and my focus upon rural girls in particular is not meant to distract from the serious issues that plague schools and students in Pakistan's cities.

Rather, the basic rationale for the focus upon rural girls is that this is the cohort in which school enrolment has historically been the lowest, and thus the one in which recent changes have been most dramatic and pronounced.

I do not attempt to establish exact criteria for defining a given context as ‘rural,’ and it is worth noting the extent to which mass media and mobility blur the social and economic boundaries between urban and rural sites in Pakistan and beyond. With that said, however, it should be acknowledged that the three sites upon which this study is based are similarly ‘rural’ in their predominantly agrarian or pastoral economies, their limited access to electricity and reliable healthcare, their relative isolation from urban labour markets, and, crucially, their distance from reliable opportunities for post-primary schooling. Girls’ primary school enrolment in each of these sites has increased dramatically over the past two decades, and in this sense each site can be approached as a distinct example of the larger changes discussed above.

By exploring the social norms bound up in such changes, this study offers insights to scholars and practitioners who work in geographic contexts beyond Pakistan and who share an interest in broader theoretical questions at the nexus of gender, schooling, and social change. However, it is also important to emphasise that understanding Pakistan’s educational present and future is valuable in its own right. The events of 11 September 2001 brought renewed international attention to Pakistan and its geopolitical significance as a large nuclear-armed Islamic state that is both a refuge and a target for terrorist groups and that shares a troubled border with Afghanistan and a turbulent rivalry with India (e.g. Brookings 2011; Hathaway 2005; Winthrop 2011). Demographic statistics give these geopolitical concerns additional resonance. The

magnitude of Pakistan's 'youth bulge' is second only to that of Yemen: more than a third of the country's population of nearly 180 million is under the age of fifteen (UNESCO 2010a), and 67% of the population is under the age of thirty (Yusuf 2011). Some estimates project that the population will grow by another 100 million within the next twenty years (Burki 2005). With roughly 60% of the population living on less than two dollars per day, an adult population that in 2012 was reported as only 55% literate, and nearly a third of primary-school aged children out of school as recently as 2009 (UNESCO 2010a, 2014; Government of Pakistan 2009), a prosperous and literate adult population seems highly unlikely within the next generation. I have no intention of mimicking the alarmist tones with which some scholars have drawn links between education and religious extremism in Pakistan (e.g. Fair 2008; Singer 2001; Winthrop and Graff 2010), but nonetheless it is worth acknowledging that educational change in this country is likely to have repercussions that extend far beyond its own borders, and that this geopolitical fact shapes the various forms of international 'aid' and influence that have flowed towards Pakistani schools.

1.7: Outline of Chapters

The next four chapters set the stage for the main presentation of my fieldwork, which begins in Chapter 6. Chapter 2 briefly considers an ongoing DFID programme entitled "Transforming Education in Pakistan" (TEP), and explores how several TEP policy documents conceptualise demand for schooling as primarily a question of whether or not parents will enrol their children. It highlights how this conceptual framework sidesteps questions about how schooling is gendered and normed, and then uses this case as a springboard for theoretical discussion of world culture, the

imagination, indeterminacy, and what I call norm-making. Chapter 3 begins with a review of how economists have tended to think about demand in relation to the inputs and outputs of girls' schooling, and argues that traces of this core paradigm still shape mainstream education research, policies, and initiatives such as the MDGs and efforts at 'gender mainstreaming.' At the same time, the chapter also shows that this paradigm has been contested by economists and comparative education researchers, and explains how the present study builds on this counter-hegemonic scholarship. Chapter 4 situates discourses about demand for girls' schooling in Pakistan within a broader consideration of Pakistan's checkered history of social and educational development, as well as a review of important themes explored in anthropological work from Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia. This chapter works to contextualise recent changes in Pakistan's educational landscape as well as the norms of gendered personhood through which people imagine and produce the value of schooling itself. Chapter 5 presents my research methods, methodology, and epistemology, and interrogates how some of my own experiences as a researcher have been embedded in processes through which gendered schooling norms are made and contested across relationships of power.

In addition to 'setting up' the main presentation of empirical data, these four chapters are empirical in their own right: they track dominant discourses about girls' schooling as they manifest in education research and policy as well as in my own fieldwork. These chapters work to show how a particular set of arguments about the value of girls' schooling constitutes an imaginative regime that resonates across various interactions and contexts. This is not an argument of causality per se: it would be too simplistic to claim that a single hegemonic idea about the value of girls' schooling has

directly caused a ripple effect through research, policy, and popular discourse. Rather, it is an effort to elucidate something more akin to what Steiner-Khamsi (2012: 11) references to as “harmonization”: the process through which ideas about schooling form a “referential web” (Vavrus 2004) which structures hegemonic norms as well as the contexts in which actors agentively contest or adapt such norms. In this way, these chapters set the stage for my analysis of how people in Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande apprehend and adapt hegemonic discourses about the value of schooling, but they also present a substantive argument about how such discourses emerge and travel through networks of theory, research, and policy.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 form the empirical heart of this work. Each chapter introduces and explores primary data from one of the study’s three research sites. In Chapter 6 I present findings from Mulweer, a predominantly agrarian village in southern Punjab. I advance several related arguments about the ways that parents and daughters in Mulweer understand the value of girls’ schooling: that the relationship between demand and expected future employment is complex and often indirect, that the broad ideal of ‘being educated’ often seems to be the most powerful driver of demand, that this ideal is relatively new and contested in its assignment of an immediate positive social value to girls’ schooling, and that the core rationale for sending girls to school often reflects the continuation of patriarchal norms about the proper role of women in the household and the family. I highlight narratives from parents, teachers, and children about how norms and attitudes have changed, and emphasise the consistent recurrence of at least two themes. First, contrary to popular assumptions about household dynamics in conservative rural Pakistan, women and children frequently appear to be significant

drivers of change. Second, parents consistently acknowledge the persuasive effect of ‘seeing’ female neighbours attend school and subsequently ‘seeing’ such neighbours assume certain behaviours and mannerisms that they deem to be desirable.

In Chapter 7 I present findings from Abid, a second village in the southern Punjab that is similar to Mulweer in its predominantly agrarian history, but distinct in its closer proximity to an urban centre and associated opportunities for schooling and non-agricultural labour opportunities. I highlight continuities and differences between the approaches to girls’ schooling exhibited by Abid’s Muslim and Hindu communities and the multiple castes therein.²¹ I explore divergent views on the effects of girls’ schooling upon marriage prospects, and lend special attention to parents who report a willingness to assume a certain level of social risk in exchange for the perceived benefits of sending their daughters to school beyond a level that their neighbours might consider to be necessary or appropriate. I emphasise the extent to which respondents in Abid – similar to those in Mulweer – cite ‘seeing others’ as a driver of change, but also point out that social and religious boundaries tend to shape what people ‘see,’ and that variations in individual personalities and convictions can shape how or if this ‘seeing’ is translated into action.

In Chapter 8 I present findings from Ghande, a small village in the Baltistan region of the northern state of Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghande is distinct from Mulweer and Abid in several important regards including the degree of its isolation from other towns or cities, the influence of Nurbakhshi Islam, its past exposure to significant development interventions from the Aga Khan Development Network, and its status as a destination

²¹ See Chapter 4.5 for further discussion of my use of the term ‘caste’ in this study.

for foreign tourists coming to visit the nearby Karakorum mountains. Following the analytical track set by Chapters 6 and 7, Chapter 8 begins by describing how residents of Ghande report upon their perceptions of the value of girls' schooling, and then seeks to explicate the processes through which these perspectives have assumed their current form. Similar to the previous two chapters, Chapter 8 explores the extent to which parents understand the core value of girls' schooling to be independent from its likelihood of leading to employment, and then highlights the extent to which respondents report that this common perspective emerged somewhat recently as a result of 'seeing' the desirable traits of educated women from elsewhere. I attempt to retrace the pathways along which village residents develop and communicate ideas about the value of girls' schooling, and lend special attention to the argument that 'anyone' can afford the costs of their children's schooling if they want it badly enough. Teachers in Ghande often insist upon variations of this argument, and although I maintain a critical awareness of the self-righteous biases that sometimes seem to inform such teachers, I take seriously the testimonies that point to individual resilience and persistence as key drivers of change. In this way, Chapter 8 builds upon the argument in Chapter 7 that some parents – often in response to pressure from their neighbours, children, or siblings – adopt self-reportedly 'new' perspectives about girls' schooling not because of any reduction in the associated social or economic costs of schooling, but rather because of an individualised shift in the perceived benefits of schooling and thus in the willingness to bear such costs.

In each of these three empirical chapters, I explore how evaluations of girls' schooling are refracted through broader ideals of female personhood, particularly as

defined through shifting norms pertaining to employment, marriage, and *purdah*, but also as defined through broader processes of norm-making in which educational research and researchers themselves are embedded. I show that these norms vary across (and within) my research sites, and that demand for girls' schooling varies accordingly – firstly in terms of 'how much' schooling people consider to be necessary and valuable for girls, but also, and more interestingly, in terms of why this is so. I suggest that this divergence emerges through broad contextual features such as employment opportunities or exposure to NGO interventions, but also through micro-level social interactions and the agentic willingness of particular people to go 'against the grain.' Crucially, I also show that these norms do not sit easily with the neoliberal rationality embedded in dominant discourses about demand for girls' schooling, and that recognising this disjuncture opens up new possibilities for comparative understanding.

Chapter 9 synthesises insights gleaned through the previous three chapters. The point is not to generalise between the three research sites, but rather to hold each against the others as a means of seeing it more clearly. On the practical level, I demonstrate the problems with overestimating the power of formal schooling to drive 'empowerment' given the extent to which certain aspects of gendered power relations can maintain or reproduce themselves amidst broader currents of social change. I show that closer attention to divergent evaluations of schooling can allow for more robust comparison between different contexts where girls' schooling is on the rise, and that such comparison can allow us to rethink notions of 'global obligation' and how policy goals can be designed and measured. Thus, I conclude the study with a creative re-statement of how closer attention to the normative dimensions of demand for girls' schooling can

allow for new ways of thinking about educational change, social justice, and the obligations and opportunities for researchers at work in a world marked by divergent values and persistent inequalities.

Chapter 2: Indeterminacy and Global Norm-Making: Theorising Schooling, Gender, and Social Change

2.1: Overview: Analytical and Methodological Questions about Gendered Schooling Norms

The broad theoretical questions from which this study begins and to which it returns are essentially questions about how social norms emerge, persist, and change over time. The primary concern of this study is with gendered norms related to schooling, and more specifically how people enact, interpret, and alter such norms through processes that are locally contingent and indeterminate yet also situated within broader hegemonic “imaginative regimes” (Carney 2009; see above, Chapter 1.4). As noted above (Chapters 1.3 and 1.4), I ask these questions in the contexts of three villages in Pakistan, but I also ask them of the broader contexts or “referential webs” (Vavrus 2004) through which normative ideas about schooling and education travel and transform, and in which education research is embedded. By tracking the idea of ‘demand’ through these webs, I seek to illuminate some of the embedded assumptions that researchers and policymakers too often take for granted in discussions about the value of schooling, and in particular about the value of girls’ schooling. I argue that gendered schooling norms – along with the construction or embodiment of gender more broadly – are fluid, indeterminate, contextually contingent, and subject to agentic interpretation and transformation, but also hegemonically structured through processes of ‘norm-making’ that are wide-reaching across time and space. The roots and implications of this argument are both analytical and methodological, and thus so are the deeper theoretical questions with which the study engages.

The analytical questions are about what is going on in contexts where girls' participation in formal schooling is increasing at an unprecedented rate. What social norms and values are bound up in such processes, where do they come from, and how have they changed – if at all? More broadly, these are questions about how or to what extent the uptake of mass schooling is associated with broader patterns of social change or reproduction. The methodological questions are about how we can know, measure, and understand these shifting norms and values – how, in other words, researchers can look beyond the quantifiable inputs and outputs of girls' schooling to gain a more nuanced understanding of how schooling is gendered and 'normed.' I introduce these two sets of questions in Chapters 2.3 and 2.4, respectively, along with a discussion of how various other scholars have approached them.

The study brushes up against a third set of questions, too: normative questions about what sort of change schooling *should* promote, and associated questions about the ethical and epistemological foundations upon which such promotion can occur (see, for example, discussions of “global obligation” in Unterhalter 2003, 2005a, 2008). The study's empirical chapters reveal that many parents, teachers, and students evaluate girls' schooling in terms that are strikingly different than those cited most often in the development literature: for example, many parents explained to me that the primary benefits of their daughters' schooling were learning to read the Qur'an, learning manners and obedience, and learning to be good housewives and mothers. Many of the parents who enthusiastically sent their daughters to school insisted that girls should not pursue formal wage employment, and that girls should not be able to choose whom or when they marry. Perspectives such as these diverge significantly from mainstream

development discourses about girls' schooling as a harbinger of empowerment and gender equality, and these discrepancies raise crucial questions about the ethical and epistemological grounds on which it might or might not be justified to argue that girls' schooling 'should' be directed towards some ends rather than others. In light of such questions, it is indeed tempting to engage with the vast corpus of normative theoretical work arguing that schooling *ought* to enhance human rights, capabilities, and freedoms (see, for example, Alkire 2005; Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1999; Stewart 2005). It is equally tempting to explore how the cosmopolitan basis of such arguments has been critiqued by communitarian philosophers wary of defining and actualising universal concepts such as 'gender equality' (Santoro, 2009; Todd 2009), as well as by postcolonial theorists such as Said (1978) and Spivak (1988), and anthropologists such as Abu-Lughod (2013, see especially pgs. 85-87), all of whom offer important rejoinders to any uncritical declaration of what sort of 'universal' principles schooling ought to promote. However, doing justice to the complexity of such questions would require a separate study altogether, and thus the present study gestures towards the importance of such an inquiry and works to provide some tools with which it might be conducted, but does not attempt to grapple with it directly.²²

²² I have worked to lay the foundations for such an inquiry in a separate paper entitled "Girls' Schooling, Capabilities, and Adaptive Preference in Rural Pakistan" (Oppenheim 2012). In that paper, I note that any debate about global 'development' hinges on the question of how and how much one can claim to know about what is best for other people. I consider cosmopolitan arguments about human rights and social justice as well as more relativistic postcolonial and postmodern concerns about the ways that these very discourses are projections of normative hegemonic values. I explore the argument that human welfare – the ultimate goal of 'development' – should be understood in terms of one's "capabilities to pursue what one has reason to value" (Sen 1999: 74; Nussbaum 2000, 2001, 2003). I acknowledge that this approach avoids many of the pitfalls of moral or cultural imperialism by emphasising capabilities over actual functionings, and thus can place a clear emphasis on the *principle* of choice without seeming to go too far in presenting particular choices as right or wrong. Yet I also point out that the privileging of individual choice as fundamentally valuable is itself a normative move descendant from a particular intellectual tradition. Without taking issue with Nussbaum and Sen for insisting that academics should be willing to

Thus, instead of making my own normative argument about how one ‘ought’ to understand the value of girls’ schooling, I work to show how such evaluations have emerged and transformed amongst my research participants and throughout the larger contexts in which they (and we) are embedded. In the process of doing so, I also work to highlight some blind spots in current research and policy discourses and to suggest some methodological approaches towards shedding light on what these blind spots obfuscate.

The remainder of this chapter maps out the theoretical terrain within which I develop these analytical and methodological arguments. Its purpose is not to identify a single ‘theory’ that guides the subsequent empirical inquiry and analysis, nor to assert any sort of a-theoretical ‘ground’ upon which the study will present data and inductively attempt to establish a new theory or hypothesis (see Thomas and James 2006). Its purpose, rather, is to illustrate the questions and assumptions that dialectically shape and are shaped by every stage of what follows. Following Trondman (2008: 131), theory in

make such moves (see Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000), I argue that it is still worth questioning the extent to which such a “cross-cultural normative approach” (Nussbaum 2000: 222) is actually useful when attempting to think about the sort of social changes that can or should be encouraged in contexts where individual choice is not necessarily assumed to be an intrinsic good. In particular, I worry about the notion of ‘adaptive preference’ (see Nussbaum 2001, 2003; see also Sen 1990, 1995, 1999) and the ways in which it can be used to invalidate the articulated preferences of people who seek to increase some basic capabilities but not the capability of individual choice (for a similar critique of ‘adaptive preference,’ see Bano 2009: 6 and Bano 2012: 125-155). Consequently, I suggest that frequent references by some scholars and development actors to the link between the expansion of schooling and the expansion of choice are not references to an inevitable chain of causation so much as power-laden efforts to establish some ends as normatively better than others. The point here is not to dispute the possibility that capabilities might provide the most “relevant space of comparison” (Nussbaum 2003) and that the capabilities approach might fulfill Nussbaum’s aspiration to generate an “overlapping consensus” among people who otherwise have very different comprehensive conceptions of the good” (2000: 222). Rather, it is to suggest that the scope and depth of this overlap are often less than what Nussbaum and Sen appear to presume, and thus that the growth of girls’ enrolments in school does not necessarily indicate a wider ‘convergence’ of normative assessments about what girls’ schooling should achieve. It should be clear that this argument is directly related to the present study even though it is beyond the scope of the study’s primary lines of inquiry.

this study is the “precursor, medium, and outcome” in relation to which I interpret the lived realities at the study’s empirical core.

I begin with a case study that substantiates some of the arguments advanced thus far and sets the stage for the arguments that will follow (Chapter 2.2). I consider several policy documents pertaining to ‘Transforming Education in Pakistan’ (TEP), a recent initiative sponsored by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) with the explicit intention of boosting demand for schooling. I argue that these documents exemplify the blind spots and simplistic assumptions embedded in mainstream education research and policy discourses about demand. Then I review the work of some world culture theorists, and I argue that their perspectives about convergence reflect and support (inadvertently or otherwise) the blind spots that I have identified in the TEP documents (Chapter 2.3). I contrast this scholarship with other work that focuses more carefully on how the transnational convergence of schooling policy and participation often belies more complex disjunctures in interpretation and enactment. Then I turn towards the work of scholars who have called for more theoretical attention to the nuances of particular contexts and how people agentively contest and reimagine their social realities, even if within the ‘structure’ of hegemonic social norms (Chapter 2.4). I conclude by suggesting that the idea of ‘norm-making’ might be a useful tool for conceptualising such processes (Chapter 2.5), and then I share a brief anecdote from my fieldwork to show how this analytical tool can be put to use (Chapter 2.6).

2.2: Transforming Education in Pakistan: ‘Raising Demand’ for Eleven Pence per Person?

In September 2012, the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), in collaboration with several Pakistani NGO’s, launched ‘Transforming Education in Pakistan’ (TEP): an initiative with the explicit intent to “improve parental demand for, and mobilise political leaders to deliver access to, better quality education for children in Pakistan” (Development Tracker 2015; DFID 2013, 2014). The intervention works to “improve parental demand” by utilising “different channels of influence including advocacy, media, and data,” and is slated to run until October, 2016, with a total budget of over £17 million (Development Tracker 2015). In this section, I briefly consider how the concept of ‘demand’ appears in the core assumptions, the programmatic design, and the annual evaluations of the TEP initiative. It is important to emphasise that TEP launched after the conclusion of my fieldwork, and thus I make no attempt to present my findings as evidence of the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of TEP. It is also worth pointing out that TEP is not explicitly oriented towards stimulating demand for girls’ schooling, but rather for “education” in general.²³ Nonetheless, I suggest that TEP is a useful case study of how research and policy discourses often conceptualise ‘demand,’ and then I use this case study as an entry point for my larger theoretical questions about how norms change (if at all) in tandem with the uptake of schooling, and how such change can be measured and understood.

²³ In light of the conceptual distinction that this study works to maintain between schooling and education (see Chapter 1.2), it is worth emphasising here that the TEP discourse revolves around promoting the general benefits of “education” rather than differently situated instances of schooling. Perhaps the distinction is merely semantic and does not signify much about the broader logic of TEP, but at minimum I contend that this word choice is consistent with the general assumptions of TEP that I discuss in the following pages.

DFID's 2013 and 2014 annual reviews of TEP make explicit the basic rationale for the program: when parents are more aware of the "benefits of education," they will exhibit more "demand," and this will translate to a) increased pressure on politicians to spearhead education reform, and b) increased likelihood that parents will "not only send their children to school but also play an active role in improving the performance of these schools" (DFID 2013: 2, 2014: 2). At the surface level, this rationale makes sense, and indeed is consistent with my basic argument that in order for the concept of 'demand' to be useful, it must stand for something more than simply whether or not parents will send their children to school. However, this rationale begs at least two significant questions: what *are* the benefits of schooling, and how do parents become 'aware' of them? DFID's annual reviews of TEP gloss over the complexity of these questions, and I argue that this discursive move is indicative of several key assumptions and blind spots embedded in the larger imaginative regime within which initiatives such as TEP have been conceived and implemented.

In particular, I argue that TEP reduces 'demand' to the basic binary question of whether or not parents are willing to send their children to school, and implicitly assumes that all parents who exhibit such a willingness must share the same perception of how and why schooling is of value. In both the program's design and its framework for assessing its own progress, TEP makes little effort to engage with the divergent and context-specific ways in which parents might understand the value of schooling, and instead imagines "the benefits of schooling" to be equally accessible, intelligible, and desirable to all citizens.

DFID measures the progress of TEP based on five different ‘outputs,’ and Output 2 is “citizen awareness of the opportunity that education offers in Pakistan is increased” (DFID 2013, 2014). What is fascinating about Output 2 is that none of the four indicators associated with it assess the actual “citizen awareness” that is being pursued and purportedly achieved. Instead, all of the four indicators are exclusively oriented around measuring the scope of the marketing and advocacy campaign conducted by TEP. The first indicator purportedly measuring progress towards Output 2 is the number of journalists contacted in relation to the TEP campaign; the second indicator is the number of parents reached by “campaign-related content” (mostly television and radio advertisements); the third indicator is citizen engagement with the TEP campaign via social media, and the fourth indicator, “campaign brand awareness,” is the percentage of the population that reported knowledge of TEP in a Gallup Poll (DFID 2013, 2014).

In its annual reviews in both 2013 and 2014, DFID assesses progress towards Output 2 of TEP with a rating of ‘A+.’ These enthusiastic assessments are based upon data suggesting that TEP surpassed its own goals associated with the quantifiable indicators described above. For example, for the second indicator associated with Output 2 in 2014, DFID had aimed for TEP to ‘reach’ roughly 110 million citizens with its television and radio ads, and ended up reaching over 200 million (based on Gallup ratings and data) (DFID 2014: 7). Likewise, for the third indicator, DFID had aimed for TEP to ‘engage’ 50,000 citizens via social media, and ended up engaging 400,000 (DFID 2014: 8). Data points such as these inform DFID’s ‘A+’ assessment of progress

towards the intended output of increasing “citizen awareness...[of] the opportunity that education offers.”

In addition to measuring progress against these indicators, DFID’s annual reviews also include regression analysis of data from a ‘Parent Teacher Engagement and Satisfaction Tracker’ (PTEST) survey instrument. Rolled out in two waves, with 2000 respondents per wave, the PTEST instrument was intended to gauge the effectiveness of the TEP campaign upon citizens’ “attitudes and behaviours” (DFID 2014: 21). Based on the PTEST results, DFID’s 2014 annual review of TEP proudly reports that “by the end of the campaign, parents exposed to [the campaign]...were 30% more likely to say that their child is likely to attend primary school in the next six months than those that were not” (DFID 2014: 22). However, the report also includes the noteworthy qualifiers that “parents that claimed to have little or no knowledge of the campaign were just as aware of the benefits of education as those with high campaign exposure” (DFID 2014: 22), and that the results of wave two of the PTEST suggest a much “weaker” correlation between campaign exposure and behaviour change than was evident in wave one:

The strong difference in behaviour between those exposed to the campaign and those not exposed to the campaign that emerged in wave 1 [sic] had disappeared altogether by wave two ...Parents were no longer any more likely...to have personally taken at least one action demanding a better education for their children, or to have had their child attend primary school during the past six months. (DFID 2014: 22)

In other words: when both waves of PTEST results are considered together, it is not at all clear that the TEP campaign played a significant role in ‘raising awareness’ nor in changing behavior. Yet even so – somewhat inexplicably – Output 2 receives an ‘A+’ assessment.

DFID's broader assessment of the TEP program reflects the same optimism as its assessment of Output 2, and the assumptions underpinning this assessment become more clear in a section entitled "Value for Money":

[The] media campaign exposed 47 million parents with children of primary school age to messages aimed at increasing demand for quality education at a cost of £5.3 million. This means that DFID has spent on average, 11 pence per person for two years of messaging raising awareness of the benefits of education and the state of the system. Evidence from survey data shows that parents that recalled the [TEP] campaign messages a great deal or a fair amount...were 30% more likely to say their child is likely to attend primary school for the next six months than those that knew only a little about the campaign or did not recall it at all. In summary, we know that school attendance (and positive outcomes such as development of reading and writing skills) are associated with wider economic benefits such as improved child health and rates of child survival, as well as reductions in inter-generational poverty. This suggests that a campaign which helps create demand for quality education services is a cost effective complement to supply side interventions in the education sector. (DFID 2014)

This passage is remarkable in several respects. The clear implication is that the media campaign has been successful in 'creating demand,' and the primary evidence cited to support this claim is that an increased share of parents say that they will send their children to school in the future. 'Demand,' in this case, is being equated purely with the reported willingness to enrol children in school. There is no mention of TEP's stated goals of spurring deeper parental commitment to schooling so that they can exert pressure on politicians and work to improve the overall quality of their children's schooling. It is also noteworthy, of course, that the report does not mention the results of the second wave of PTEST, which cast considerable doubt upon the depth and scope of whatever impact (if any) the TEP media campaign seems to have had. Yet what is

perhaps most interesting about this passage – and the TEP program more broadly – is the mechanism of “raising awareness” through which the report imagines demand can *change*.

In other words, even if we set aside questions about the narrow terms within which demand is being conceptualised and the questionable validity of the data being cited as evidence of this demand, the logic of the report still appears simplistic at best. The report seems to assume that all citizens who are exposed to the TEP campaign content about the “benefits of education” will necessarily internalise this “awareness” and subsequently move closer towards the ultimate goal of “demand[ing]...better education for children.” Even more fundamentally, it assumes that the “benefits of education” are so universal that they can be dictated to the public via a media campaign designed for mass consumption. In this sense, the design of TEP reflects the basic assumption that the “benefits of education” transcend contexts and will be automatically endorsed by anyone who is made aware of them. Attendant to this is the assumption that parents who are not currently “demanding” education are simply not aware of its benefits, and that telling them the benefits will inevitably change their attitudes and behavior.

The “Value for Money” statement also reflects the sort of mechanistic thinking about schooling inputs and outputs which I have referenced above and which I will further explicate in the literature review in Chapter 3. The desired outputs are clear – schooling will lead to wide social and economic benefits – and the implication is that the input of “supply side interventions,” along with the TEP campaign to “increase demand,” will be sufficient to achieve these outputs. Also crucial to the rationale at play

here is the assumption that the campaign will achieve these outputs in a way that is “cost effective” at just eleven pence per person.

In explicating these discourses, my intent is not to dismiss TEP as altogether ineffective or unimportant. My intent, rather, is to add some substance to the arguments I have advanced thus far about the blind spots embedded in typical discourses about demand for schooling. Despite its stated goal of sparking deeper parental investment in their children’s schooling, TEP defines and measures ‘demand’ primarily as a matter of whether or not parents will enrol their children in school. Likewise, TEP imagines that changing “demand” is merely a matter of “raising awareness” about the self-evident “benefits of education,” and makes little effort to engage with the possibility that schooling is differently valued, imagined, and pursued by differently situated parents.

While I share the basic conviction of TEP that improving school systems will require more than mere “supply side interventions” (e.g. building schools or training teachers), and that policies should also engage with how citizens evaluate schooling opportunities, I contend that it is inadequate to assume that this can be meaningfully achieved via a mass campaign using television, radio, and social media. Likewise, I submit that researchers seeking to meaningfully understand whether demand has changed must do more than simply quantify the “reach” of such a campaign or ask whether or not parents will enrol their children in their school. Yet in the imaginative regime that animates the discourses of TEP, these indicators pass for sufficient because of the work that is done by the concept of demand: it implies a clear target, an efficient match for supply, and a tangible opportunity in which one can invest at large scale and hope for large returns. Most importantly, it implies a certain convergence of experience:

a sense that most people evaluate schooling through more or less the same lens, or at least that they will begin doing so once they get a taste of it.

Taken together, these interlocking assumptions of TEP amount to a particular way of answering the analytical and methodological questions asked in this chapter and throughout this study: what are the social norms at play in contexts where school enrolments are on the rise, how do these norms change over time (if at all), and how can such change be measured and understood? More fundamentally, these are questions about how ideas travel across time and space. I have suggested that initiatives such as TEP imagine normative evaluations of schooling to be converging across contexts, spurred on by a growing collective “awareness” of the “benefits of education,” and therefore measurable, at least by proxy, in tandem with enrolment rates and the ‘reach’ of mass marketing campaigns. The task now is to situate this particular way of thinking in relation to broader trends in education research and theory: some of which draw upon similar indicators to echo and reinforce the TEP’s vision of seemingly inevitable convergence, and others which explore the movement of ideas through a different lens and portray such processes as characterised by disjuncture and asymmetry.

2.3: What Is Going On?: Convergence, Disjuncture, and Asymmetry in the Flow of Policy, Norms, and Values

To better understand the discursive context in which initiatives such as TEP have imagined the movement and transformation of ideas about schooling, it is instructive to take another look at some of the scholarship loosely gathered under the heading of ‘world culture theory’ (see Chapter 1.4). It is beyond the scope of this study – and perhaps not possible – to argue that world culture theory (or similar scholarship that

goes by a different name) has directly shaped the design and implementation of specific policies or programs such as TEP. However, at the very least, we can identify parallel streams of thought, and can recognise how some of the core assumptions of TEP reflect and are reflected in wider trends in policy and scholarship. This in turn can expand our sense of how and why other scholarship, including the present study, seeks to diverge from these trends.

Following Carney et al. in their critique of the ways that some theorists present the global convergence of particular ideas and values as historically inevitable without realising that their indicators for convergence are somewhat superficial and that their own scholarship is in fact *producing* some of the same convergence that it attempts to measure (2012: 380-381; see Chapter 1.4), I begin with the case of Wiseman's paper entitled "A World Culture of Equality?" (Wiseman 2008). Wiseman acknowledges that "women's education is strongly contextualized by the social and cultural environment of the local schools and national education systems," but in almost the same breath, citing prominent world culture theorists such as Ramirez and Meyer, he asserts that "this environment is permeated by shared norms and values, which are shared not just by small groups but by larger communities of people who all participate in the worldwide phenomenon of modern mass schooling" (Wiseman 2008: 180). Along with Carney et al. (2012: 367), I am uncomfortable with how these oppositional arguments can seem to accommodate each other too easily, and I am inclined to question the scope and depth of these "shared norms and values," as well as the processes through which they supposedly come to "permeate." Most of all, I want to question the indicators that

Wiseman uses to make such an assertion, and to ask what blind spots the use of such indicators might reinforce.

Much of Wiseman's argument focuses on gender parity in school enrolment and achievement. Using data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995 and 2003, he points out, for example, that in many countries girls have begun to outperform boys in math and science, especially in primary school. Wiseman goes to great lengths to draw out a statistically significant relationship between the expansion of female voting rights and the improvement of girls' performance in eighth-grade math, and thus argues that "progress towards gender equality is taking place – slowly but surely...indeed, mass schooling has helped gender equality become part of a pervasive world culture" (2008: 193). My issue with this sort of argument is that it leaps too casually from quantifiable indicators such as voting rights and math achievement to the broad and loosely-defined concepts of "gender equality" and the aforementioned "shared norms and values." The implication is that any country where women can vote and do math must have loosely similar gender norms and a similar notion of "gender equality" towards which its people are striving. Perhaps this is the case in an extremely broad sense, but when it comes to actually understanding 'what is going on' for people living in such contexts, I am not at all sure that Wiseman's analysis takes us very far. The reasons for my skepticism become painfully clear in Wiseman's consideration of girls' schooling in Saudi Arabia.

Wiseman notes that girls' enrolment rates in Saudi Arabia have risen dramatically since 1970, and that the 2003 TIMSS data show that girls no longer lag behind boys in science or math achievement. Alongside these facts, he presents the

following analysis of how world culture, mass schooling, and gender equality intersect in Saudi Arabia:

Of special note is that the king of Saudi Arabia has a portion of his official, government-sponsored website devoted to gender equality in the first place! The obvious question is why. In large part, world culture is the reason why the Saudi king has gender enrolment statistics on his official website. The significance of this is important. Saudi Arabia is a society where women cannot vote or even drive, and there is a social and religious taboo that prevents men and women from different families from mixing or even meeting. Yet, the egalitarian influence of world culture has spread even to this society, and schooling is among the most important and in many ways the most sacred of world cultural norms and values. (2008: 194)

Wiseman seems genuinely surprised and excited to observe that the king of Saudi Arabia has listed girls' enrolment statistics on his website, and the king's public display of such statistics causes Wiseman to leap to the assumption that "the egalitarian influence of world culture has spread *even to this society*" (emphasis added). Wiseman does not seem to consider the possibility that the king's public discourses might not accurately reflect "this society" as a whole, nor that the king himself (or, more accurately, the king's public relations advisers), by publicly declaring progress towards quantifiable goals of gender equality in schooling, might be responding to the expectations of multinational institutions and frameworks rather than articulating "shared norms and values." Even as he acknowledges that women in Saudi Arabia are not permitted to vote or drive, Wiseman insists that rising rates of school enrolment and achievement – along with the mobilisation of such statistics in public discourse – necessarily indicate "the egalitarian influence of world culture."

My own interpretation of these facts is quite literally the opposite: the fact that rising female enrolment and achievement in school can easily coexist with institutionalised female marginalisation in other spheres of society demonstrates just how *limited* “the egalitarian influence of world culture” might actually be, even in contexts where mass formal schooling is on the rise. In other words, while Wiseman offers the expansion of girls’ schooling in Saudi Arabia as evidence of “shared norms and values” and “pervasive world culture” despite a few non-egalitarian features of the local context, I would argue that Wiseman’s indicators for convergence actually tell us very little about the norms and values that shape the meaning and experience of gender and schooling in everyday life. I submit, then, that if we seek to know and say something substantive about what the expansion of mass schooling means for parents and children and the lived experience of gendered norms and values in different contexts, we must look beyond simple indicators of enrolment or achievement in school, and beyond the question of whether or not prominent politicians choose to mobilise such indicators in their own public discourses.

Perhaps the issue here is mainly one of degree: I agree with Wiseman and his intellectual kin that the worldwide expansion of mass schooling is a powerful force and that it brings with it a degree of institutional isomorphism, but I am skeptical of the extent to which this expansion necessarily creates or indicates “shared norms and values” that “permeate” everyday life. In this sense, my critique of Wiseman can be extended to some aspects of Baker’s arguments about mass schooling and social change, or what he calls *The Schooled Society* (2009, 2009a, 2014).

Baker argues that formal schooling produces a “‘schooled consciousness’ promoting a culture of universalistic values, human empowerment, scientific knowledge, and rationality” (2009: 1). In making his broader argument about the extent to which schooling shapes society rather than merely reflects or reacts to it, Baker suggests that “the social reproduction argument misses the point that schooling as a social institution [still] constructs society” (2009: 7; see also 2014). This perspective adds a useful twist to paradigmatic debates about how and to what extent schooling is an engine of social change versus social reproduction,²⁴ for it suggests that even if schooling is reproducing social relationships (and in some contexts is reproducing social inequalities), the institution of schooling nonetheless brings to society certain unique features – a “‘schooled consciousness,” or Wiseman’s “shared norms and values.” More specifically,

²⁴ This theoretical debate is an important backdrop of the present study’s consideration of how or to what extent norms change in tandem with the uptake of schooling, and thus is worthy of brief mention here (and is explored further in Chapter 3). Some camps have argued that schools essentially reproduce economic inequalities – a view popularised by the work of Illich (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) in the wake of the 1966 Coleman Report in the United States and 1967 Plowden Report in the United Kingdom. Other camps have considered this strain of ‘reproduction theory’ (or, for Bowles and Gintis, ‘correspondence theory’) to be overly deterministic, and, building from Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ (1971) and Althusser’s ‘relative autonomy’ (1971), have posited more nuanced and dialectical relationships between economic, cultural, and educational change and reproduction. While Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bernstein (1977) have maintained that the cultural dimensions of schooling function primarily to reproduce the status quo, scholars such as Freire (1970), Willis (1977), Giroux (1980), and Apple (2002) and have pointed out the ways that schools can also be sites of dialogue, resistance, and cultural change. Foucault’s analysis of discourse, power, and the transmission of knowledge (1980) has influenced much of this theoretical landscape, and meanwhile, a range of feminist voices have emphasised that the capacity of schools to reproduce power dynamics must also be understood in terms of patriarchal forces and the unequal gender norms that they perpetuate (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005; Stromquist 1989, 1995, 2005). The present study takes these feminist analyses as its most obvious point of departure, but their theoretical relevance cannot be fully appreciated in isolation from the larger shift in education research of which they are a part: as Stromquist (2005: 90) points out, the field now known as comparative and international education has grown increasingly attentive to the ways that educational processes shape and are shaped by local relations of power, inequality, marginalisation, and subordination (see also Alexander 2001; Au and Apple 2009; Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008). While the sweeping international or country-wide assessments put forward by some contemporary development actors (e.g. World Bank 2011, UNESCO 2010, United Nations 2010) might seem to echo early comparativists such as Bereday (1964) and Noah and Eckstein (1968) in their breadth of analysis and reliance upon human capital theory, much recent scholarship has focused more carefully upon the ways that schooling experiences and outcomes are refracted through differences of class, race, gender, and culture that exist within the same country or even the same school, and this work provides the foundation for the present study.

Baker identifies four “institutional values” that constitute “global cultural dimensions of the schooled society”: education as a human right, universalism of educational merit, development of modern individuals, and the universal authority of knowledge enacted through higher-order cognitive skills (2014: Chapter 1).

I do not take issue with Baker’s basic point that the expansion of mass schooling can be credited with dramatically reshaping societies across many different contexts, but it is still quite a leap from this assertion to the assertion that, in doing so, schooling necessarily establishes a baseline “schooled consciousness” that is stable across time and space. Indeed, my own findings suggest that Baker’s “institutional values” are far from embedded in the three villages at the center of this study, and other researchers have reported similar findings from elsewhere in South Asia. First, many parents I met during my fieldwork express deep appreciation for schooling, but still stop short of calling it a human right, and do not hesitate to assert that under some circumstances, it is perfectly reasonable to send one child to school but not the other (see also Balagopalan 2005; Lyon 2010; Sawada and Lokshin 2001). Second, corruption, kinship networks, high youth unemployment, and limited social mobility complicate the notion that educational merit is a universal currency (see Lyon 2002).²⁵ Third, the idea that schooling is primarily a matter of developing modern *individuals* – an idea that Baker acknowledges is founded on “the modern notion of the individual as the basic social unit of society,” and is at root of human capital theory in addition to other dominant ways of thinking

²⁵ In his work on *Power and Patronage in Pakistan*, Lyon writes: “As young as 14 or 15, people [specifically the children of powerful landlords in northwest Punjab] have come to understand the ambiguous nature of doing well in school. On the one hand, it may open doors, but on the other, it will not open any doors that could not be equally effectively opened through family connections. Obtaining a place, and even a degree, in a Pakistani university can be accomplished by contacts rather than studying” (2002: 81). I do not intend to suggest that this is necessarily the case throughout all of Pakistan, but at the very least Lyon’s work complicates some of Baker’s sweeping assertions.

about the value of schooling (Baker 2014: 33) – is anything but taken for granted in contexts such as Pakistan, where notions of kinship, duty to one’s family, and Muslim selfhood complicate the ideal of the completely autonomous individual (see Lyon 2002: 3; Marsden 2010: xxiii; Shamim and Qureshi 2013: 471). And fourth, Baker’s suggestion that the expansion of mass schooling carries with it an increase in the authority of modern knowledge (while simultaneously “know-how from non-educational sources becomes less legitimate” (2014: 35)) is complicated in contexts such as Pakistan, where since 1973 the expansion of mass schooling has involved the mandatory inclusion of *Islamiat* (Islamic learning) and has also spurred competition with *madrasas* for state support and popular authority (see Bano 2007a, 2010; Nelson 2006: 715).

In their suggestion that the expansion of mass schooling necessarily creates an upswell of similar norms, values, and ideas, scholars such as Baker and Wiseman lay the groundwork for a particular way of thinking about demand for schooling. In this image of demand, evaluations of schooling appear to be somewhat uniform, or at least moving towards uniformity in their common appreciation of the shared values that schooling represents and instantiates. School enrolment and achievement, therefore, naturally appear to be evidence of the extent to which these shared values are “permeating” through society. This way of thinking about demand recalls the image of a braided river that I offered at the end of Chapter 1.4: contextual differences notwithstanding, all tributaries are flowing towards the same endpoint. Much like the “benefits of schooling” as conceptualised by TEP, in this image of demand the intended endpoint appears clear, obvious, and inevitable, and thus policymakers need only remove the ‘barriers’ that prevent this demand from being enacted. On the other hand, if we conceptualise

evaluations of schooling as less like the tributaries of a river than the currents of an ocean – complex, divergent, in tension, and shaped by different geographies as well as by each other – it becomes less clear that one can “raise demand” through a mass media campaign that merely explains “the benefits.” Likewise, it appears less certain that the act of enrolling one’s child is necessarily a meaningful proxy for demand. In short, I worry that theories of convergence invite and reinforce a tendency to imagine that people’s evaluations of girls’ schooling are more or less consistent across time and space, and thereby short-circuit more nuanced comparison between different modes of understanding and experiencing the meaning of gender and schooling across contexts.

Again, the issue here might be largely a matter of degree and emphasis. I agree that the institution of mass schooling emerges from a particular imaginative regime and that the expansion of this institution entails the dissemination of particular norms and values embedded in that regime. However, I am skeptical about the insinuation that the adoption and interpretation of these norms and values is uniform and inevitable, and I am inclined to look more closely at how people such as my research participants contest and re-interpret them.

In raising these concerns, I build upon the work of numerous other scholars who are attentive to the workings of hegemony and coercion as well as contestation and divergence in the movement of educational policies and practices across the boundaries of nation-states. Through their focus on how policies are differentially implemented and interpreted through sub-national institutions and contexts, these scholars add important nuance to what might otherwise appear to be the historically inevitable convergence of policy. For example, Steiner-Khamsi identifies globalisation not simply as an inevitable

external force but rather (or also) as a rhetorical construction that actors strategically mobilise in particular moments for the purpose of adding force and legitimacy to their own arguments (2010; 2012: 8-12). Like Broadfoot (2002: 134), Steiner-Khamsi and the authors she assembles in her 2012 edited volume of the *World Education Yearbook* suggest that models of policy borrowing, lending, and transfer must account more fully for the explanatory power of “local policy contexts,” and thus they refute the “commonsense – but naïve – assumption that reforms are imported because they have proven to be good or...because they represent best practices” (2012: 5). By calling for greater attention to subtleties of coercion, incongruency, and local idiosyncrasy (2012: 14), Steiner-Khamsi helps open the door for this study’s consideration of how the superficial convergence of education policy or school enrolments might obfuscate important differences in how schooling is perceived and experienced.

Likewise, in considering how schooling constructs national imaginaries, Popkewitz emphasises that “the playing field is not level” and that, despite policymakers’ frequent references towards “giving people voice,” the construction of voice is always mediated by relationships of power (2000: 5-8). In other words, Popkewitz highlights hegemonic aspects of schooling reforms while also pointing out that the adoption and desire for such reforms is not necessarily as uniform as hegemonic discourses would imply. Popkewitz argues that the policies of institutions such as the World Bank and USAID not only construct social and economic programs, but also “governing discourses that relate to the capabilities and being of the modern citizen” (2000: 19).

Along the same lines, as discussed in Chapter 1.4, Popkewitz and Rizvi identify education policy discourses as “generating principles that order what is seen, acted on, and thought about” (2009: 8), and Rizvi and Lingard argue that the globalisation of education policy amounts to an “authoritative allocation of values” which shape and are shaped by a “neoliberal social imaginary” that presents itself as inevitable but actually is the product of historically situated actors and interests (2010: 7). Similarly, Ball (2012) presents an extensive analysis of how contemporary education policies reflect a neoliberal social imaginary both in terms of the material and social relations that such policies create and in terms of the rationalities and notions of selfhood that they produce through what Foucault has called ‘governmentality.’ Ball demonstrates that the content and formulation of contemporary education policy are increasingly driven by non-state actors and shaped through networked processes that are incommensurate with earlier models of unidirectional policy transfer, and thus that “as soon as we take neoliberalism seriously, it becomes clear that education policy analysis can no longer be limited to within the boundaries of the nation-state” (Ball 2012: 4). By highlighting how schooling policies and programs emerge through asymmetric relationships of power between and within nation-states, these scholars open the door for further analysis of how their implementation is refracted through divergent contexts and lenses of interpretation.

The recent GEGPRI study (Unterhalter et al. 2011) provides a useful example of how such insights can be put to work. As mentioned in Chapter 1.4, the GEGPRI study sought to empirically investigate the negotiation and interpretation of global policies and agreements in local settings, and found “only a partial connection between...global policy aspirations for gender equity...and various sites of enactment” (Unterhalter et al.

2011: 11). The study suggests that while the MDGs may have succeeded in motivating a significant degree of coordinated effort towards achieving quantifiable benchmarks such as gender parity in schooling, the goals' minimalist conception of 'gender as a line to be crossed' allows for a sort of agnosticism about various other more complex ways in which people experience gender and the gendered value of schooling. Thus, along with much of Unterhalter's other work about the 'mutable meanings' of concepts like gender equality and empowerment as they are mobilised across different policy discourses and interventions (2012, 2014; Unterhalter and North 2011), the GEGPRI study demonstrates that "contentious issues of value associated with development" cannot be bracketed and set aside in favor of a focus on easily measurable "results" (2011: 11-12). Rather, questions of value are bound to resurface in the discussion and implementation of education policy, even if the policy presents itself as straightforward and value-neutral. The point is that understanding the normative implications of girls' schooling requires looking beyond questions of policy convergence or expanded participation. This insight anticipates Unterhalter's more recent call for researchers to "document education agents...doing gender," (2014: 121; see above, Chapter 1.4), and this is a call to which the present study responds.

Taken together, these scholars add an important layer of nuance to any argument about the shared norms and values that might seem to emerge and converge in tandem with the expansion of formal schooling. In one sense, they highlight how mass schooling emerges from and reinforces a particular imaginative regime, and in this way their arguments might seem to support the idea that the expansion of schooling necessarily indicates the establishment of common ideals. Yet at the same time, these scholars are

also attentive to how the apparent convergence of schooling policy and participation often belies more complex power-laden processes of interpretation, contestation, and enactment. Their scholarship suggests that understanding the movement of norms and values in tandem with the expansion of mass schooling will require research approaches that shed more light on how particular people apprehend, evaluate, and contest the meaning of schooling in their own lives and contexts. I turn now to the task of introducing some such alternative approaches in further detail, and in particular to the unique ways in which they respond to larger theoretical questions about dialectics of structure and agency.

2.4: How Can We Know?: Gender, Aspirations, Indeterminacy, and the Imagination

To understand what is going on when people encounter the hegemonic expansion of formal schooling (as well as the particular concepts of gender and personhood that inform this expansion), we must first understand how and to what extent they can contest or shape the broader contexts in which they are situated. Generations of scholars have sought to develop such an understanding through theoretical work related to the concepts of structure and agency (see MacLeod 2009: 11-23; Maslak 2008; Seeberg 2008). Critical race theory, resistance theory, and various strands of feminist theory have worked to explore the limitations and possibilities of individual agency in relation to larger structures of power and inequality that shape schooling processes (see Apple, Au, and Gandin 2009: 8-9), and in doing so have underscored the methodological value of exploring the ideas, experiences, and narratives of individual actors within macro-level processes of social change or reproduction. In what follows, I relate this scholarship to

my own understanding of gender and how the gendered value of schooling is at once hegemonic and also undetermined and subject to ongoing re-imagination.

In the introduction to his landmark study of aspirations and attainment among low-income youth in an urban neighborhood in the United States, insists that the lived experiences of his subjects “bear on the issues of social reproduction more directly than any sociological theory ever could” (2009: 23). Although the context and specific questions of his inquiry are quite different than those of the present study, MacLeod’s broader question is salient: “how much autonomy do individuals have at the cultural level?” (2009: 22). To answer this question, MacLeod focuses on aspirations: referencing Bourdieu and Willis, he notes that aspirations manifest “at the interface between structural determinants and human agency,” and thus “offer the sociologist a conceptual bridge over the theoretical rift of the structure-agency dualism” (2009: 22).

Likewise, in her study of “schooling amid crisis in Tanzania,” Vavrus argues that in the context of Tanzania’s neoliberal ‘development,’ the ameliorative potential of formal schooling is far less powerful than what its advocates often claim, but that nonetheless schooling provides a fertile “staging ground” for the imagination of different futures and possibilities (2003: 19). Building from Appadurai’s work on the imagination (see above, Chapter 1.4), Vavrus critiques the simplistic ways in which development discourses have imagined that the expansion of girls’ schooling will drive socio-economic change (2003: Chapter 1), but also shows that schooling nonetheless enables students and parents to re-imagine gendered relationships and norms. In this way, following a longstanding trend in feminist anthropology, Vavrus works to avoid reifying gender as an extrinsic set of conventions that governs “what men and women

do” (see Stambach 1999: 441-2), and instead approaches gender as a sort of prism that reflects, refracts, and is remade by a wide range of other social and economic arrangements. As it pertains to the present study, this approach allows individual instances of demand for girls’ schooling to shed light not just on hegemonic understandings of the gendered distribution of social ‘roles,’ but also on the fluidity of broader conceptions of what is socially possible and desirable.

It is precisely this wariness of reifying or essentialising gender and culture that drives my interest in particular instances of indeterminacy within demand for girls’ schooling. In the spirit of Geertz’s maxim that “human thought is basically both social and public” (1973: 44), I presume that individual assessments of the value of girls’ schooling both reflect and contribute to much larger ‘webs of meaning,’ and thus that nuanced tensions or fissures in demand can reveal at least as much about social change or reproduction as the broader ‘structures’ with which they are entwined. For this reason, I am less concerned with the direct outcomes of girls’ increased school enrolments than with the patterns of thought that surround this trend, and especially with the processes through which individuals adopt, contest, or contradict these patterns. Thus, rather than seek to make generalisations about overall changes or continuities in demand for girls’ schooling, I work to highlight and explore particular instances of uncertainty and indeterminacy through which people articulate their evaluations of girls’ schooling and the gendered ‘webs of meaning’ within which particular schooling opportunities are situated.

In this sense, I respond to Unterhalter’s call for further attention to how education agents are “doing gender” (2014: 121; see above) and also to Abu-Lughod’s

suggestion that “ethnographies of the particular” (1991: 475) can help social scientists avoid several problematic trends:

First, refusing to generalise would highlight the constructed quality of that typicality so regularly produced in conventional social scientific accounts. Second, showing the actual circumstances and detailed histories of individuals and their relationships would suggest that such particulars, which are always present, [...] are also always crucial to the constitution of experience. Third, reconstructing people’s arguments about, justifications for, and interpretations of what they and others are doing would explain how social life proceeds. It would show that although the terms of their discourses may be set [...], within these limits, people contest interpretations of what is happening, strategize, feel pain, and live their lives. In one sense, this is not so new. [...] But the difference here would be seeking textual means of representing how this happens rather than simply making theoretical assertions that it does. (1991: 475-6).

Other scholars have made a similar call for researchers to investigate the nuanced ways in which individuals exercise agency and effect change in their everyday lives even as the “limits” of such agency may be predetermined by broader social structures and hierarchies. Beach, for example, focuses explicitly on the practice of educational ethnography and contends – referencing Althusser’s concept of ‘relative autonomy’ (1971) – that

critical ethnographic representations are about showing *relations of indeterminacy as the autonomy of culture within larger processes of social reproduction*, and it is this quality that is the elegance of the best critical ethnographic work. (2008: 171; emphasis added)

The present study is epistemologically and theoretically oriented around the same assumptions that inform Beach’s and Abu-Lughod’s emphasis on the value of approaches to research that highlight qualities of indeterminacy and contextual

particularity in the making of social worlds. The basic premise is that scholarly work about what is happening in a specific place at a specific time should not rely on ‘culture’ or ‘gender’ as static explanatory variables waiting to be discovered or as bonded categories of human phenomena waiting to be described and catalogued. Instead, such scholarship should work to uncover complexities and tensions in the dynamic fabric of interwoven individual perspectives through which gender and culture emerge, and to explore how such points of indeterminacy are both indicative and constitutive of broader processes of social change.

It follows, then, that in the case of girls’ schooling in Pakistan it is insufficient to cite ‘culture’ or ‘gender norms’ as an explanation for why girls do or do not attend school, and equally problematic to assert that the uptake of girls’ schooling is ‘changing the culture.’ Such arguments tend to essentialise culture and obscure the extent to which and the means by which individuals and collectives contest and re-negotiate various norms and expectations pertaining to girls’ schooling. Moreover, as will be shown in the literature review in Chapter 3, such arguments about processes of change (or lack thereof) are often based upon analysis of ‘structural’ barriers and outcomes of schooling, but show little regard for the significance of agentive personal perspectives and normative evaluations within these processes.

In contrast, the empirical core of the present study revolves around the diverse ways that different people in selected villages in rural Pakistan perceive the normative value of girls’ schooling, and I work to highlight the rifts and tensions through which self-proclaimed ‘new attitudes’ are emerging. To be sure, these individual perspectives are circumscribed and shaped by other characteristics of the local and global socio-

educational landscapes within which they have emerged – but this does not mean that they are predetermined or insignificant. Rather, I proceed with the assumption that such perspectives emerge and transform with some degree of ‘autonomy,’ and this assumption drives my commitment to elucidating how and under what conditions such transformations occur.

2.5: ‘Local’ Demand, ‘Global’ Norm-Making, and Education Research²⁶

The focus on instances of indeterminacy through which demand for girls’ schooling emerges and transforms offers to enrich larger theoretical conversations about the interaction of ‘local’ interpretations of schooling with ‘global’ educational discourses. As noted above (Chapter 1.3), the study explores questions about ideas and values in rural Pakistan but also questions how ideas and values are transmitted and contested within broader spheres of academic research and policymaking, and understands all of these phenomena as interacting within a unitary sphere that is not easily characterised by the bifurcating concepts of ‘local’ and ‘global.’

This angle of inquiry offers to enrich researchers’ reflexive awareness of the real implications of choices they make while planning and conducting their work, particularly ethnographic fieldwork. It also offers to deepen their understanding of how the educational ideas, values, practices, and norms that they study move and transform across space and time through networks of knowledge and influence in which their work is inevitably included but not determining. These networks link the decisions of

²⁶ I am indebted to Dr Amy Stambach for her collaborative support in the development of many of the ideas articulated this section. I presented a version of this section at the XV World Congress of Comparative Education Society (WCCES) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in June, 2013. A similar version of this section, along with excerpts from Chapter 8, was published as a ‘featured article’ in the *Comparative Education Review* (Oppenheim and Stambach 2014).

researchers and policymakers to the decisions and lived experiences of actors who are often not involved in the formulation of research or policy. By exploring the ideas and relationships that comprise such linkages, this aspect of the study has two aims: first, to increase researchers' reflexive awareness of the hegemonic and normative aspects of trends in educational research and policy, and second, to simultaneously highlight the agentic role of the individuals and communities who actively engage with these trends and translate them into contextualised meaning and practice through ongoing processes of contestation and interpretation.

This aspect of the study focuses upon the dialectical and indeterminate qualities of the processes and relationships through which different actors – including but not limited to educational researchers – engage, transmit, and transform educational phenomena between spatial and temporal contexts. Researchers and many with whom they work often delineate such contexts as 'global' and 'local,' or further delineate between regional, national, and sub-national levels, but this study hesitates at such compartmentalisation (see above, Chapter 1.4; see also Ferguson 2006: 10). Instead, it conceptualises educational actors and phenomena as positioned within an endlessly intricate lattice of influences and relationships that converge and metamorphose at distinct nexuses. The study mobilises the notion of 'global norm-making' as a useful concept for understanding what goes on at these nexuses of engagement, and argues that the indeterminacy of conjunctural conditions means that educational researchers must grapple with the ethical implications of their capacity for making change – not just as researchers, but also as educators and citizens.

The concept of ‘global norm-making’ helps us proceed beyond a simplistic framework in which educational phenomena are understood to ‘move’ or ‘transfer’ from one context to another, and towards an understanding that is more attentive to the dynamic and dialectical processes through which such phenomena are refracted or produced within social, political, and economic asymmetries between differentiated persons and their differentiated worlds. This asymmetrical or differential complexity is often obscured by analyses that portray contextual particularity either as an ornamental form of ‘local variation’ within the larger globalising sweep of ‘world culture,’ or as so intensely localised that it appears to occur within a spatial and temporal vacuum in which other meanings do not exist and co-mingle. By advancing a better understanding of the dialectical interplay of what many call global and local actors and contexts but what this study regards more generally as an interplay of differential regimes of value informing the production of educational phenomena, the concept of global norm-making is both a lens and a mirror: it offers a new way of describing not just the people, places, and processes that education researchers study, but also how research and researchers exist in relation to these phenomena.

The remainder of this section begins by situating its argument in connection with recent scholarship that has laid an important foundation for conceptualising transnational dimensions of education and education research in terms other than the transfer or borrowing of policy. Then it presents a model of global norm-making that builds upon this prior work, and then it establishes its core argument about how this analytic scheme can enrich the field of comparative and international education. To show the utility of a global norm-making approach for identifying how some topics and questions can

become hegemonic within educational research, Chapter 3.7 considers the example of ‘gender mainstreaming’ and argues that the normative establishment of girls’ schooling as a key focal point for researchers and policymakers has led to a privileging of questions about enrolment and outcomes over questions about meaning in context. Then, to show the parallel utility of this lens in framing the decisions and experiences of situated actors who encounter and engage with such hegemonies, subsequent empirical chapters identify regimes and asymmetries through which a norm of ‘gender mainstreaming’ has been engaged and interpreted, and highlight researchers’ participation – though not domination – in this process. The study emphasises that the establishment, negotiation, and proliferation of this global norm, as well as its translation into local practice, are driven by actors with differential access to technologies of power that reside at the nexuses of engagement. Yet even as it acknowledges the extent to which educational phenomena are hegemonically structured not only in their establishment as global norms but also in their re-interpretation into local practice, it also continues to emphasise the theme of indeterminacy: an appreciation of the extent to which, even within structures of power and inequality, educational norms change and become substantiated as practice through processes that are anything but predetermined.

The theoretical terrain upon which this argument begins is one in which scholars from across the social sciences have contemplated the meaning and effects of ‘globalisation’ – a term here defined quite simply as a concept people deploy to describe the accelerating movement of people, goods, ideas, and influences across national and sub-national boundaries. Within the broad swath of phenomena that are inextricable

from ideas of global flows, the focus here is on schooling practices, and more specifically on how different actors think about, evaluate, and advocate for some schooling practices in relation to others. However, it is worth noting from the start that this argument also responds to larger paradigmatic questions (Cowen 2003) about tensions and dialectics between global hegemony and local agency (or for that matter global agency and local hegemony), between the structures, patterns, and forces of states or institutions and the embodied meanings of individual interpretation (see, for example, Anderson-Levitt 2003; Carnoy 2000; Finnemore 1996), and about where and how those who study such processes fit in relation to them.

The urge to introduce the notion of schooling as global norm-making emerges from a sense that much of the existing scholarship about schooling and globalisation has tended towards one of two emphases, neither of which leaves much room for theoretical, methodological, or ethical contemplation of the role of the researcher or of educational research more generally (nor of education itself): first, there is the overplayed, simplistic, but still resonant notion that the globalisation of formal schooling is leading to a grand convergence of cultural norms and economic interests in the melting pot of a global knowledge economy (see above, Chapters 1.4 and 2.3) – this of course is a particular incarnation of modernisation theory and before that of social Darwinism; second, there is the directly oppositional argument that ‘context matters,’ that meaning is constructed and communicated in particular contexts often seen as ‘local,’ and that individuals exercise degrees of agency even within the limits of macro-level ‘structures’ such as geopolitics, economic relations, or, as Charles Taylor (2004) calls them, other “modern social imaginaries,” including those of gendered identities. Some scholars have

usefully pointed out that these two emphases must be understood as dialectically interrelated (e.g. Anderson-Levitt 2003a; Stambach 2003; Strathern 1995), but it is quite a different thing to explore how this dialectic actually unfolds – through what actors, nexuses, decisions, and processes – and how educational research and researchers have, can, or should fit within it.

In their recent critique of world culture theory (also known as sociological institutionalism), Carney, Rapple, and Silova open the door for this kind of analysis, but they do not pass through it or indicate how others might attempt to do so (2012; see above, Chapter 1.4). They helpfully point out that the oppositional arguments of global convergence and local distinctiveness actually accommodate each other quite easily, and thus have reached a sort of “impasse” that short-circuits further inquiry. The authors are explicit about their intent to “recharge” this debate (2012: 367), and are quite convincing in their deconstruction of how recent iterations of world culture theory have tended to normatively produce and promote the very phenomena of convergence that that they purport to investigate (2012: 380). However, the authors are less clear about the import of this deconstruction for educational researchers who engage in ethnographic fieldwork and thus are likely to already share their critique of the failure of world culture theory to adequately address the local motivations, meanings, and shared (or splintered) understandings that underlie superficial convergences in policy or quantifiable macro-level trends (2012: 375; see Anderson-Levitt 2003). The authors acknowledge that their own research has explored the “contested meaning attributed to schooling across contexts” (2012: 375), but they offer few theoretical or methodological insights to guide investigation about how and to what extent these localised meanings and practices exist

in relation to the transnational hegemonies that the authors aptly identify as the underbelly of what others have simplistically considered to be an emergent “world culture.” The reader is thus left with a sense that the original impasse has been exchanged for a “recharged” critique that highlights the normative (liberal and neoliberal) biases embedded in world culture theory but offers little insight about what it is that such biases actually obscure.

In this regard, Carney et al. are correct to point out that world culture theory tends to create what it wants to see, but they miss the full implications of this fabrication and the causal chain in which it is empirically embedded: seen through a lens of global norm-making, world culture theory is not merely a distorted description of global trends, but also a way of thinking about such trends that actively (though perhaps unconsciously) helps to create and establish them by positing ‘convergence’ as inevitable and normatively positive. Applied to world culture theory – or any other academic trend – a framework of global norm-making highlights processes of iteration and recursivity that lead to generalised patterns of scholarship that may seem to simply describe ‘what is going on,’ but, more than mere theories that orbit and amplify within academic circles, also transmit particular ideas and values and thus affect the lives of people with whom researchers work and study.²⁷

Thinking in terms of global norm-making also highlights that researchers – as embodied individuals building relationships, asking questions, and sharing ideas – are vectors of such transmission, particularly while doing ethnographic fieldwork. In this sense, reading academic trends through a lens of ‘global norm-making’ is a new form of

²⁷ For a broader discussion and a substantive example of how a lens of global norm-making can be applied to the industry of academic publishing, see Stambach et al. 2011 and see Chapter 3.7 of this study.

researcher reflexivity: it can inform the questions researchers ask, the answers they think they hear, the meanings they inscribe, and their awareness of how all of this intertwines with the lives of people with whom they live and learn. It invites reflection upon aspects of their bias that emerge not from conscious personal preference or past personal experience so much as from their participation in academic circles and their engagement with academic and popular literatures in which some questions and ideas are inevitably privileged over others.

At the same time, the concept also sheds new light upon what might otherwise be glossed as simply ‘local variation’ within an emergent world culture. Carney et al. are useful in their effort to expose the normative aspects of world culture theory and its sleight-of-hand promotion of a neoliberal conception of educational ‘progress’ (2012: 381), but their critique does not address how to understand locally contingent educational meanings and practices in relation to this normativity and the transnational hegemonies to which educational research often contributes. The concept of global norm-making thus can encourage researchers not only to look more deeply at the complex diffusion of ideas and norms across contexts, but also to read themselves into this process so that they can better understand how the field of education as researchers conceive it is infused with and contributes to norm-making. The framework offers to highlight, in other words, the interactional and dialectical qualities of the processes through which transnational influences arrive in and are refracted through ‘local’ contexts, including those that researchers of education inhabit.

This study's use of the concept of global norm-making builds from the work of Halliday and Carruthers, who propose that today's world trade, finance, and bankruptcy laws can be understood as emerging through a set of three cycles:

(1) at the national level through recursive cycles of lawmaking and law implementation, (2) at the global level through iterative cycles of norm making, and (3) at an intersection of the two where national experiences influence global norm making and global norms constrain national lawmaking, in an asymmetric but mutual fashion. (2007: 1138)

Adapting this analysis, the study suggests that education of the kind sponsored by governing bodies as diverse as ministries, international agencies, voluntary associations, and corporate and charitable philanthropic boards unfolds through cycles of norm-making and policymaking that occur at large global and national scales, but also always at increasingly more specific levels of local contingency. The 'local,' in this sense, is always defined by those who perceive it as such, and thus can refer to a geographically bonded sub-national region or village as well as a geographically dispersed diasporic or even virtual community working to better a particular place or people. This study's interest in local contingencies begins with the fact that educational practice can diverge dramatically from 'official policy' based on conditions of economy, geography, and access to knowledge networks and human resources, but the heart of this interest is not rooted in the divergence of educational practices so much as in the contingency of educational meanings upon interpretation by actors at every scale or level of transmission and enactment. The hinge of this argument is that the generative points at which educational norms and policies influence and constrain each other are also home to the intertwined co-emergence of meaning and practice, and thus that actors at these

junctures simultaneously transmit forms of hegemonic educational phenomena and contest these phenomena through collective and individual interpretation.

While Halliday and Carruthers focus upon intersections between global and national levels, the argument here contends that these dialectics also play out at various intersections between and within institutions, communities, and families – or, more precisely, at the intersections of interests differently held by people who comprise such groups and whose conception of ‘the local’ might as easily be a village as a lecture hall or board room. Following Halliday and Carruthers (2007: 1138, 1151, 1188), the framework of this study emphasises that these intersections are characterised by asymmetries of power both within and across locations, but expands upon Halliday and Carruthers’ analysis to note that macro-level asymmetries between, for example, states and multinational institutions are both paralleled by and unevenly integrated with more localised asymmetries between individuals and organisations. Finally, much as Halliday and Carruthers reaffirm the extent to which postcolonial studies of local contestation and renegotiation have disrupted simplistic histories of law as a reified and impersonal mechanism of global hegemony (2007: 1140, 1196), this study suggests that attempts to understand and predict the implications of expanding mass schooling will require a commitment to empirically investigating the dialectics, asymmetries, and subjectivities through which emergent global norms are challenged and instantiated.

All of this amounts to a call for renewed methodological attention to the spatial and temporal nexuses at which educational research shapes and is shaped by the refraction of ‘global’ trends into specific ‘local’ contexts. This valuing of context specificity is akin to Abu-Lughod’s call for more “ethnographies of the particular” (see

above, Chapter 2.4) – not for the sake of privileging ‘local’ over ‘global’ or promoting unnecessary distrust of research that aspires towards generalisation, but rather for the sake of discovering new insights about the intersections through which academic trends, international norms, and national policies become embodied in practice and imbued with meaning. Understanding what goes on at these nexuses means understanding the unseen lattices of influence from which education research emerges and to which it can contribute, and this study attempts to enact such a possibility.

2.6: “It Is Hard for Us To Imagine All of That”: An Anecdote from Mulweer

To substantiate the theoretical arguments that this chapter has put forward, I conclude by offering a brief anecdote from my interaction with Kamal, a mother of six children in the village of Mulweer. Kamal and her husband cultivate cotton and wheat on land that they do not own, and her husband is also a ‘hawker’ – he sells cheap dry goods to other residents of Mulweer. On a good day, he earns one hundred rupees (about \$1.25 USD). Neither Kamal nor her husband ever went to school, but at the time of my fieldwork their three sons were all enrolled and attending school in Mulweer. However, none of their three daughters were currently enrolled or attending, despite all being of school-going age, and despite having each been enrolled for some amount of time over the past few years.

As I spoke with Kamal about her daughters’ schooling, she pointed out a number of reasons for their current non-participation: the direct and indirect costs of schooling, health problems in the family, and more general concerns about whether the school environment (Urdu: *mahol*) was appropriate for girls. None of this was particularly surprising to me, for I had heard similar concerns from many other parents, and indeed,

these issues are well-documented ‘barriers’ to schooling (e.g. Herz and Sperling 2004; Unterhalter et al. 2014). What struck me, rather, was the tone of exasperation in which Kamal responded when I asked her to tell me what she thought might be some of the benefits of schooling for her daughters if they were hypothetically able to attend:

It is clear you people think education is very good, but
because we are facing problems it is hard for us to imagine
all of that.

-Kamal, mother of six²⁸

This simple statement bears out the arguments of this chapter in several important ways. The first point is that the potential benefits of schooling are unclear to Kamal, but not because of any lack of ‘awareness’ of how others might define such benefits. Kamal is acutely aware that some people “think education is very good,” and this hegemonic evaluation has perhaps contributed to the broader shift in enrolment underway in Mulweer and to the fact that Kamal and her husband did, at some point, enrol each of their six children in school. Yet being ‘aware’ of how others evaluate schooling is clearly not the same as sharing the same evaluations, and there seems to be little reason to assume that the rise of schooling in Mulweer has led Kamal to adopt any ‘shared norms and values’ with regard to the desirability or necessity of schooling.

This leads to the second point, which is that Kamal assumes (perhaps quite rightly) that my interpreter and I – and the broader networks we represent, as implied by “you people” – have already formed our own normative evaluations of schooling, and that these evaluations are informed by circumstances quite unlike those of her own. The issue, as she states frankly, is one of imagination: it is not simply that we can afford schooling while she cannot, nor simply that we can access quality infrastructure

²⁸ Interview 15.

and opportunities while she cannot; it is more fundamentally that we apprehend the institution of formal schooling through a different evaluative lens. Our interaction, then, can be considered an instance of ‘norm-making’: it involves the collision of different (and perhaps competing) regimes of value, and its outcome is indeterminate and incommensurate with any simplistic model of either global convergence or local particularity. There is no doubt that these differing regimes of value are asymmetrically weighted with power, and that the very presence of a foreign researcher working closely with the local NGO school to do research about girls’ schooling – regardless of my efforts to avoid projecting my own biases – would reinforce the hegemonic notion that “education is very good,” and that girls’ schooling, in particular, is worthy of special attention. Yet even within the contours of this asymmetry, Kamal is far from a passive receptacle for the establishment of hegemonic ‘global’ values; rather, she questions such values and frankly acknowledges how they are incommensurate with her own experience and imagination.

Finally, then, the third point: there is little reason to assume that, if Kamal *did* send her daughters to school, it would necessarily indicate a convergence of norms and values. Suppose, for example, that Kamal and her husband were to receive stipends or scholarships that allowed them to afford the direct costs or indirect costs of schooling (e.g. reduced productivity due to the loss of their daughters’ labour in the fields), and that they subsequently enrolled their daughters in school. Suppose, also, that after several years we could collect data indicating that Kamal’s daughters had made significant learning gains and had also improved in their health and general welfare. We – along with many others who already “think that education is very good” – would

likely consider these data to reinforce our sense of the positive benefits of schooling.

Yet how would we know whether or to what extent Kamal and her family had come to share such a perspective, and had come to imagine the value of schooling through a lens similar to our own? The data alone could not tell us.

The same point is true if we invert the hypothetical situation completely: suppose that after several years, Kamal still was unable to enrol her daughters in school. How would we know whether her own agentic evaluation of schooling had changed in the meantime, even within the social and economic constraints that may have barred her from translating her evaluation into the act of enrolment? Again, I contend that we would be unable to meaningfully answer such questions if our data were solely limited to a focus on enrolment and outcomes, and this point provides the core rationale for the present inquiry and its development of an analytical lens that more is more attentive to the multidirectional processes through which ideas about schooling emerge and transform. The next task is to apply this lens to some of the literature about girls' schooling, 'demand,' and development, and to further elucidate how this literature is itself embedded in broader processes of norm-making.

Chapter 3: Literature Review: ‘Imagining Demand’ through Education Research and Policy

3.1: Overview

This literature review tells a story which is about ‘imagining demand’ in two distinct senses. In one sense, it is a critique of how some researchers and policymakers, by conceptualising modern mass schooling as obviously desirable and inevitable for all, have imagined demand for schooling to be something that it is not. This is imagining in the sense of projecting or hypothesising something which is not empirically ‘real,’ or perceiving reality with a degree of inaccuracy due to embedded biases and blind spots. The blind spots in question here include a preoccupation with quantifiable (and largely economic) ‘returns’ to schooling and a subtle conflation of demand with supply: many studies purportedly about ‘demand’ are in fact about what conditions of supply are most likely to boost enrolment; they do not actually grapple with the question of how people evaluate schooling and experience its meaning. This critique involves comparing global schooling policies (that is, policies and discourses attempting to claim global resonance) with local realities, and exploring the gap that Unterhalter et al. have identified between “global policy aspirations for gender equity” and “various sites of enactment” (2011: 11).

At the same time, however, this literature review – along with the broader arc of this study – destabilises the conceptual binary between local and global, and suggests that if there is anything we can meaningfully describe as demand for schooling in a given context, it is a dynamic evaluative framework shaped by competing imaginative regimes that span wide geographies and power structures. In this sense, demand is

always collectively ‘imagined,’ and there is no wholly ‘local’ demand for schooling which is distinct from researchers’ or policymakers’ imaginings of it, for particular instances of demand – even if contextually contingent – emerge through dialectical interplay with transnational values and norms. In other words, when researchers and policymakers conceptualise (or mis-conceptualise) demand for schooling through lenses clouded by their own biases, they might misrepresent the realities they seek to describe, but they also *shape* those realities. This is imagining in the sense of creating and sustaining a particular vision of the way things are, and it is akin to what Stambach et al. (2011) have called “global publishing norm-making”: the imaginative regimes that animate hegemonic trends in research become recursively self-reinforcing and are dialectically entwined with their objects of analysis, even as they claim for themselves a stance of objective distance.²⁹

This literature review explores both forms of imagining as they have manifested within academic research about girls’ schooling. First, I substantiate my claim that researchers and policymakers have tended to conceptualise demand in ways that obscure or ignore the complex processes through which people evaluate schooling. Second, I argue that this tendency has not proliferated by accident; rather, the particular ways in which researchers and policymakers have tended to think about demand for schooling must be seen as emerging from within the ‘neoliberal social imaginary’ introduced in

²⁹ Perhaps it could be argued that any corpus of academic work emerges through and as a similar process of norm-making, but the point is particularly relevant in the present study insofar as evaluations of girls’ schooling – unlike, for example, the correlation between test scores and future earnings, or the behavior of an atom or the patterns of natural selection – are fundamentally normative and indeterminate. In this sense, it is ‘turtles all the way down’: my consideration of how scholars have conceptualised demand for schooling cannot be wholly distinguished from my consideration of how demand manifests ‘on the ground,’ and thus the research and policy trends reviewed in this chapter must be considered primary empirical evidence as well as secondary analyses (see Chapter 1.7).

Chapter 1.4, and more broadly from a tradition of economistic thinking about education which privileges a focus on measurable outcomes and ‘quick fixes.’ I trace a process of norm-making to show that research paradigms shape each other as well as the social worlds in which they are deployed, and that demand for schooling emerges through these processes as indeterminate, fluid, and resolutely social.

The arc of this literature review begins by highlighting three problematic trends in how researchers and policymakers have tended to mobilise the idea of ‘demand’ for schooling (Chapter 3.2). I show that research papers and policy evaluations have tended to imagine demand as for schooling as something that is latent, inevitable, and neatly measurable by the rate at which people participate in school. I emphasise that scholars have tended to discuss demand in terms of ‘how much’ rather than ‘what kind,’ and that the qualitative aspects of demand – that is to say, norms and values bound up in decisions about schooling – tend to be referenced superficially if at all.

In the subsequent section (Chapter 3.3), I locate the roots of this trend within broader economistic analyses of education. Following Unterhalter’s critique of the conceptual paradigm in which gender is ‘a line to be crossed’ (2012, 2014; see Chapter 1.4), I trace the contours of a broader trend of economistic thinking about development and schooling, particularly girls’ schooling: a focus on rate of return, barriers and outcomes, and a tendency to imagine schooling in neatly mechanistic terms which do not fully capture the multidimensionality of particular evaluations of schooling. I then review the relatively recent explosion of academic and popular interest in the outcomes associated with sending girls to school (Chapter 3.4), and point out that this popular

focus on how and why to get more girls into school has often passed over questions regarding how and why such schooling is valued at the household level.

The next section (Chapter 3.5) explores the work of comparativists and various other scholars whose research has looked ‘beyond access’ to investigate the extent to which girls’ schooling can be an engine of social change and a driver of women’s empowerment, autonomy, and equality. This scholarship echoes Unterhalter’s notion of gender as a net or a fuel (2012, 2014), and it provides a foundation for my own critique. These scholars are more attentive to context specificity and are justifiably critical of the tendency to treat gender as a line. Their consideration of concepts like ‘autonomy’ and ‘empowerment’ call attention to questions beyond mere enrolment or ‘rate of return,’ but they still tend to be preoccupied with measurable ‘outcomes’ of schooling and rarely explore how schooling is valued and perceived. Moreover, as shown in Chapter 3.6, the task of defining and measuring outcomes such as ‘autonomy’ and ‘empowerment’ is fraught with difficulty, and this point underscores the need for exploring the norms bound up in schooling rather than simply measuring schooling ‘outcomes.’

The chapter’s penultimate section (Chapter 3.7) takes a step back to consider the interplay of the trends described above with deliberate efforts at ‘gender mainstreaming’ in recent decades. I argue that even as researchers and policymakers have worked to ‘mainstream’ a focus on gender, their efforts have been embedded in cycles of norm-making which prioritise a focus on boosting enrolments and measuring outcomes rather than exploring how people imagine and experience the gendered value of schooling. In this sense, I show that gender mainstreaming emerges through and as a process of global norm-making, and is thus entwined with – not apart from – the research and policy

trends which it attempts to transform. The final section of the chapter (Chapter 3.8) then offers a more focused summary of the limited scholarship which has departed from the dominant paradigm and set the stage for this study's presentation of a renewed concept of demand for schooling.

3.2: 'Demand' in Research and Policy: Three Problematic Trends

In this section I highlight several prevailing trends within research about demand for schooling and the background factors and policy interventions that purportedly shape demand. My critique revolves around the simple point that efforts at measurement have tended to gravitate towards that which can be easily measured, and thus have been somewhat agnostic towards aspects of demand that resist simple quantification. Consequently, research about demand has tended to use enrolment as a primary indicator of demand, and when seeking to understand changes in demand has focused on the relationship between enrolment and various measurable 'inputs' such as cash or school infrastructure. This amounts to a purely transactional understanding of demand: that is, demand is explored and discussed only as it pertains to the actual exchange of time, money, or other resources for a child's schooling. While such a conception might be an appropriate lens for considering household demand for onions or kerosene, I argue that this understanding of demand for schooling is insufficiently nuanced and that it is incapable of accounting for the norms and values that underpin schooling decisions. Recalling Unterhalter et al.'s observation that norm-changing interventions are "under-researched and under-resourced" (2014b: 1), I show that researchers of demand have tended to ignore questions about norms or deal with them only superficially, and that this limits comparative understanding of the meanings of schooling across contexts.

This tendency to overlook the qualitative and normative dimensions of demand manifests as three problematic blind spots in the literature. First, demand is conflated with enrolment, and it is impossible to determine whether or how perceptions of schooling might change even as enrolment stays stable (or, conversely, how perceptions of schooling might remain static or change in divergent ways even as enrolment patterns appear to grow towards convergence). Second, demand is assumed to vary in quantity, but not in quality; that is, researchers will ask whether parents exhibit more or less willingness to send their daughters (and sons) to school, but tend not to explore the possibility of qualitative shifts in how parents think about the (gendered) value of schooling. Third, demand is conflated with supply: variables such as school infrastructure and household income are often considered to be ‘demand-side factors’ even though they reveal almost nothing about how schooling is perceived. The net effect of these trends is that researchers have developed a good understanding of the general factors that tend to shape whether or not a child enrolls and persists in school, but very little understanding of the particular (and often divergent) ways in which schooling is normed and valued by different parents and community members within a given context. Consequently, ‘demand’ tends to appear stripped from the particular contexts in which schooling decisions are made, and the details and mechanisms of context-specific changes in demand remain obscured.

The key point here is that these tendencies in the literature subsume the context-specific meanings of schooling into an implied narrative of convergence that obscures important differences and constrains comparative understanding. When enrolment is high or rising, researchers have tended to conclude that ‘demand is strong.’ ‘Demand’ in

this case serves as a metonym for all of the background variables that seem to contribute to enrolment growth, and invites little attention to the possibility that enrolment in school means different things for different people. Within this concept of demand, there is little space or incentive to explore how schooling is ‘normed’ in relation to key features of a given social landscape, such as marriage, employment, and *pardah* in the case of the present study. Likewise, when enrolment is low, researchers have tended to portray social norms as ‘barriers’ to an assumed demand rather than as constitutive features of a particular instance of how people actually understand and experience the value of schooling. Again, recall the river metaphor from Chapter 1.4: my concern is that when researchers assume that different instances of demand for schooling are merely tributaries of a single current flowing towards a single convergent endpoint, and that these tributaries need only be ‘unblocked’ in order to flow freely, researchers lose the opportunity to recognise that there are divergent currents at play, and that none is necessarily more natural or inevitable than any other. By working against this trend, my hope is to draw renewed attention to the critical question of how the meanings of schooling flow across time and space, and how these currents of meaning, far from latent or inevitable, are shaped and re-shaped through real interactions and power-laden processes of norm-making.

Nelson raises similar questions and concerns in his article “Muslims, Markets, and the Meaning of a ‘Good’ Education in Pakistan” (Nelson 2006). Perhaps more so than any other published academic work of which I am aware, this article critiques common discourses about ‘demand’ in a way that anticipates the rationale for the

present study. Nelson begins by pointing out that despite the increasing prominence of discourses about school choice and ‘demand-driven’ reforms,

scholars and policy-makers alike have failed to devote sufficient attention to a disinterested assessment of local educational ‘demands’...[and] in fact have demonstrated a remarkably consistent attitude in turning their attention away from what individual preferences *are* and toward a politically motivated account of what scholars and policy makers believe they *should be*. (2006: 701; emphasis in original)

Nelson documents a “significant gap” (708) between the general expectations of education donors and policymakers and what he calls “the substantive features of local educational demands” (701). His qualitative research amongst UNICEF and USAID staff in Rawalpindi highlights their general assumption that parents will converge towards rational secularism, and he juxtaposes this finding against his research amongst citizens who predominantly report that they value religious schooling as much as or more than other forms of schooling which might be more likely to lead to employment (709). Regardless of whether or not these particular findings can be generalised beyond Nelson’s sample of roughly 100 households in Rawalpindi, what resonates here is his account of the blind spots of donors and researchers. Nelson points out that the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program has made “little discernible attempt to publish any systematic or disinterested account of local educational demands even though they claim their work is ‘demand driven,’” and he reports being told by ESRA staff that they had “no time for ‘ethnographic research’” (719-720). Nelson’s concern with such blind spots is that they can reinforce a narrative of convergence which is empirically unfounded. He contends that while world culture theorists like Meyer are surely correct to point out increasing patterns of educational

isomorphism, they should recognise that these patterns may be moving in multiple directions at once and do not necessarily imply “a unidirectional pattern of value-based convergence” (704; recall also my critique of Wiseman and Baker in Chapter 2.3).

In what follows, I build on Nelson’s research by exploring the extent to which some of these same blind spots recur throughout research and policy discourses concerning ‘demand,’ and I show how a concept of norm-making can help us understand how these discourses interact with each other and the social worlds they seek to describe. As noted in this study’s introductory chapter (see especially Chapter 1.3), the notion of ‘demand for schooling’ is obviously polysemic, and it is beyond the scope or intent of the study to systematically explicate every instance of its usage throughout decades of educational research and policymaking. Instead, I draw from a variety of research and policy documents from Pakistan as well as from other contexts to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the trends and blind spots described above. My consideration of research and policy discourses which mobilise the language of ‘demand-side factors’ lends special attention to literature surrounding conditional cash transfers (CCTs), and I use the example of CCTs as a sort of microcosm of my larger critique: although researchers and policymakers are becoming increasingly effective in their efforts to measure and manipulate the factors driving participation in school, normative evaluations of schooling remain under-researched, poorly understood, and often divergent from the stated goals of purportedly ‘global’ efforts towards gender equality in and through schooling.

3.2.1: Demand is Conflated with Enrolment

Among the three intertwined trends that I identify in typical discourses about demand for schooling, the tendency to conceptualise demand based purely upon enrolment is perhaps the most pervasive and easiest to recognise. In scores of studies that seek to understand demand – and in related policy efforts to ‘stimulate’ it – the term ‘demand’ is used as a sort of shorthand for all of the observed background variables that seem to shape enrolment. While such analyses might be internally valid – that is, they successfully isolate significant background factors and can point towards the interventions most likely to boost enrolment – my concern is that their conceptualisation of ‘demand’ is too coarse to allow for nuanced consideration of the normative evaluations that shape and reflect the lived experience of schooling.

This tendency to reduce ‘demand’ to ‘likelihood of enrolment’ is closely tied to concerns with elasticity and cost recovery: efforts to stimulate or measure demand have often been driven by policymakers seeking to boost enrolment while minimising public expenditure (recall the TEP program and its ‘Value for Money’ statement reviewed in Chapter 2.2), and in such cases, the concept of demand does the important work of representing the likelihood of enrolment under given conditions of supply. For the researcher or policymaker wondering how much enrolment patterns will change if public investment in education is withdrawn and the burden of cost shifts further towards parents (e.g. Psacharopoulos et al. 1986; Birdsall and Orivel 1996), there is little incentive to ask whether or why parents actually *value* schooling. Rather, the more urgent question in such a policy context is simply whether parents will enrol their children at all. This context yields a ‘transactional’ concept of demand in which the core

question is simply how much parents are willing to pay (in real and opportunity costs) for their children's schooling.

For example, Hamid (1993) seeks to identify 'demand-side determinants of schooling in urban Pakistan,' and uses household survey data to identify which background factors seem to have the greatest effect upon enrolment. Unsurprisingly, he finds that household income and the gender and education levels of a household head are "key determinants of demand" (1993: 723), but in this case, 'demand' is literally a synonym for 'enrolment.' In other words, Hamid shows that a poor, uneducated male household head is far less likely to enrol his children in school than a wealthy, well-educated female household head, but he reveals nothing whatsoever about whether or how these different individuals diverge in terms of how they actually think about the value of schooling.

Likewise, the Brock and Cammish study of "Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries" (1997a) uses large-scale survey data to demonstrate the extent to which low participation can be explained by the general 'demand-side' factor of "socio-cultural bias in favor of males." Brock and Cammish propose the notion of "cultural capacity building" as a means of "closing the gender gap" by nurturing "demand" for girls' schooling in contexts where pro-male bias remains an obstacle to change (1997b; 2000). Their notion of "cultural capacity" as "the extent to which and the rate at which a society is capable of absorbing cultural change" (2000: 112) is an interesting lens through which to contemplate fluctuations in social and educational change, but it sheds little light on what ideas might drive such change in the first place, nor how 'change' might be measured. Moreover, Brock and Cammish

base their entire assessment upon enrolment rates alone, and thus leave unexplored the possibility that demand can change independently of enrolment rates, and that qualitative explorations of demand might in fact be more reliable than enrolment rates as indicators of a society's 'capacity' for cultural change.

In a similar vein, Johnson's study of "Strategies for Increasing Access, Persistence, and Achievement for Girls" (1999) provides a valuable framework for conceptualising the 'supply-side' and 'demand-side' factors affecting enrolment, but does not invite consideration of 'demand' as anything other than a determinant of enrolment. Johnson helpfully acknowledges the interaction between supply factors and demand factors, and warns against the naïve assumption that one side can be treated as more significant than the other. Instead, Johnson emphasises that educational interventions must "take account of the fact that demand for schooling is not driven simply by the supply of schooling...but by a complex set of social, cultural, political and economic factors operating at the level of the household" (1999: 60). His study concludes with a useful review of 'what works' in terms of raising enrolment, and an assessment of policy-level and programme-level interventions that have attempted to 'stimulate demand' for girls' schooling (72-5), but its overall treatment of 'demand' does not attempt to explore this concept as anything more complex than a basic willingness to enrol.

Similarly, an econometric analysis from 2002 attempts to discern the "relative importance of school supply versus household demand" upon enrolment in Mozambique, but the only indicators for 'demand' are income and levels of parents' education (Handa 2002). Once again, then, we see the term 'demand' being used as a

catch-all for ‘household characteristics influencing enrolment,’ and zero attention lent to what Nelson has called the “substantive features” of demand (2006: 701). Likewise, a 2004 study uses data from Vietnam to identify a “positive and significant relationship between changes in wealth and changes in demand for education” (Glewwe and Jacoby 2004: 33), but the only indicator for ‘demand’ in this study is the level of enrolment after controlling for certain characteristics of supply – and thus, once again, the qualitative, normative, and value-laden aspects of demand remain completely unobserved. Equally monolithic conceptions of ‘demand’ recur throughout the literature: a 2011 paper from the World Bank relies upon enrolment data alone to argue that “demand for [girls’] schooling is sensitive to [geographic] allocation of schools” (Jacoby and Mansuri 2011: 1); a 2004 paper published in the *Pakistan Development Review* uses enrolment data to suggest that “increasing the availability of schooling at the primary and secondary levels” will “raise the demand for schooling of girls” (Mahmood 2004: 69), and a 2001 paper in the same journal deduces from enrolment data that “income is the main factor affecting demand for education” (Hamid and Siddiqui 2001: 1077). In each of these three quotations, the word ‘enrolment’ could be substituted for the word ‘demand’ without changing the meaning of what is being said. While such studies are no doubt useful to scholars and policymakers seeking to boost enrolment, they leave much to be desired for those who seek a more substantive and nuanced understanding of how people apprehend schooling opportunities in a given context.

3.2.2: Demand is Quantified, but not Qualified

The second trend I identify in most discourses about demand is a tendency to ask questions of ‘how much’ rather than ‘what kind.’ This amounts to a blind spot with

regard to how people value schooling in different ways across different contexts. Within this trend, researchers and policymakers offer a nod to such differences in their (often vague) references to ‘cultural norms’ which present ‘barriers’ to demand, but they spend little time asking what demand actually looks like once a given ‘barrier’ is surpassed. ‘Cultural difference,’ in this narrow framework, is like a series of dams blocking various tributaries on the imagined river of demand – each dam contextually situated, to be sure, but conceivable only as a ‘barrier’ within a larger flow which is somehow latent, meta-cultural, and ultimately convergent.

Researchers and policymakers within this paradigm focus on removing barriers or ‘raising’ demand to a point at which it can surpass such barriers, and as noted in the previous section, this approach makes particular sense in the context of policies seeking to maximise enrolment for minimum cost. However, even without questioning the basic rationale for such policies – a task towards which I turn my attention in due course – one can recognise that the focus on ‘raising demand’ is problematic if it distracts us from asking what demand actually *looks like*. How do different people talk and think about the value of schooling, particularly for their daughters? How do these evaluations change over time and space, and how might they diverge within a given location or household? How, in short, can we understand parents’ shifting evaluations of schooling in terms that are more nuanced than simply asking whether or not they will enrol their children? My concern is that when the term ‘demand’ is deployed in most mainstream research and policy discourses, it tends to distract from such questions rather than illuminate them.

This discursive trend can be traced back at least as far as the commencement of the multinational ‘Education for All’ initiative in 1990. In a “Background Document” prepared by UNICEF for the EFA conference in Jomtien in March 1990, the authors note that “there is a need to protect the investment of the scarce resources made available” by governments and donors, and that “*mobilization of demand will promote the efficient use of resources*” (UNICEF 1990: 74; emphasis in original). The document goes on to urge countries to develop action plans which specify “means to promote the demand for, and broadscale participation in, basic education” (80), but offers little insight about what ‘promoting demand’ actually looks like. Demand, in this framework, is a servant of ‘efficiency’: effectively synonymous with ‘willingness to participate,’ demand is understood as something to be ‘promoted’ for the sake of ensuring that ‘investments’ in school infrastructure do not go to waste. Within this document, the context-specific evaluations that Nelson refers to as “substantive features” of demand (2006: 701) appear to matter very little; what matters is that demand is ‘mobilised’ and ‘promoted’ and that school participation increases.

The UNESCO ‘Framework for Action’ which emerged from the Jomtien conference offers a similar image of ‘demand’ as something latent and monolithic:

The demand for, and participation in, learning opportunities cannot be assumed, but must be actively encouraged. Potential learners need to see that the benefits of basic education activities exceed the costs... Women and girls especially may be deterred from taking full advantage of basic education opportunities because of reasons specific to individual cultures. Such barriers to participation may be overcome through the use of incentives and by programmes adapted to the local context. (UNESCO 1990: 5)

In this statement, cultural differences appear as “barriers to participation,” and the insinuation is that these barriers can be “overcome” through incentives such as cash payments. Within the logic of this statement, any increased participation in schooling would presumably indicate that demand has increased and has “overcome” cultural barriers. Yet let us pause to consider the flimsiness of this logic: if the direct cause of increased participation is an ‘incentives’ programme, then how do we know whether demand has actually shifted? Suppose there is a context where parents see limited net value in sending their daughters to school, in part because it is considered taboo for girls to seek paid employment, and in part because parents are wary of letting their daughters walk to school and interact with male teachers. Now suppose UNESCO funds an incentive programme which pays a cash stipend based on school attendance, and it also funds a “programme adapted to the local context” which pays for a school bus and an all-female teaching staff. In the wake of such interventions, school participation might increase significantly – but it would be inaccurate and misleading, in my assessment, to argue that ‘demand’ has changed in any substantive way. Rather, I would argue that “reasons specific to individual cultures,” far from being simple “barriers” that parents and children “overcome,” in fact continue to shape how parents and their daughters experience and evaluate formal schooling. This example anticipates the argument I advance in the next section – namely, that much of the literature about ‘demand-side interventions’ actually conflate demand with supply – but what is relevant for the current section is that the UNESCO ‘Framework for Action’ imagines ‘demand’ to be something that might increase or decrease, but does not vary in qualitative substance.

In the same vein, a 1998 study in rural Pakistan explores parents' willingness to pay for their children's primary schooling, and works to derive a "demand function" by employing a model that revolves around "the dichotomous nature" of enrolment decisions: "parents can either enrol the kid in school...or they can let her spend time in some non-school...activity" (Saqib 1998: 51). The conclusions of this study, predictably enough, are that price elasticity of demand is higher for low-income parents, and thus that the negative enrolment effects of rising costs of schooling will be most significant among the poorest families. However, the study's reliance upon a "dichotomous" concept of demand prevents it from exploring how families exhibiting the same basic enrolment behaviour might still value schooling in different ways, and how the effects of these divergent evaluations might extend beyond enrolment and come to bear upon attendance, achievement, and persistence. Moreover, this treatment of demand as a "dichotomous" variable prevents the study from considering how and why some parents diverge from the enrolment behaviour that would be predicted by their income, and thus such parents are treated as 'outliers' from a general norm rather than as contextually situated individuals who are (consciously or otherwise) driving or resisting a particular pattern of social change.

More recently, UNESCO's 2010 Global Monitoring Report notes that "countries including Cambodia and Bangladesh have demonstrated that financial incentives can...raise demand for primary schooling" (UNESCO 2010: 66). A World Bank review of "Priorities and Strategies for Education" from fifteen years earlier relies on almost identical language, noting that "in many countries parents' demand for education for their daughters is low," but that "subsidies increase the demand" (World Bank 1995: 44,

4).³⁰ A different variant of the same basic trend recurs throughout many studies observing the astronomical growth of private schools in low-income contexts. Zaidi et al. note that the growth of private school enrolment in Pakistan “reflects increasing demand” (2012: 23); Hussein considers the *amount* of demand to be a critical factor in determining the potential for cost-recovery and efficiency gains via public-private partnerships in Pakistan’s education sector (2010: 183-4), and the World Bank study mentioned above cites private school expansion in Tanzania and Romania as evidence of “enormous pent-up demand” (1995: 43). In all of these studies, demand appears as something that varies in terms of quantity but not in terms of substantive characteristics.

In sum, many studies explore ‘barriers’ to schooling and whether certain conditions or interventions seem to generate ‘more’ or ‘less’ demand, but few if any explore the possibility of *qualitative* shifts in demand – that is, qualitative changes in the ways that members of a given community think about the reasons that girls should or should not go to school. This trend might reflect the justifiable need for researchers to focus on the factors that keep most girls out of school, or it might suggest the more troubling possibility that some researchers have taken for granted the benefits of schooling to such an extent that they consider the drivers of existent demand to be universally obvious, and therefore less worthy of study than the ‘barriers’ that obstruct its actualisation. Whatever the case, we are left with rich literature about the cultural and economic factors that purportedly constrain demand for girls’ schooling, but very few studies about what ‘demand’ actually consists of when it emerges in such contexts. Where demand is understood to be ‘low,’ researchers have tended to assess strategies for

³⁰ It is worth noting that both of these quotations exemplify the trend identified in the previous section: ‘raising demand,’ in these cases, is literally a synonym for raising enrolment.

increasing demand (e.g. Herz and Sperling 2004; Johnson 1999; Mahmood 2004; Mitchell, Humayun, and Muzaffar 2005; Orazem, Glewwe, and Patrinos 2008). Where demand is understood to be ‘high,’ researchers and popular commentators have argued that an increase in domestic spending or multinational aid can boost enrolments by expanding the supply of educational facilities and opportunities (e.g. Heward 1999: 210; Kristof 2009: 167-180; Sachs 2008: 301). All of these findings may indeed work together to help raise girls’ enrolments, but they explain very little about what new ideas, aspirations, and intentions might be bound up in this shifting educational landscape – nor, crucially, by what mechanisms and through which channels such ideas emerge and transform.

3.2.3: Demand is Conflated with Supply: The Case of CCTs

The third trend I wish to highlight is that research and policy interventions purporting to involve ‘demand-side’ factors often seem to define ‘demand’ so broadly that it is almost indistinguishable from supply. Programs that provide cash, transportation, teachers, improved school infrastructure, school lunches, and a range of other goods and services are often considered to be ‘demand-driven’ or ‘demand-side’ interventions, but I contend that this conceptualisation makes sense only if our definition of ‘demand’ is so broad that it is almost meaningless. Without intending to reify a black and white distinction between the concepts of supply and demand, I suggest that if the terms are to be useful at all, ‘supply’ should refer to the constitutive features of a given schooling opportunity, and ‘demand’ should refer to the ways in which a given person or

community apprehends and evaluates such an opportunity.³¹ Within such a framework, a ‘shift in supply’ implies a substantive shift in the nature of schooling opportunities available, and a ‘shift in demand’ implies a shift in the lens through which parents evaluate these opportunities. Cash, lunches, teachers, school infrastructure, and other material interventions all change the nature of what is being offered more so than they change how people perceive schooling per se, and thus it is misleading to think of these as ‘demand-focused.’ Of course, it is possible that such interventions will indeed spark a change in how people think about schooling, but this is a possibility which must be explored and tested rather than taken for granted.

Consider a scenario in which enrolment increases in response to a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program. As I will demonstrate shortly, many studies would consider this hypothetical CCT to be a ‘demand-side’ intervention, and the shift in enrolment would be assumed to indicate that the intervention had ‘raised demand.’ However, I argue that it is more appropriate to think of CCTs as ‘supply-side’ interventions insofar as they fundamentally change the nature of the schooling opportunity that parents and students are encountering: what was once an opportunity to ‘just’ go to school is now an opportunity to go to school and earn money at the same time. The overall cost-benefit analysis has changed, but the value assigned to schooling itself within this calculation has not necessarily changed at all. Put differently: initiatives that reduce the cost of schooling might indeed boost enrolment, but this does not necessarily mean that they spark a change in demand.

³¹ Recall that this is the baseline definition I offered in Chapter 1.3.

This critique is consistent with the basic concepts of supply and demand as they appear in the field of economics: if the price of apples drops and consumers subsequently begin to buy more apples, it is hard to imagine an economist making the unequivocal assertion that demand for apples has changed. Indeed, it would seem more reasonable to assert that the increase in consumption emerged from a shift in supply (which led to cheaper apples) rather than from a shift in the demand curve *per se*. Similarly, in the case of the hypothetical CCT, we might indeed want to find out how this intervention will affect enrolment, but we should not assume that a change in enrolment following the CCT necessarily reflects any change in how parents value schooling itself.

The broader point here is that the conflation of demand and supply reflects researchers' lack of interest in exploring or understanding 'demand' in qualitative, substantive terms. Recall Sheehan's statement in *The Economics of Education*, as quoted in Chapter 1.3, that "if one is left with 'changes in taste' as the main explanatory variable [for a shift in demand], then one may feel (somewhat justifiably) that one is not much more enlightened than before" (2012 [1973]: 19). On the contrary, I would contend that "changes in taste" – that is, changes in the normative frameworks through which people evaluate schooling – should be taken as a definitional starting point for anything that we can call a 'shift in demand,' and that researchers and policymakers would be considerably more "enlightened" if they were more attentive to such changes. Indeed, I submit that the very concept of demand is useful precisely because (and only insofar as) it can draw our attention towards such normative changes, and that

researchers who brush aside such concerns in favor of more ‘concrete’ quantitative factors risk obscuring more than they elucidate.

In elaborating this argument throughout the rest of this section, I focus upon two discursive threads that weave throughout policy-related research focused upon ‘demand-side’ approaches. The first thread involves implementing and evaluating the sort of interventions described above: distributional or material adjustments meant to incentivise more people to participate in school, whether by reducing real costs or opportunity costs (for example, by providing free uniforms or CCTs) or by increasing real benefits (for example, with free school lunches). In the second thread, the focus upon ‘demand-side’ initiatives is actually a focus on privatisation through interventions such as voucher programs or low-cost private schools. These two threads are distinct from each other in important ways, but often interwoven within a single document, and similar in that they both reflect aspects of the neoliberal social imaginary that I introduced in Chapter 1.4 and will discuss further in Chapter 3.3: both are concerned with increasing ‘cost effectiveness’ and with meeting quantifiable targets, and both camps imagine citizens to make decisions that are economically rational and that will lead towards formal employment and economic prosperity. More to the point, both discursive threads are preoccupied with boosting enrolment and seldom consider ‘demand’ to be anything more than a means to that end.

A World Bank “Priorities and Strategies for Education” document from 1995 provides a clear example of this rationale:

In many cases, expanded basic education coverage will require investments to expand school capacity, to train qualified teachers, and to provide suitable educational materials. But in other cases, where insufficient capacity is

not the binding constraint, the demand for education will need to be increased through actions designed to improve educational quality, to improve the school environment, or to defray the direct and indirect costs of school attendance. (World Bank 1995: 97)

In this framework, “demand for education” is synonymous with ‘willingness to enrol,’ and thus any intervention which increases enrolment is imagined to ‘increase demand.’

There is a conspicuous absence of focus on the specific contexts in which schooling becomes meaningful. The operating logic is that we need more schools, better schools, and/or more affordable schools, and what is implied here is that the benefits of schooling – or at least of the abstract good of ‘education’ – are obvious and universally appreciated to such an extent that it is either not necessary or not possible to address the ways in which these benefits are perceived and understood. There is brief mention of ‘indirect cost,’ which could gesture towards the non-quantifiable dimension of social norms and values, but few studies within this vein of policy-oriented, macro-level quantitative studies actually explore the subtle processes through which these ‘indirect’ costs (and benefits) emerge and transform.

UNESCO’s 2010 *Global Monitoring Report* provides another example of this trend. The report cites studies of CCTs which show that “financial incentives can raise demand for primary schooling” (2010: 66), and also considers school lunch programs to be “demand-side interventions” (2010: 123). A brief passage clearly captures the broader understanding of ‘demand’ at play within the document. In a section focused upon “expanding skills in the new global economy,” the report explains:

Vocational education has the potential to make a difference in the lives of young people. Yet that potential is weakened in countries relying upon top-down, supply-driven models in which governments determine priorities. Moving towards a

demand-driven approach that responds to the needs of individuals, companies, and the economy is the overriding priority for reform. (2010: 91)

Admittedly, this passage is focused on vocational education in particular, but it is nonetheless noteworthy that its notion of a ‘demand-driven’ approach revolves around the economic outcomes of schooling rather than the broader social context in which schooling takes place. Within this discourse, school reform serves the economy, and schooled citizens are economically productive. It follows, then, that the *Report* is more concerned with how schooling becomes economically useful than with how it becomes socially meaningful.

Similar discursive trends recur throughout subsequent versions of UNESCO’s *Global Monitoring Report*. The 2012 *Report* celebrates “convergence” in enrolment rates as “one of the successes of the EFA movement” (UNESCO 2012: 106), but makes little effort to discern whether or to what extent a similar convergence has occurred with regard to normative evaluations of schooling. It references “discriminatory social norms” and “gender-specific social norms” (2012: 263, 281), but does not conceptualise normative dimensions of demand – instead, norms appear only as ‘barriers’ to a demand which is assumed to be latent and directly linked to the demand for skills in the labor market (2012: 187, 199, 207). The 2015 *Report* reflects on “Achievements and Challenges” throughout the previous 15 years of the ‘Education for All’ initiative, and identifies cash transfer and school feeding programmes as “policies aimed to raise demand” (UNESCO 2015: 9). The *Report* argues that “some approaches succeeded [in boosting enrolment] by increasing demand,” but it defines such approaches as those that “reduce direct and indirect financial burdens [on families]” through measures such as the

provision of scholarships, stipends, and free school uniforms (2015: 88). Again, my critique is that the claim to have ‘increased demand’ is unsubstantiated in this context: it is clear that certain interventions have boosted enrolment, but these interventions seem to have more to do with changing what is supplied than with changing how people perceive it.

A similar conflation occurs within the discursive thread that uses the terms ‘demand-side’ or ‘demand-driven’ to describe policies of privatisation. For example, a 2007 publication of the International Institute for Educational Planning entitled *Demand-side Financing in Education* argues in favor of school stipend and voucher programmes, citing their effectiveness in boosting enrolment and lowering dropout rates and commending these programmes for putting resources in the hands of those who demand schooling rather than those who supply it and (Patrinos 2007). Yet even if we acknowledge that this a significant programmatic distinction, the meaning of ‘demand’ within the concept of ‘demand-side financing’ still seems quite narrow and transactional: stipend and voucher programmes might indeed affect *how much* schooling certain populations attain, but this reveals little about how those populations actually value schooling. Indeed, a 2006 OECD publication advances this same critique, noting that despite the abundance of policies claiming to be ‘demand-led,’ few studies actually explore “the demands that parents have, what it is they find important, and what they want from schooling” (OECD 2006: 139).

We can easily apply this same critique to a recent paper in which Orazem, Glewwe, and Patrinos argue that “mechanisms that stimulate schooling demand have the strongest evidence of success to date and are the most cost effective” (2008: 1). The

authors conceptualise ‘demand’ only in terms of the household-level health and economic factors that enable a child to attend school (2008: 31), and thus offer no insight towards how the value of schooling is actually understood, and how such understandings can change. Their consideration of “demand-side interventions” refers to initiatives such as school lunch programs, school-based immunisation programs, and conditional cash transfers (2008: 31-34). Similarly, a 2005 World Bank “Country Gender Assessment” for Pakistan identifies school stipends and free school lunch programmes as “demand-side initiatives” (World Bank 2005: 5). Without doubting that such initiatives are likely to induce more parents to send their daughters to school, the framework of the current study would suggest that these are actually ‘supply-side’ interventions and thus that their impact upon enrolment actually provides no insight into possible changes in demand.

Likewise, Lloyd reviews “evidence of effectiveness of alternative approaches to address the educational needs of adolescent girls,” and divides different interventions into the categories of “demand-side strategies” and “supply-side strategies.” Within the “demand-side” category, she includes scholarships and stipends, transportation and boarding, direct advocacy or community engagement, and toilets and sanitary supplies (2009: 59). Among these four types of intervention, I would argue that only ‘direct advocacy or community engagement’ qualifies as ‘demand-side’ in the sense proposed by this study, since all of the other listed interventions seem to change the nature of what is supplied along with schooling more so than they attempt to change how people perceive schooling itself.

Some of Lloyd's other work with the Population Council has indeed highlighted important links between enrolment trends and particular factors at the level of the household, the school, and the broader social and economic context, but in most of this work, 'demand' – if mentioned explicitly at all – is addressed at the macro-contextual level rather than at the level of particular evaluative frameworks informing particular decisions. For example, at the household level, Lloyd has considered the impact of fertility rates and sibling distribution upon parental investment in schooling (e.g. Lloyd and Gage-Brandon 1994); at the school level, she has addressed the importance of 'quality' schooling and the inclusion of female sexual health curriculum for adolescent girls (Lloyd 2005; 2012), and at the broader contextual level, she has called attention to the ways in which the perceived benefits of girls' schooling have often (but not always) shifted in relation to new labour opportunities linked to emerging technologies and economic globalization (Lloyd 2010; 2012). All of this work is important insofar as it highlights factors determining girls' enrolment and retention, and much of it has also identified or suggested effective interventions for boosting enrolment further. However, 'demand' in most of this work remains a somewhat skeletal concept: a shorthand way of summarising the complex interplay of factors that shape girls' participation in school, but not a sphere of normative evaluation inviting further qualitative investigation.

This same trend is borne out throughout Lloyd's significant research on girls' schooling in Pakistan in particular. Lloyd has conducted a series of robust studies of the factors affecting girls' school enrolments in Pakistan, and has noted the powerful effects income, poverty, economic shocks, and distance to school upon a girl's likelihood of enrolment (Lloyd 2004; Lloyd, Mete, and Grant 2007). This work includes a focus on

the effects of school type and ‘quality’ upon girls’ enrolment, and has shown that ‘high quality’ teachers and school facilities tend to be associated with higher rates of girls’ enrolment and retention even after controlling for girls’ household characteristics (Lloyd, Mete, and Grant 2006). Lloyd has also investigated the astronomical growth of private schools in Pakistan and other low-income countries, and has argued that this increase in the ‘supply’ of private schools will be unlikely to result in increased access for the most marginalised children, and thus is insufficient as a route towards achieving universal primary school enrolment (Lloyd, Mete, and Grant 2006).³² Throughout this work, Lloyd and her colleagues explore “the complementary nature of supply and demand factors” (2006: 14; see also Lloyd and Young 2009: 50), but ‘demand’ in this context is reduced to little more than household characteristics such as number of children, parents’ income, parents’ level of schooling, and distance to school. In other words, Lloyd’s consideration of enrolment and dropout rates in relation to ‘supply and demand factors’ might highlight the relative impact of various school and household characteristics, but it reveals very little about the actual ideas and perspectives that underlie ‘demand’ and perhaps inform its fluctuations.

This relative lack of attention to what Nelson has called the “substantive features” of demand (2006: 701) can obscure significant dimensions of how schooling is valued and normed within particular populations affected by self-described ‘demand-side’ interventions. To illustrate this point and to wrap up Chapter 3.2 and its overview of how and why I seek to improve upon typical conceptualisations of ‘demand,’ I turn

³² For other perspectives with regard to the hotly debated question of whether private schools are ‘good for the poor,’ see Andrabi et. al. 2007; Day Ashley et al. 2014; Tooley 2005; Tooley and Longfield 2015; see Chapter 4.3 for more details on the expansion of private schooling in Pakistan.

now to the case of CCTs. As noted above, researchers often consider CCT programs (as well as other stipend and scholarship programs, regardless of conditionality) to be ‘demand-side’ interventions (e.g. Lloyd 2009; UNESCO 2010, 2015). The basic assumption is that giving people cash for school increases demand for schooling, and that this increased demand is manifested in (and proven by) increases in enrolment. I have argued above that this logic relies on a narrow concept of demand which allows for and reinforces a certain blind spot towards how schooling is actually perceived, and the case of CCTs for girls’ schooling provides a useful example of how such a blind spot can obscure the nuances of local norms and the gender-based discrimination that they can perpetuate.

Programme evaluations from Mexico, Brazil, Pakistan, and beyond have shown that CCTs tend to boost girls’ school enrolment and attainment as well as their long-term improvement along a range of other indices of health and social welfare (e.g. Chaudhury and Parajuli 2006; Hasan 2010; see Saavedra and Garcia 2012 for a meta-analysis). However, the capacity of CCTs to change attitudes and locally-situated gender norms is far less clear. For example, a recent evaluation from Pakistan includes the revealing detail that parents who receive stipends continue to invest more money in the education of their sons than that of their daughters (Alam, Baez, and Del Carpio 2011). Likewise, a recent paper from Duflo and colleagues at the Abdul Lateef Jamil Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) reports on a CCT program in Colombia which unintentionally “*increased* inequality in educational attainment within households” because families with one child in the program tended to shunt resources away from other children – particularly daughters (J-PAL 2012: 3-4; emphasis added). In other words, these CCT programme

evaluations from Colombia and Pakistan suggest that although the CCTs were demonstrably successful in boosting enrolment, they did not appear to have any effect upon parents' existing biases against daughters. This simple fact crystallises a much broader point: CCTs can nudge people into school, and this can have all kinds of knock-on effects, but there is little reason to assume that such changes necessarily correlate to a deeper transformation of gendered norms and values. More broadly, in their meta-analysis of 42 studies of CCTs in 15 countries, Saavedra and Garcia note the high heterogeneity between program outcomes, and surmise that this reflects the (somewhat obvious) point that local conditions shape the ways in which families engage with formal schooling even after 'cost barriers' have been removed or mitigated (2012: 27). In this sense, it is misleading to refer to CCTs as 'demand-side interventions,' for they appear to change what is being offered more so than they change how people perceive it. It is equally misleading to claim that CCTs have 'raised demand,' unless we conflate 'demand' with enrolment and participation (as many do). Rather, it seems more useful and precise to assert that CCTs can boost enrolment by making schooling more affordable and fundamentally shifting 'what is being supplied' in a given schooling opportunity, but that their impact upon demand remains uncertain and context-dependent. This acknowledgement of uncertainty opens up space for a fuller consideration of 'demand' which is more attentive to how particular people produce and contest the meaning and value of schooling in their own contexts.

Throughout the present and preceding sections of Chapter 3.2, I have sought to critique common conceptualisations of demand for schooling and to encourage a more nuanced understanding of 'demand curves' as clusters of norms and values which are

independent from (though obviously entwined with) particular conditions of supply, price, or enrolment. With such a lens, we can look afresh at research about the real and perceived ‘returns to schooling,’ and we can recognise that many of the blind spots I have identified above recur within this scholarship as well. Economists of education have focused on ‘rate of return’ for decades, and in recent years some researchers have focused more carefully on *perceived* returns, recognising as a point of departure that information about returns is often imperfect, and that this affects parents’ enrolment decisions. This attentiveness to parents’ perceptions is a welcome improvement upon studies that seem to assume that the ‘benefits of schooling’ are inevitable and obvious to everyone. However, many researchers who work to understand parents’ perceptions of the ‘returns’ or ‘benefits’ of schooling use a narrowly economic lens which is focused only upon future income or employment and thus remains agnostic with regard to questions of normative social value. This scholarship provides a perfect segue between the present section’s consideration of demand for schooling and the next section’s broader critique of economic thinking in education research and policy.

For example, the Benhassine et al. (2014) study of a ‘labeled cash transfer’ in Morocco finds that “cash transfer programs may work in part by changing how parents perceive education,” and that this is consistent with other literature suggesting that “perceived returns to education are an important determinant of demand for education, but in developing countries, information about these returns is often imperfect” (2014: 6). What is remarkable is that the study’s actual dataset about “perceived returns” is exclusively focused on expected future income based on attainment of a certain amount of schooling (2014: 41). The same is true with regard to most of the other research that

Benhassine et al. cite in their assertion that perceived returns are an important determinant of demand: Kaufmann (2014) explores the relationship between college attendance and expected future income in Mexico; Jensen (2010; 2012) asks similar questions of school attendance in the Dominican Republic and in India, stressing that perceived returns to future income are often distorted by information asymmetry, and Nguyen (2008) explores perceived returns among families in Madagascar, focusing on the capacity of role models to shift perceptions. In a similar vein, Mateju and Smith (2009) assess shifting educational aspirations amongst parents and children in the post-Soviet Czech Republic, and ask how the perceived value of schooling is shaped by gender and socio-economic background – but the main thrust of their inquiry is framed around *whether* parents and children perceive schooling to be important rather than *why* this may be the case.

All of this scholarship advances our understanding of how parents perceive the economic benefits of schooling and how these perceptions are likely to shape enrolment decisions, but perceptions of non-economic outcomes of schooling remain effectively unobserved. To what extent (if at all) do parents expect that schooling will increase a woman's dignity or her capacity to make autonomous decisions or her power within the household? To what extent might such expectations affect parents' decisions about whether or not (or for how long) to send their daughters to school? Questions such as these are seldom considered within scholarship about 'returns' to schooling. In other words, even scholarship which is explicitly focused upon parents' perceptions of schooling still falls short of considering 'demand' with enough nuance to account for the context-specific ways that schooling is gendered, normed, and infused with meaning. In

this sense, I cannot help but read a sense of irony into the statement that “perceived returns to education are an important determinant of demand...[but] information about these returns is often imperfect” (Benhassine et al. 2014: 6). Given that “perceived returns” in this statement really means ‘expected future income,’ and that “demand” in this statement is synonymous with ‘willingness to enrol,’ I would suggest that the issue of imperfect information about returns applies not only to parents, but to researchers as well: while it may be true that parents are often unable to access accurate information about the likely economic benefits of schooling, it seems equally true that researchers are often unable (or unwilling) to access information about the real or perceived non-economic outcomes of schooling and the broader contexts within schooling becomes meaningful. This lack of information shapes and is shaped by the narrow concept of ‘demand’ which I have critiqued throughout this section, and my hope is that by disrupting and expanding this concept, this study will help encourage more holistic considerations of how parents (and others) evaluate schooling and its expected outcomes.

3.3: ‘Rate of Return’, ‘Human Capital,’ and ‘Measurable Outcomes’ in Educational Research and Policy

The preceding sections of this literature review considered research and policy discourses which explicitly mobilise a concept of demand, and showed that these discourses privilege a focus upon enrolment and quantification, and that they exhibit a general inability or unwillingness to account for what Nelson has called the “substantive features” of demand (2006: 701) – that is, the nuanced, normative, and often gendered ways that particular people understand and reimagine the value of schooling in their own

social contexts. To the extent that these mainstream discourses about demand for schooling have focused on girls' schooling in particular, they have tended to treat gender as "a line to be crossed" (Unterhalter 2012, 2014) rather than a dimension of schooling experience in which people make meaning, exercise power, and embody their imaginings (or re-imaginings) of what is 'normal.'

The task now is to situate this discursive trend within the larger corpus of education research and policymaking in the past half-century. In Chapter 1.4, I suggested that discourses about demand reflect and emerge from a larger imaginative regime – what some have called the 'neoliberal social imaginary,' but which surely has its roots in earlier formulations of neoclassical economic theory – in which the principles of market efficiency provide a blueprint for development policy and people appear as rational individuals seeking to maximise their own economic prosperity. By explicating that assertion in the present section, I hope to show that my critique of common discourses about 'demand' is more than just a semantic argument about how scholars and policymakers have used that particular word; rather, it is a critique of a hegemonic way of thinking about schooling which (as noted in Chapter 3.1) fails to capture the nuance of the social realities it seeks to describe and simultaneously acts upon these realities through processes of norm-making.

Insofar as my aim here is to describe an imaginative regime which transcends decades, institutions, and geographic boundaries, it is necessary to use some broad strokes, and it is not realistic to explicate a causal chain which leads from early principles of neoclassical economics and to more recent formulations of neoliberal thought and then to more specific research and policies pertaining to demand for girls'

schooling in rural Pakistan. Indeed, as numerous scholars have carefully observed (see Bergeron 2008; Ferguson 2015), many of the particular policies recently implemented by purportedly ‘neoliberal’ institutions bear little resemblance to the archetypal notion of government austerity and market-driven growth. The CCTs discussed in the previous section are but one example of recent policy initiatives which appear to be a significant departure from the hallmark policies of structural adjustment and the Washington Consensus. However, recalling (from Chapter 1.4) Ferguson’s distinction between neoliberalism as a range of policies and neoliberalism as “a kind of rationality evident in particular ideas of governance and citizenship” (2012: 170-171), I work to identify several key concepts which have underpinned economistic thinking about education, personhood, and society, and to briefly sketch out their recurrence and persistence even as particular policies have come in and out of vogue. I focus on three key concepts – human capital, rate of return, and measurable outcomes – and use them to illustrate the larger imaginative regime within which we can understand the common discourses about demand for schooling that I explicated earlier in this chapter.

Although some aspects of this imaginative regime are at least as old as neoclassical economics and its assumptions about the efficiency of markets (see Klees 2008a), the most reasonable starting point for the present discussion is the work of the ‘Chicago school of economics’ in the 1950’s and 1960’s, which became known for its theoretical and policy-oriented endorsements of free-market capitalism. On the general level, it is easy to see how the celebration of free markets leads to a particular usage of the term ‘demand for schooling’ – one in which the concept’s primary significance is understood in the transactional terms of whether or how much a person will pay for a

given instance of schooling. The policy implications of this pro-market stance are manifold and predictable, as is the role played by the concept of ‘demand’: within this imaginative regime, governments need only to step aside, and then the ‘market forces’ of supply and demand take center-stage. A passage from Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom* captures this thinking perfectly: advocating for a school voucher scheme, Friedman notes that “if public expenditures were made available to parents regardless of where they send their children, a wide variety of schools would spring up to meet the demand...here, as in other fields, competitive enterprise is likely to be far more efficient in meeting consumer demand” (1962: 79). ‘Demand,’ in this rendering, is latent and inevitable, and it manifests itself – and thus can be observed and measured – when parents send their children to school. From the standpoint of a researcher or policymaker attempting to predict the outcomes of a school voucher program, ‘demand’ is significant as an indicator of how many parents will send their children to a given school, but there is little reason to investigate the broader norms and values bound up in such enrolment decisions.

While it is relatively easy to see how the pro-market imaginative regime of the Chicago school invites a particular reading of ‘demand’ as a force within market-based transactions, it is also crucial to recognise the more specific ways that the Chicago school drove mainstream thinking about education policy through the concepts of human capital and rate of return. Mincer (1958) and Schultz (1961, 1963) and Becker (1964) worked to establish ‘human capital’ and ‘rate of return’ as foundational concepts in the economics of education, and together, these concepts work to provide a vision for the role of schooling in society and a framework for measuring its effectiveness. In this

framework, formal schooling is an input which increases the private and social outputs or 'returns' on human capital. This basic premise yields one more: the private and social rate of return, if measurable, can inform the optimal public expenditure on schooling and can also explain individuals' enrolment decisions.

Early work by Schultz captures the core rationale at play in his own research and the research of his colleagues: "economists who are analyzing the investment attributes of education are laying the foundations of an economic growth policy which assigns a major role to schooling" (1963: 19). In this framework, it is taken for granted that investments in schooling can and should drive economic growth, and thus the primary question for economists is how to balance private and public investment to achieve an optimal rate of return. This brings up secondary questions about foregone income, whether schooling is an investment good or a consumption good, and whether or how much government spending might be needed in order to counterbalance the inefficiencies of capital markets and people's underinvestment in schooling (see Chapter 1.3; see also Friedman 1962: 75-84; Mincer 1965: 638; Schultz 1961: 14-17; Stiglitz 1974). However, the main point here is that the concepts of human capital and rate of return as introduced by early economists of education helped establish several assumptions that set the terms of debate for much of the research and policy analysis that would follow: first, public and private expenditure on schooling can be justified in terms of measurable returns; second, these returns are mostly related to income, employment, and economic growth; third, the reliability and desirability of these returns provide clear reason for policymakers to try to get more children into school, and

therefore, fourth, ‘demand’ is important primarily insofar as it contributes to this goal of boosting enrolment.

These interlocking assumptions form the basis of a paradigm in which education is imagined to drive economic growth as well as larger processes of ‘development’ and ‘modernization.’ This ‘education as development’ paradigm has been justly criticised (e.g. Carnoy 1974, 1975; Beneria and Sen 1981; Fennell 2008; Klees 2008), and I will consider these critiques more fully in Chapter 3.5. For now, the task is to understand how this paradigm has emerged and shifted over time, how it provides the backdrop for mainstream discourses about demand for girls’ schooling, and how it implies and induces a particular way of thinking about gender in relation to education research and policy. In this sense, it is important to point out that much of the early work on human capital and rate of return was somewhat agnostic with regard to gender (see Beneria and Sen 1981: 279; Fennell 2008: 35). For example, in his landmark 1961 paper *Investment in Human Capital*, Schultz makes only passing reference to the ways in which ‘returns’ to schooling might be gendered – and it is to observe uncritically that since women do not typically participate in the labour force, their rates of school participation are not particularly relevant for economists seeking to “analyze the effect of growth in schooling on earnings” (1961: 11).

This agnosticism towards gendered dimensions of schooling and development began to dissipate in the 1970’s, particularly after the publication of Boserup’s milestone text *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (1970 [2007]). Boserup challenged the hegemonic assumption that women are irrelevant to economic development (see Corner 2008: 600), and showed that women’s work in the household and in agriculture –

although usually unaccounted for in measures of GDP or per-capita income – both shapes and is shaped by larger processes of macroeconomic growth, migration, urbanisation, and changes in labour force composition. More generally, Boserup called attention to the gendered division of labour within households, and emphasised that industrialisation can alter this division of labour in ways that exacerbate gender inequality by increasing the burdens borne by women without increasing their potential for economic gain. In sum, Boserup highlighted that women are often marginalised within the dominant paradigm of economic growth driven by wage labour and technological advancement, even as it is women's contributions that make such growth possible. Yet Boserup also saw hope in the potential for increases in women's schooling to eventually ameliorate gender inequality and improve women's overall well-being, not least because of the potential for schooling to drive a decrease in total fertility rates (1970 [2007]: 212; see Chapter 3.6 for further discussion of girls' schooling and fertility).

Commonplace though it may seem in the context of contemporary research, Boserup's work was revolutionary in its call for closer attention to how women are situated in relation to the causes and effects of economic development. Indeed, Boserup's work has been credited with paving the way for the UN International Year for Women in 1975, the UN Decade for Women from 1976-1985, four world conferences on women between 1975-1995, and the broader 'Women in Development' (WID) approach to research and policy (Corner 2008: 598; see Chapter 3.5 for further discussion of the WID approach). In this sense, it is indisputable that Boserup's work helped plant the seeds for more nuanced approaches to gender, education, and

development, but it is also crucial to point out that this work did not challenge the core assumptions at play in the paradigm of ‘education as development.’ As noted by Beneria and Sen, Boserup’s work is informed by “the view that modernisation is both beneficial and inevitable in the specific form it has taken in most Third World countries,” and this assumption limits Boserup’s capacity to assess the extent to which women’s experience of ‘development’ might be shaped by pre-existing social inequalities, including those which emerged from historical periods of colonial exploitation (Beneria and Sen 1981: 284-5). Likewise, in the preface to the 2007 edition of *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, the authors note that “Boserup did not challenge accepted social, political, and economic frameworks...Rather she argued for an equal share of the pie for women” (Boserup 1970 [2007]: xxiii). The critical point for this literature review is that while Boserup’s work – along with the larger WID approach – significantly disrupted a previous norm in which development research and policy lent minimal attention to gender-specific concerns, this disruption did not challenge the larger ‘education as development’ paradigm in which the primary goals for research and policy are to boost enrolments in school and to boost the macroeconomic ‘returns’ yielded by these investments in human capital.

The persistence of this dominant paradigm is clearly evident in the work of King and Hill, whose edited volume *Women’s Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policies* (1993) became a definitive text for researchers and policymakers in the 1990’s. The book’s subtitle maps out its rationale and structure: it identifies barriers that keeps girls out of school; it identifies benefits that accrue when girls do go to school, and therefore it suggests policies for mitigating these barriers and maximising

the benefits. The logic of ‘rate of return’ pervades the text. In the very first paragraph of the foreword, Lawrence Summers, then the Chief Economist of the World Bank, observes that “investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world” (King and Hill 1993: v). In Chapter 1, Hill and King outline the core problem and opportunity: the social returns to girls’ schooling often outweigh the private costs (both material and ‘psychic’) borne by parents; thus parents often ‘under-invest,’ or invest at a rate which is socially inefficient, and thus public policy should work to rectify this inefficiency (Hill and King 1993: 21-26; see also Hill and King 1995). In Chapter 2, T. Paul Schultz (son of the Schultz quoted above) offers extensive analysis of “Returns to Women’s Education,” and although he does discuss “nonmarket returns” such as reductions in fertility rates and improvements in children’s health, the chapter is primarily about calculating economic returns to the individual and to society (Schultz 1993). Schultz concludes that the social returns on investment in girls’ schooling are highest at lower levels of schooling, and thus encourages public investment in primary and secondary schooling in order to offset the private costs of attending school (Schultz 1993: 80). This sort of analysis provides the rationale for Bellew and King, in the final chapter of the book, to directly assess “the most cost-effective measures for boosting girls’ schooling” and to suggest interventions such as recruiting female teachers, improving school infrastructure, reducing direct costs and opportunity costs, and providing incentives through school lunch programmes (Bellew and King 1993: 286-308).

Over the nearly twenty-five years that would follow from the publication of this text until the present day, many of these same interventions would be widely researched,

implemented, and celebrated by governments, NGOs, and multinational aid agencies in pursuit of gender parity in school enrolment under the banner of ‘Education for All’ and the Millennium Development Goals (see, e.g., Herz and Sperling 2004; Sperling and Winthrop 2016; UNESCO 2015; Unterhalter et al. 2011). Yet regardless of the efficacy of these policy recommendations, the point here is to recognise that they emerge from a broader paradigm in which girls’ schooling is framed in the economic terms of measurable returns that accrue from investments in human capital. We can trace the resonance of this paradigm throughout the next two decades of research about schooling: in 1994, Psacharopoulos published *Returns to Investment in Education: A Global Update*, in which he emphasises that individual behavior is guided by the private rate of return, and that the social rate of return should guide public investment; in 2002, Schultz published *Why Governments Should Invest More to Educate Girls*, in which he emphasises the “economic efficiency” of investing in girls’ schooling, particularly primary schooling (2002: 207, 211); in 2004, Psacharopoulos and Patrinos published *Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update*, in which they re-emphasise that the measurable social rate of return should guide public investment (2004: 118); and in 2016, Sperling and Winthrop published *What Works in Girls’ Education: Evidence for the World’s Best Investment*, in which they reaffirm the benefits that accrue from girls’ schooling (2016: 19-58) and the efficacy of various interventions aiming to boost girls’ enrolment and participation (2016: 105-194).

This trend of economic thinking about schooling has certainly not gone unchallenged, and Chapter 3.5 will explore the rich critical literature that has emerged in tension with this paradigm. However, for the present section, the key point to emphasise

is that economistic thinking about human capital and rate of return provides a clear and quantifiable rationale for getting girls into school, and that this paradigm – if not altogether dominant – has surely informed the multinational quest to boost enrolments and achieve gender parity in school participation. Within this paradigm, gender is “a line to be crossed” (Unterhalter 2012, 2014; see Chapter 1.4), and it follows, then, that ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling is worthy of exploration only insofar as it contributes to growth in enrolment – and thus that enrolment rates can be considered a reasonable proxy for demand. From this perspective, the discursive trends identified in Chapter 3.2 make more sense: researchers and policymakers seeking to maximise the returns on their investments in human capital need not concern themselves with *why* girls go to school, nor *what kind* of evaluations inform a given instance of enrolment change, nor *how* people (including researchers and policymakers themselves) imagine and produce the gendered value of schooling; they need only ask *how much* ‘demand’ exists in a given context, and how it can be ‘stimulated’ to get more girls into school. Within this imaginative regime, there is little reason to investigate the possibility that different people value girls’ schooling in different ways, and that these evaluations refract and remake the broader meanings of gender in particular contexts. Instead, it is assumed that the ‘returns’ on investments in schooling are universally obvious, or at least universally desirable, and thus that policymakers need only inform people of these benefits (recall the logic of TEP explored in Chapter 2.2), or remove the ‘barriers’ that prevent people from enacting their latent desire for these benefits.

It would be crude and simplistic to label this core rationale as explicitly ‘neoliberal,’ or to claim that all of the authors and texts referenced in this section are

explicit representations of neoliberal ideology. Indeed, Klees (2008a: 311-312) notes that the economic theories of Friedman and his Chicago school colleagues were influential but oft-contested in academic circles for much of the 1960's and 1970's, and it was not until the 'Washington Consensus' in the 1980's that these theories began to manifest in public policies that are now recognisable as 'neoliberal' in orientation. Nonetheless, I argue that we can better understand hegemonic discourses about human capital and the measurable 'returns' to schooling if we locate these discourses within the broader contours of a neoliberal social imaginary in which people are understood to be autonomous individuals seeking to maximise personal economic gain through their rational assessments of costs and benefits (see Chapter 1.4 and Ferguson 2012). Understanding the operating logic and historical roots of this imaginative regime allows for a fuller grasp of the context in which many researchers have tended to focus on the measurable outcomes of girls' schooling rather than the ways in which schooling may be differentially valued.

3.4: "The Highest Returns of All Development Investments": Outcomes Associated with Girls' Schooling

The focus on outcomes associated with girls' schooling is hardly a new trend. Indeed, in 1980 the academic journal *Comparative Education Review* released a special issue focused on "Education of Women in Third World Nations," and eleven articles follow from the coeditors' claim to "represent the state of the field...of scholarship on women's education in the third world" (Elliott and Kelly 1980: S2). Seven articles focus explicitly on the extent to which and the means by which schooling tends to lead to particular outcomes for girls and women – whether in terms of attainment of literacy and

numeracy, employment, 'better' motherhood, or subtler norms of behaviour, propriety and power (Biraimah 1980; Kalia 1980; LeVine 1980; Finn et. al. 1980; Ram 1980; Schiefelbein and Farrell 1980; Wainerman 1980). The authors explore to what extent these outcomes differ between men and women and consider the implications for broader patterns of change or reproduction in gender norms and hierarchies. The other four authors in the collection focus on access and participation, and either describe overall trends in enrolment and achievement (Bowman and Anderson 1980) or attempt to explain persistent gender disparities by exploring the quality and quantity of school 'supply' (Jones 1980), the non-school factors that constrain girls' time and availability (McSweeney and Freedman 1980), or the effect of perceived long-term outcomes upon parents' willingness to invest in their daughters' schooling (Wang 1980). No article in the publication directly explores the ways that individuals or communities understand the value of sending girls to school. The co-editors call for further investigations of what causes gender differences in school attainment and what aspects of schooling cause different short- and long-term outcomes, but make no reference to the possibility that researchers might also want to explore household perceptions of girls' schooling in terms that extend beyond a transactional notion of 'demand.'

Compare this with the same journal's next 'special issue' on gender and education twenty-four years later, in the wake of gender-sensitive approaches to development having been 'mainstreamed' at United Nations' World Conferences on Women in 1985 and 1995 and then further enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals. Stromquist notes in the preface that the field has been characterised by an increase of studies that look beyond easily quantifiable indicators of access and

attainment to attempt more holistic assessments of how schools “reproduce – and at times contest – the construction of masculinity and femininity” (2004: iii). Contributors to the special issue were asked to question the extent to which girls’ schooling was or was not leading to changes in “the social construction of gender roles” (Assie-Lumumba and Sutton, 2004: 349), and contents include reports on gender equity in relation to post-Soviet democratisation (Silova and Magno 2004), broader shifts and continuities in gendered boundaries of propriety and respectability in Jordan (Adely 2004), and subtle but persistent barriers to female progression through higher education in South Africa (Mabokela and Mawila 2004). All of these articles exhibit an interest in outcomes or possible outcomes of girls’ schooling that are more nuanced than the outcomes under investigation in 1980, but the preoccupation with outcomes remains unquestioned, and there is a distinct lack of attention to how ideas about the value of schooling travel, transform over time, and translate into practice.

A 2011 special edition of *Research in Comparative and International Education* maintains this trend. Monkman’s introductory essay notes that ideas about gender equality and female empowerment have been increasingly brought into the mainstream by popular figures like Mortenson, Kristof and WuDunn, and Oprah – a list to which today we could surely add the name Malala Yousafzai – but that the actual meaning of these terms remains somewhat vacuous (Monkman 2011). Consequently, Monkman calls for researchers to look more closely at the “conceptual underpinnings of issues such as ‘empowerment,’” and to explore the role of formal schooling in the construction of femininity, masculinity, and gender relations more broadly (2011: 2). The articles in the collection heed this call and emphasise that researchers must look beyond simple

enrolment statistics and general trends if they wish to understand the meanings and possibilities of ‘schooling for empowerment’ in particular contexts (Baily 2011; Dejaeghere and Lee 2011; Holmarsdottir et. al. 2011). This attention to context specificity is a welcome improvement upon the common tendency to categorically equate girls’ schooling with ‘empowerment,’³³ but even so, this collection conforms to the beaten track of studies that prioritise a focus on the ideas and practices that emerge from girls’ schooling rather than those that shape how families and individuals apprehend girls’ schooling in the first place and how they determine for whom, for how long, and for what reasons such schooling is worthy of pursuit.

Authors writing for popular audiences reiterate many of these commonly expected outcomes of girls’ schooling. Sachs (1999) argues that schooling will help girls “overcome preexisting cultural biases more easily”; “will empower them as young women to negotiate more effectively with their spouses”; and, finally, by raising the market value of daughters, education “will reduce the preference for sons” that is prevalent in many parts of the world. In their bestselling book *Half the Sky*, Kristof and WuDunn (2009) mirror Sachs’ confidence by arguing that “the very best means of combating suffocating tradition is education.” Similarly, and most geographically pertinent to the current study, the popular author Mortenson (2009) explicitly argues for girls’ schooling as a means of promoting peace and fighting terrorism in Afghanistan

³³ Perhaps the best-known example of this tendency is the fact that the third Millennium Development Goal (‘MDG3’), to “promote gender equality and empower women,” was conceived as something that could be achieved primarily through efforts to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels by 2015” (United Nations 2005: 4). This reductionism has been widely critiqued in academic circles (e.g. Aikman and Unterhalter 2005a; Murphy-Graham 2012; Subrahmanian 2004; Vavrus 2000; see Unterhalter 2003: 8 for a related critique of Sen’s conflation of the expansion of girls’ schooling with the expansion of agency and capabilities), but it persists nonetheless in many academic and popular texts, including many critiqued in the present study.

and Pakistan. All of these associations maintain a presence in contemporary discourses ranging from policy documents published by UNESCO and the World Bank to Time Magazine articles with titles like “Global Girl Power,” newspaper editorials by prominent politicians, films such as *Girl Rising* (2013), and high-profile philanthropy efforts such as the Nike Foundation’s “Girl Effect” campaign (Brown 2013; Gibbs 2011; Girl Effect 2013; Tembon and Fort 2008; UNESCO 2010; United Nations 2010).

The pervasiveness of this general focus upon outcomes of girls’ schooling cannot be overstated. To list a few more recent examples: Rihani explains “Five Benefits of Girls’ Secondary Education” (2006); Murphy lists the “wide-ranging benefits” of girls’ schooling to argue that increasing access “has become an urgent matter” (2009: 4); Tembon and Fort emphasise that educating girls “is positively correlated with increased economic productivity, more robust labor markets, higher earnings, and improved societal health and well-being...[and] is therefore key to sustainable global development” (2008: xvii-xviii); and a publication by the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative reminds readers that “educating girls can make more dramatic, positive changes for both the individual and society than any other single intervention” (UNGEI 2010: 2).

The intent of this review is not to question the validity of such statements, but rather to suggest that this collective enthusiasm about the value of sending girls to school has perhaps distracted scholars and policymakers from investigating how and to what extent perceptions of this value are transmitted between actors and across different contexts – especially in those areas where girls’ enrolments are stagnant or only recently on the rise. The term ‘demand’ does not appear particularly often within the literature

cited in this section, but to the extent that it does, it tends to be a shorthand way of referring to background factors driving enrolment rather than a more nuanced consideration of the ideas and values underpinning enrolment patterns.³⁴ I argue that this narrow treatment of ‘demand’ has emerged within a larger imaginative regime which privileges boosting enrolment and achieving measurable outcomes or ‘returns,’ and that this has created a blind spot which limits our understanding of important questions about how schooling is gendered (or how gender is schooled) through value-laden social interactions which span space and time.

The importance of such questions becomes evident if we recall the GEGPRI finding of significant disjuncture between “global policy aspirations for gender equity” and “various sites of enactment,” and the related observation that “contentious issues of value associated with development” cannot be bracketed and set aside in favor of a focus on easily measurable “results” (Unterhalter et al. 2011: 11-12; see Chapter 2.3). Normative “issues of value” pertaining to girls’ schooling are at play within global policy as well as within enrolment decisions made by parents in rural Pakistan and in every other instance of “enactment,” and these shape each other and ultimately come to bear upon what schooling means, how it is gendered, and whom (if anyone) it empowers. By privileging the measurement of schooling outcomes over the consideration of how schooling is differentially valued, researchers limit their understanding of the larger contexts of meaning and power within which these outcomes are pursued and (sometimes) achieved.

³⁴ See Chapter 3.2, and recall Nelson’s (2006) critique of USAID staff in Pakistan who claim that their work is “demand driven” but make no discernible effort to understand the “substantive features” of demand.

3.5: 'Beyond Access' & Beyond Rate of Return: Critical Perspectives on the Transformative Capacity of Girls' Schooling

The work cited above demonstrates the extent to which the past several decades of research about girls' schooling in the development context have been strongly coloured by a focus on how to transcend 'barriers' to boost enrolment and expand access, and what outcomes or 'returns' are likely to accrue as a result. However, it is crucial to note that this focus has been accompanied by a more sceptical stream of academic discourse that calls for researchers to look 'beyond access' in their assessments of gender, education, and development. These scholars provide an important rejoinder to those who present the expansion of girls' schooling as a linear pathway towards 'development' or 'empowerment,' and their critical work exposes the narrowness of discourses that treat gender as "a line to be crossed" (Unterhalter 2012, 2014). Rooted in feminist theory but extending out into broader popular considerations of concepts like 'autonomy,' 'equality,' and 'empowerment,' these critical views are primarily concerned with attitudes and social norms that are inherently more difficult to measure than background factors such as family income or outcomes such as changes in employment or maternal health. In this scholarship, much of which emerges from the tradition of comparative education, the concept of gender appears more like what Unterhalter has described as a "net" of intricate power relationships within which schooling takes place, or even more broadly as a "fuel" of ideas and values which infuses social life (Unterhalter 2012, 2014).

In this section, I consider some of this critical scholarship in relation to a broader critique of the 'education as development' paradigm itself. As noted briefly in Chapter 2.3, some researchers of education have argued for decades that schooling tends to be an

engine of social reproduction rather than social change, and these scholars are naturally sceptical of the ‘education as development’ narrative of investments in human capital leading to shared ‘returns’ and sweeping progress for all (see Apple, Au, and Gandin 2009). Instead, these researchers tend to be more attentive to the ways in which schooling reflects and reproduces context-specific relationships of power. By starting with a brief review of these larger critiques of ‘education as development’ and then considering how some scholars have brought critical approaches to the study of girls’ schooling in particular, this section works to further expose and disrupt the economic assumptions at root of common discourses about ‘demand.’ In this sense, the critical scholarship introduced here provides an entry point and foundation for the present study. However, most of these scholars still tend to focus more on the inputs and outcomes of schooling than on the particular ways in which people imagine schooling to be valuable, and much of their comparative work attempts to compare discrete locations rather than how particular values and imaginative regimes – including those that inform their own work – emerge and shape each other across time and space.³⁵ These are keys gaps that the present study works to address.

In addition to the scholarship on reproduction theory and correspondence theory introduced briefly in Chapter 2.3 (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), perhaps the most important early rejoinder to the ‘education as development’ paradigm came in the form of dependency theory in Carnoy’s *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (1974). In this polemical text, Carnoy argues that mass schooling, far from

³⁵ Recall Carney’s (2009: 84) call for comparative education researchers to be more attentive to the “increasingly shared imaginative landscapes of globalization,” a call to which this study responds (see Chapter 1.4).

being an instrument of progress and ‘development,’ functions to serve the interests of people with power by subduing and exploiting those with less power. Moreover, argues Carnoy, mass schooling achieves a certain ‘colonisation of the mind’ which convinces marginalised people – including the populations of formerly colonised countries in Africa and Latin America as well as sub-populations such as women and minorities in the United States – to accept their position of subordination as natural and not worthy of contestation (1974; see esp. 1-25).

Later in his career, in a Presidential Address to the Comparative and International Education Society, Carnoy reflects on his departure from the sort of ‘rate of return’ analysis he had practiced while a graduate student under Schultz’s supervision in the early 1960’s, and explains that by the 1970’s he had become “especially suspicious of the dominant paradigm of the time that Western education was a positive force for the common good even in countries that were colonised and exploited economically by the same countries that were providing that Western education” (2006: 553). In sum, argues Carnoy, “the failure of Western education to create a mass of innovative, highly trained, self-actualising individuals was not a failure at all but the direct result of the colonising function of schooling in a capitalist society” (1975: 289). From this perspective, in contrast to the market idealism of the Chicago school, the tremendous growth in enrolment rates around the world since the mid-twentieth century appears to be the result of a hegemonic Western project rather than the expression of a natural latent ‘demand’ for schooling.

Carnoy’s work met extensive criticism, especially for its failure to provide empirical evidence of the causal links that he hypothesises (see Bowman 1975; Koehl

1975). However, more than thirty years later, Carnoy's fundamental critique of the "dominant paradigm of the time" still resonates in critical circles. For example, in his 2008 Presidential Address to the Comparative and International Education Society, Klees critiques the fundamental assumptions of neoclassical (and later neoliberal) economic theory as "problematic at best, absurd at worst" (2008: 304), and notes with frustration that "neoclassical economics has so dominated theory and practice that...the vast majority of educational researchers still do not seem to be very aware of any challenges" (2008: 306).

Klees argues that although "literally hundreds" of studies have used regression analysis to calculate 'rate of return' on schooling in terms of earnings or agricultural production, these studies are fundamentally flawed because of the incapacity of regression analysis to properly include and specify all relevant variables (2008: 310-314). The implication, argues Klees, is that "this type of quantitative methodology is a dead end...and someday people will look back in wonder at how so many intelligent people could convince themselves otherwise" (2008: 315). Klees laments the ascendance of neoliberal ideology and its preoccupation with measurable "outcomes" (2008: 318; see also Klees 2008a), and advocates instead for more "alternative theories" focused on issues of marginalisation (2008: 308-309). Applying this critique to the subject of Education for All and girls' schooling in particular, Klees notes that neoliberal policies fail to address the deeper material and ideological conditions which support women's marginalisation in patriarchal societies (2008: 321). He concludes by reiterating that "dominant economic and social theories are bankrupt," that they "have been reproductive of our unjust and unequal social order," and that they need to be

replaced by theories focused on “understanding and overcoming marginalization” (2008: 324).

While critics such as Klees and Carnoy have focused on shortcomings of the ‘education as development’ paradigm at large, and have tended to address the topic of girls’ schooling only as an example of this larger paradigm, many other critical scholars have lent extensive focus to the particular ways in which schooling tends to reproduce or exacerbate gender inequalities. For example, Stromquist’s 1989 review of existing empirical studies about “Determinants of Educational Participation and Achievement of Women in the Third World” identifies “a diverse array of negative messages, practices, and expectations” as one of the major constraints upon girls’ education, and argues that these norms are perpetuated not just by families and schools, but also by the complicit state apparatus. In her ensuing theoretical critique, she laments the inability of traditional functionalist and reproduction theory to account for the gendered dimensions of educational inequality, and calls for more feminist approaches and “more studies of a qualitative, anthropological nature” to examine “how school transmits patriarchal ideology” (1989: 166-176).

Stromquist reiterated this critique in her 1995 Presidential Address to the Comparative and International Education Society – a speech that has been credited with laying the foundations for educational researchers to look ‘beyond access’ in their assessments of the problems facing girls’ education (Heward 1999: 9). Perhaps anticipating undue optimism at the upcoming United Nations’ Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, Stromquist’s speech posited that patriarchal states concede to improving women’s access to schooling only because women’s schooling “does not

threaten the status quo, and so the basic structures of ideological and material domination are retained” (Stromquist 1995: 445). Her searing argument concludes with the assertion that apparent gains in women’s education have been “more symbolic than real,” and she called for more attention towards the role of schooling in the “reproduction of conventional gender identities” (1995: 454).

A wide swath of research has emerged alongside this basic scepticism towards the transformative capacity of simply sending more girls to school. Even before Stromquist’s landmark arguments, Biraimah (1980) called for further attention to how school acted to transmit gendered “role expectations,” and Kalia (1980) focused on the gendered ways in which Indian textbooks depicted men and women. Recent studies by Durrani (2008) and Nayyar and Salim (2002) have carried out a similar analysis of textbooks and curricula in Pakistan, and their findings reinforce Kalia’s concern that what is taught in South Asian schools tends to reinforce norms of masculine strength and female submissiveness. Indeed, Jeffery and Basu provide a concise summary of these concerns in a provocative assessment about how schooling tends to function in the region of the world most pertinent to the present study:

In most of South Asia, schooling, whether secular or religious in orientation, is dominated by the ideals of rote learning and submissive respect to teachers, and seems as likely to reduce as to increase the creativity and self-confidence of girls...[Moreover,] educated, respectable women in north India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are likely to find their horizons narrowed by the constraints of seclusion in their married lives if ostentatious displays of modesty are demanded from them as part of a household strategy to raise its prestige. (1996: 20)

Jeffery and Basu might risk essentialising the diverse and dynamic range of schooling processes that occur throughout South Asia, but nonetheless critiques such as theirs

encourage a healthy scepticism towards the uncritical conflation of girls' schooling with girls' empowerment.

The broader concerns within this field of criticism extend far beyond the specific content of what is taught in school, and focus upon the conservative structures of the broader contexts within which schooling occurs. For example, in the introduction to a 1999 collection entitled *Gender, Education, and Development: Beyond Access to Empowerment*, Heward asserts that the diverse case studies contained therein all work to demonstrate “the importance of local cultures” in defining the “meaning of educational experience” for girls and women (Heward 1999: 13). According to Heward, this attention to context is fundamental to what enables scholars to move ‘beyond access’ in their analyses:

[These case studies] make the empowerment of women and their autonomy central issues...Gender relations in education are embedded in their changing political, economic, and cultural contexts. Sensitive analyses using qualitative and quantitative evidence are needed to explicate their complexities and nuances. (1999: 13)

A common theme emerges from the essays that follow. Wynd reports that girls' schooling in rural Niger essentially fails to effect significant change because “the World Bank approach to girls' education overlooks underlying social structures...[and thus] those structures remain unchallenged and unchanged” (Wynd 1999: 115). Bendera critiques “the World Bank's reductionist perspective” and argues that universal primary education in Tanzania “has not reduced the number of early marriages” and “does not seem to have altered societal norms” (Bendera 1999: 123-125). Sibbons suggests that his qualitative research on girls' schooling in Nepal reaffirms the basic point – also emphasised by Jayaweera's analysis of “Higher Education and the Social and Economic

Empowerment of Women” (1997) – that schooling “has the potential to reduce, reproduce, or widen gender inequalities,” depending on its form and content (Sibbons 1999: 194). The results of Sibbons’ workshops with teachers and administrators in rural Nepal suggest that “rather than poverty, it is the cultural beliefs about marriage and femininity that are responsible for the low participation of girls in secondary education” (Heward 1999: 12), and thus Sibbons concludes with the ambiguous observation that “social and cultural norms are powerful forces that require significant efforts to change” (Sibbons 1999: 200).

Indeed, many scholars have shown that such norms can persist even as many other indicators of women’s well-being begin to shift. For example, Malik and Courtney suggest that higher education for women in Pakistan increases their awareness of legal rights and their potential to become economically independent, but simultaneously “contribute[s] to women’s subordination rather than helping to empower them” (2011: 40). Holmarsdottir et al. remind readers that even though South Africa has achieved “numeric gender equality in education,” schools often remain “unable to challenge traditional practices that can harm girls” (2011: 23). Ames reports that teachers in Peru “emphasise, reproduce, and naturalise the domestic role of women among their students” (2005: 159), and Silova and Magno (2004) report similar findings in their study of “Gender Equity Unmasked” in the former Soviet Union.

In recent years, many gender-focused critiques of the ‘education as development’ paradigm have been oriented towards the EFA goals and MDG3 for their simplistic usage of girls’ school enrolment rates as indicators for gender equality and women’s empowerment (see footnote in Chapter 3.4). In Black and White’s collection of

“Critical Perspectives on the Millennium Development Goals,” Colclough warns that the goal of achieving universal primary education will not be achieved unless reforms also focus on “changing broader traditions in society – where women’s roles are expected to be centred in the family, and where marriage robs girls of incentives” (2004: 178). In the same collection, Subrahmanian critiques the goal of promoting gender equality by pointing out that “instrumentalist” arguments which uncritically conflate girls’ school enrolment with enhanced women’s autonomy actually “do a disservice to efforts to challenge the gender biases within education systems, by making it all appear far simpler to achieve than it really is” (2004: 195). Likewise, Maslak (2003) critiques EFA for focusing on gender parity in enrolment while failing to address social and cultural barriers; Murphy-Graham (2012) urges scholars to avoid equating “empowerment” with years of schooling, and Waljee (2008: 88) critiques the MDGs and the EFA goals for failing to acknowledge “political complexities behind the official statistics of educational access and achievement.”

Waljee demonstrates that gender relations in Tajikistan, rather than being an expression of a static ‘Muslim culture,’ are in fact a response to the broader social, political, and economic context of post-Soviet marketisation – but that most studies of gender and education in Tajikistan tend to miss this point due to their preoccupation “with access and outcome patterns, or with conventions...that pertain to Western capitalist societies whence they originate” (2008: 87). Arnot and Fennell take this critique even further as they note that “universal gender targets also carry with them imperial and colonial legacies of international interference in nation building” and that “gender equality, although portrayed as a human right, is now also associated with the

new demands of neoliberal economic globalisation, encouraging national regimes and indigenous cultures to move towards Western versions of modernisation” (2008: 3).

To a certain extent, it is useful to classify these critiques as part of the ‘gender and development’ (GAD) discourse that has gained traction since the late 1980’s, and to contrast it with the earlier ‘women in development’ (WID) discourse that emerged in the 1970’s and the ‘women and development’ (WAD) discourse of the 1980’s. Some scholars highlight this distinction to emphasise the reductionism of earlier approaches, and to affirm the importance of the GAD approach and its attention to more nuanced intersections of gender and power (see Arnot and Fennell 2008: 5; Heward 1999; Maslak 2008; Unterhalter 2005). Such affirmation is well-founded, and the juxtaposition of WID, WAD, and GAD provides a useful lens for reviewing literature about girls’ education in the development context. Yet this lens offers limited utility to the current study, because it risks obscuring the extent to which concerns about gender and power have themselves become mainstream, and thereby distracts from the more urgent question of how researchers operationalise and explore such concerns. As noted throughout this and previous sections, much research and policy which purports to address issues of women’s empowerment, autonomy, and equality in fact relies upon measurements of access and outcomes which reveal very little about the transformation or reproduction of gendered social norms. Scholars frequently reference ‘cultural norms’ as either a barrier to women’s empowerment or the theatre in which such empowerment must occur, but they seldom lend serious attention to the mechanisms through which such norms might change nor how researchers might seek to understand

such change.³⁶ Indeed, Subrahmanian advances a similar critique in her observation that many researchers have tended to demonstrate “a lack of real interest...in testing the implicit assumption that education translates into enhanced autonomy for women” (2004: 195).

Subrahmanian might overstate her case, for in fact, as discussed in the next section, some scholars have worked hard to measure the relationship between schooling and concepts like autonomy and empowerment. The problem, rather, is that such concepts are inherently hard to measure, and that the researchers and policymakers who do seek to measure and/or promote them seldom bring to their work a reflexive awareness of their own participation in processes of norm-making. As Vavrus observes, “the global circulation of commonsense beliefs about empowerment...has profound implications for the subjectivities of educational planners as well as for the targets of their reforms” (2000: 238) – yet my concern is that these implications are typically unexplored, even by comparativists who have indeed gone ‘beyond access’ in their considerations of schooling, gender, and power. Consequently, we are left with aggregate statistics measuring the quantifiable inputs and outcomes of girls’ schooling, but the relationship between schooling and the broader transmission of gendered norms and values across time and space remains murky at best. The scholars reviewed in this section have advanced important critiques of the ‘education as development’ paradigm at large and with particular regard to issues of gender and power, but they rarely signal a path forward into more robust consideration of how schooling is gendered and normed

³⁶ See, for example, Colclough (2004) and Sibbons (1999) as quoted in this section, and recall Unterhalter et al.’s (2014b: 1) observation that norm-changing interventions tend to be “under-researched and under-resourced.” Also see discussion in Chapter 1.3 and Chapter 1.4 about how some researchers reference vague ‘cultural norms’ or ‘cultural barriers’ as a way of describing various factors which interfere with the expression of a presumably meta-cultural ‘demand’ for schooling.

through competing imaginative regimes in which researchers themselves participate. It is here that the current study responds to Carney's call for researchers to "grapple with the very question of comparison itself" and to better account for "the increasingly shared imaginative landscapes of globalization" (2009: 66, 84): I suggest that careful consideration of how different actors imagine the value of girls' schooling – that is, consideration of how people 'imagine demand' in both of the senses introduced at the start of this chapter – provides an unappreciated avenue towards exploring the reproduction and re-negotiation of gendered social norms that are otherwise quite difficult to measure. However, before proceeding with this argument, it is worth pausing to take a closer look at some of the measurement issues in question.

3.6: Measurement Issues and the Case Study of Girls' Schooling and Fertility

It is well beyond the scope of this study to attempt a comprehensive summary of how different scholars have sought to define and measure the concepts of women's 'autonomy,' 'empowerment,' and 'equality' and their relation to schooling. Rather, the aim of this section is merely to provide a sketch of the uncertainty and disputation that have surrounded such endeavours, and to present this as the backdrop against which the current study suggests that an expanded concept of demand for girls' schooling can offer a unique glimpse of the complex norms and attitudes that concepts like 'autonomy,' 'empowerment,' and 'equality' intend to capture.

Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) attempt to compare different levels of autonomy between female respondents in India and Pakistan by analysing survey responses that are meant to indicate women's decision-making power, mobility beyond the household, freedom from domestic abuse, and control over economic resources. By these indices,

they find that Hindu and Muslim women in south India tend to have significantly more autonomy than Hindu and Muslim women in north India or Pakistan, and thus they argue that “region rather than religion has a stronger influence on women’s autonomy in South Asia” (2001: 703). What is more pertinent to this study, however, is that the strength of relationship between women’s level of schooling and their level of autonomy tends to vary significantly between regions (2001: 705). Put more simply: schooling is not a reliable proxy indicator for autonomy, and schooling in and of itself cannot be assumed to increase women’s autonomy.

Likewise, Sathar and Kazi (2000) use similar indicators to track variations in autonomy between women in different areas of rural Pakistan. They find that women in rain-fed (*barani*) areas tend to exhibit more autonomy than those in irrigated areas – a trend that they attribute to the more conservative norms that have emerged through the feudal hierarchies associated with the politics of irrigation (2000: 96-98; see also Sathar 1996: 145) – and that the relationship between autonomy and schooling is indirect at best. Their data suggest that women’s level of schooling is tightly correlated with fertility patterns – a well-known trend discussed in further detail below – but less so with mobility, and hardly at all with reported decision-making power within or beyond the household (2000: 103). By their own estimation, this finding amounts to an important corrective to the oft-assumed relationship between women’s level of schooling and their autonomy or “status” (2000: 103).

While Sathar, Kazi, and Jejeebhoy question the relationship between schooling and autonomy, other scholars question the measurement of concepts like ‘autonomy’ altogether. Mason and Smith share lessons learned from their twenty years of “Thinking

About, Measuring, and Analyzing Women's Empowerment/Autonomy,” and candidly emphasise that reliably measuring power differentials is “extremely tricky” (2001: 2). The authors note that it “makes sense conceptually” to measure gendered relations of power and authority via self-reported data about who makes what decisions and who controls what resources, but that ultimately these methods have left them with “very little confidence that we are measuring the power divide between males and females in a meaningful way” (2001: 1). Mason and Smith attribute this uncertainty not only to measurement issues associated with self-reported data about matters as sensitive and personal as domestic relations, but also to the complex reality that “women may be empowered in some areas while being completely oppressed in others” (2001: 2).

Ghuman, Lee, and Smith (2006) reinforce this scepticism. These authors revisit the survey data used by Mason and Smith (2001), and they conclude that this data – collected from men and women in twenty-three communities in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines – is of “limited utility for understanding differences in gender stratification across context” (2006: 1). The authors find that “the level of women's autonomy depends on whether wives or husbands are respondents,” and that “response categories do not have the same cognitive or semantic meanings to men and women” (2006: 1). Their point, in short, is that the survey items used to measure women's decision-making power, mobility, and control over resources – which, incidentally, are quite similar to the items used in other research about ‘autonomy’ – “cannot be used with confidence for understanding community level differences in women's autonomy” (2006: 24). They note that researchers in the United States have spent over four decades wrestling with the challenge of how to reliably measure the

distribution of power in household gender relations (2006: 4), and conclude by emphasising the need to “spend more time in a community to understand the nature of gender relations,” though not at the expense of parallel efforts to develop cross-cultural theories of gender inequality (2006: 24).

Agarwala and Lynch make a useful contribution to this discussion by noting that the constructs of ‘status,’ ‘autonomy,’ and ‘empowerment’ have all been used to discuss “some element of gender equality in the household and community,” but that they are distinct insofar as ‘status’ tends to refer to how women are perceived by others, primarily men; ‘empowerment’ tends to refer to collective as well as individual aspects of power, and ‘autonomy’ tends to refer to the control that women exert over their own lives (2006: 2077-2078). The authors recall that in 1995 the United Nations declared autonomy to be a basic human right, but that there is little evidence to show that the construct of ‘autonomy’ can be usefully applied and compared across different contexts (2006: 2078). Drawing from earlier work by Mason (1986), they note that proxy indicators of ‘autonomy’ are of little utility, because the lived meaning of a given proxy (level of education, for example) in relation to ‘autonomy’ is entirely context-dependent. Next, they review the various ways that scholars have attempted to employ ‘direct measures’ of autonomy as a multi-dimensional construct, and they note that the validity of such measures is dependent on the differential weights assigned to each indicator (2006: 2080). In other words, they point out that it is problematic to assume that a woman’s level of autonomy when buying vegetables is as significant as her level of autonomy in decisions about family planning – but it is equally problematic to determine how to quantitatively assign different levels of significance to these decisions.

Having acknowledged these caveats, the authors go on to analyse survey and interview data that were collected from over two thousand women in India and Pakistan. The data correspond to fifty-four questions presumed to reflect women's autonomy from violence, autonomy in family decisions, autonomy in community involvement, and autonomy in household economics. The authors test and refine their model of autonomy with respect to the data from India, and then attempt to apply the same model to Pakistan. Unsurprisingly, their findings suggest that “even relatively small changes in context can affect...the measurement of autonomy and thus the concept of autonomy itself” (2006: 2095). Consequently, the authors question the “robustness” of any attempts to measure autonomy across cultural contexts (2006: 2095).

Attempts to operationalise the concept of ‘empowerment’ and its relation to girls’ schooling have encountered similar methodological challenges and scepticism. As noted in Chapter 3.5, these critiques have been particularly sharp in the wake of MDG3 and its casual insinuation that boosting primary school enrolment rates will necessarily ‘promote gender equality and empower women’ (see Aikman, Halai, and Rubagiza 2011; Black and White 2004; Kabeer 2005; UNDG 2010; Unterhalter 2003, 2005a, 2005b). However, it is hardly new to acknowledge that ‘empowerment’ is difficult to define and measure. Following Moser’s (1989) oft-cited introduction of the term in relation to gender and development, Rowlands notes that its common usage is often “careless, deliberately vague, or sloganising” (1995: 106). Rowlands acknowledges that conventional definitions of empowerment tend to involve increasing access to decision-making processes, but also that other definitions, particularly those informed by feminist

theory, entail a broader “undoing [of] negative social constructions” pertaining to women (1995: 103-4).

Rowlands does not attempt to define how such processes of deconstruction can be systematically measured, but Kabeer shifts the conversation in this direction by insisting that decision-making processes – and ‘choice’ more broadly – always involve multiple dimensions that must be understood in relation to each other (2001: 19). Kabeer suggests that indicators of ‘empowerment’ must reflect the resources, agency, and achievements that constitute the conditions and outcomes of an individual’s available choices, and thus that research about empowerment must attend to the fact that these dimensions are “*indivisible*” (2001: 40; emphasis in original; see also 2005). Kabeer’s framework draws upon the capabilities approach (see Nussbaum 2000; 2001; 2003; 2004; Sen 1995, 1999) in that it identifies the expansion of capabilities as the ultimate goal of ‘empowerment’ and development at large, but ultimately Kabeer remains sceptical about the possibility of directly measuring such concepts. She worries that survey research cannot capture critical power-laden processes of ‘informal decision-making’ (2001: 33), and resolves that “there is no single linear model of change by which a ‘cause’ can be identified for women’s disempowerment and altered to create the desired ‘effect’” (2001: 52).

Scholars such as Bano (2009) and Abu-Lughod (2002) take this scepticism even further by highlighting the extent to which the issue at stake is not just methodological; it is also an ethical and epistemological dilemma concerning the basic question of “how to deal with cultural ‘others’” (Abu-Lughod 2002: 786) – or how, in other words, to conceptualise and pursue ideals of welfare and justice without being overly reliant on

arbitrary, ethnocentric definitions of these terms. Both scholars worry about the neo-colonial implications of global discourses about ‘empowering’ Muslim women, and both work to emphasise that respect for difference should not be conflated with nihilistic cultural relativism. Abu-Lughod warns that dogmatic faith in the salvation rhetoric of secular humanism is as dangerous as dogmatic faith in Islamism, and challenges readers to accept that “different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best” (2002: 788). Likewise, Bano draws from her work in Pakistan’s female madrasas to argue that indices of empowerment must be “context-sensitive” if they are to be meaningful (2009: 20), and Basu insists upon the need for definitions of “autonomy” to be “culture-specific” (1996: 53). Such critiques do not render useless the frameworks developed by scholars like Kabeer or Agarwala and Lynch, but they do reinforce the recurring point that even the best frameworks are of limited utility when attempting to extend concepts like ‘autonomy’ or ‘empowerment’ across different cultural contexts.

Indeed, this point seems to have been accepted so widely that a recent special issue of *Research in Comparative and International Education* is devoted to exploring “under-theorized concepts such as empowerment” by telling the stories that are “under and beyond statistics” (Monkman 2011: 1; see Changezi and Biseth 2011; Holmarsdottir, Ekne, and Augestad 2011). When juxtaposed against the 1980 special issue of *Comparative Education* that focuses almost exclusively on the quantifiable barriers and outcomes associated with sending girls to school (see Chapter 3.4), this recent publication neatly illustrates the gradual ‘turn’ in the literature away from using gender as a framework or category of analysis and towards exploring the local contexts

within which gender assumes its meaning (see Stambach 1999). Even so, it remains the case that scholars are unsure about how best to conduct such explorations, especially as they pertain to girls' schooling. Moreover, the increasing recognition that concepts like women's 'autonomy,' 'empowerment,' and 'equality' are culturally and contextually contingent does not sit easily with the cosmopolitan project of generating global frameworks for defining and measuring these goals and pursuing them through education. Consequently, many researchers and multinational institutions continue working to refine how they operationalise such concepts, and struggle to find indicators that are broad enough to be widely applicable but specific enough to capture meaningful trends at the nexus of gender and schooling across contexts.

For example, UNESCO has developed the GEI, a gender-specific index for evaluating progress towards 'Education for All,' but the GEI is simply an aggregation of different measurements of gender parity in enrolment and adult literacy, and thus has limited utility for researchers seeking to understand shifting patterns of gender and schooling with a lens that looks 'beyond access' (UNESCO 2003; Unterhalter et al. 2008). Likewise, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has put forward a 'Gender-related Development Index' (GDI) that adjusts the well-known Human Development Index to account for gender inequality in basic indicators of welfare such as health and literacy, and has also developed a 'Gender Empowerment Measure' (GEM) combining data for women's political and economic participation and their share of earned income (UNDP 2013). Unterhalter, Challender, and Rajagopalan note that the GDI and GEM are both useful as "easily accessible measure[s] of some aspects of gender in relation to human well-being" (Unterhalter et al. 2008: 68), but stress that

more robust frameworks are necessary for measuring gender equality in education. Thus, the authors propose a new Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI), which combines data for girls' enrolment, attendance, and retention in school with other data reflecting their capacity to "translate" that schooling into future health and prosperity (Unterhalter et al. 2008: 67).

The GEEI – along with many of the other measures mentioned above – might indeed be a useful tool for scholars seeking to generate broad assessments of basic trends across different countries and contexts, and such assessments are undoubtedly necessary for policymakers wondering where to direct educational resources and reform efforts. However, the breadth of such indices limits their capacity to illuminate how different parents, educators, and students themselves understand the value of girls' schooling on its own terms or in relation to boys' schooling. Perhaps one might argue that these evaluations are not important, or that statistics such as enrolment and retention rates are sufficient proxies for how different stakeholders value girls' schooling. Yet the concern of this study is that none of these indices can capture the extent to which the meaning and lived experience of concepts like 'gender equality' are contextually contingent.

Two examples from the present study should suffice to make this point. First, many parents insist that boys and girls should have the opportunity to pursue 'equal' amounts of education, but that they should learn different things so that they are better prepared to fulfill their different social responsibilities (see, for example, Chapter 6.5). Second, and more broadly, no measure of female participation in schooling, employment, or government could capture the extent to which women are still expected

to defer to men in daily household affairs or in important decisions about their futures (see, for example, Chapter 9.4). It is in this sense, if none other, that the present study of ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling can shed useful light on the gendered norms and evaluations that are entwined with particular assessments of whether or not girls should attend school and towards what ends such schooling should lead. This sort of analysis need cannot replace broad quantitative measurements like the ones described above, but they can indeed provide a richer understanding of the different lives and contexts that such measurements work to describe.

Put broadly, then, the point is that even as researchers and policymakers have grown increasingly confident about ‘what works’ to get more girls in school and what quantifiable outcomes can be expected from increasing girls’ enrolments, they remain uncertain about how to understand the gendered social and cultural norms bound up in such processes. Nowhere is this dynamic more clearly displayed than in the vast literature concerned with girls’ schooling and fertility rates, and thus it is instructive to briefly discuss that oft-referenced stream of research.

Conducted over several years during the mid-1970’s, the first World Fertility Survey showed a strong negative correlation between a woman’s years of schooling and the number of children she is likely to have (Jeffery and Basu 1996: 15). Scholarship over the ensuing two decades led to a degree of consensus so thorough that, by 1996, Basu would write that “it is now universally acknowledged...that female schooling has a strong and independent relationship with fertility” (48). Indeed, as recently as June 2011, the World Bank website listed “reducing women’s fertility rates” as the first bullet point underneath the statement that “girls’ education yields some of the highest returns

of all development investments” (World Bank 2011). However, there is little consensus about the reasons *why* this pattern persists.

Important early work by Caldwell (1980) hypothesised that the provision of mass schooling would induce ‘structural’ changes that would transform household economics and encourage parents to invest more resources in fewer children – and thus that increases in the availability of schooling would encourage even uneducated women to have fewer children. This hypothesis depends on the assumption that parents would perceive schooling to lead to employment or some other form of economic benefit that would provide an incentive for parents to trade ‘quantity’ for ‘quality.’ In contrast, other scholarship suggested that the effect of schooling upon fertility would be independent of ‘structural’ micro-economic realities such as the availability of jobs, because women who attended even just a few years of school would be exposed to new ideas and would experience a rise in ‘status’ that would influence fertility decisions and behaviours (e.g. Cochrane 1979; Jain 1981; Mason 1986). The implicit ‘ideational’ hypothesis is that ‘structural’ changes can help accelerate fertility change, but the fundamental relationship between fertility and schooling – particularly female schooling – is a product of the capacity of schooling to change “perceptions, ideas, and attitudes” (Alam et. al. 2003: 450). Countless iterations of the structural and ideational hypotheses have appeared throughout the past decades, and swirling among them are further points about the tendency for girls’ schooling to delay marriage age, decrease infant mortality, increase contraceptive usage, and induce a number of other changes that lend themselves to fertility reduction.

What is most relevant to the present study is the particular strain of ‘ideational’ argument that has sought to explain the link between girls’ schooling and reduced fertility rates by citing gendered structures of power as the critical intermediary variables. By this argument, schooling increases women’s power and autonomy within and beyond the household, and this in turn leads to the widely observed reduction in total fertility rates. Basic though it is, this notion is hotly contested and difficult to prove. Much of the research attempting to measure women’s ‘status’ and ‘autonomy’ has been driven by a particular interest in whether these constructs might explain the correlation between girls’ schooling and fertility rates, and findings have tended to cast doubt upon at least two assumptions: first, that there is any consistently strong association between girls’ schooling and their eventual ‘autonomy’ or ‘status,’ and second, that these constructs maintain any consistent association with fertility rates (e.g. Basu 1996; Mason 1986, 2001; Morgan, Stash, Smith, and Mason 2002; Sathar 1996).

In light of this lack of evidence, some scholars surmise that ulterior political motives may have driven the initial assumption and continued interest in the possibility of any such associations. The Program of Action that emerged from Cairo after the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development unambiguously linked girls’ schooling, ‘empowerment,’ and fertility reduction (ICPD 1994: Ch. XI), but Heward and Jeffery and Jeffery suggest that conference participants were merely using the trope of ‘empowerment’ to skirt around the political thorniness of arguing for contraception (Heward 1999; Jeffery and Jeffery 1998). Indeed, Jeffery and Jeffery suggest that the Cairo Program of Action commits a “hijacking of feminist vocabulary that masks a

fundamentally unchanged population control agenda and that engages with girls' education only as a means to that end" (1998: 252).

Likewise, Subrahmanian critiques the popular tendency to interpret correlations between girls' schooling and reduced fertility as "indications in the changes of *desires* of women, as opposed to exploring the possibility of other changes...in incentives for changing family size" (2004: 196). Jeffery and Jeffery have criticised the same trend, noting that schooling is often seen as "a progressive and positive mechanism for broadening people's minds, raising women's autonomy at the same time as it reduces their fertility," while in fact their research in north India suggests that fertility decline must be seen "as the outcome of the logics of male-dominated family systems in which low fertility has come to be seen as economically rational" and is consequently "imposed" by husbands (1998: 247).

It is entirely possible that some variant of the 'ideational hypothesis' is indeed accurate, at least in some contexts, and that the correlation between girls' schooling and fertility decline can be attributed at least in part to some kind of substantive shift in gender norms that is induced by formal schooling. This study does not aim to enter the ongoing debate over this possibility, but even so, the basic trajectory of this debate offers an instructive microcosmic example of the larger trend that this literature review works to highlight: even as girls' schooling is shown to be strongly and independently correlated with certain outcomes or 'returns' across a range of cultural contexts, the household-level attitudes and perspectives that underlie such correlations remain poorly understood. For reasons that are political, sentimental, and perhaps entirely reasonable, the possibility that girls' schooling is a causal driver of 'empowerment' or some other

change in gender norms retains a prominent position in popular and academic discourses on the topic, but robust empirical support for this possibility is often scarce. My intention here is not to address this scarcity by explicitly seeking evidence of ‘empowerment’ or ‘autonomy’ as outcomes of schooling, but rather to suggest that investigations of these topics would be enriched by looking beyond schooling ‘outcomes’ and more carefully considering the different ways that particular people think and talk about the value of schooling: who schooling is for, towards what ends it should lead, to what extent it should disrupt established distributions of power, and how the answers to these questions might be gendered. This is the web of normative evaluations that I am presenting as an expanded concept of ‘demand,’ and I contend that it offers a wellspring of insights unavailable within research and policy frameworks that treat gender as a line to be crossed and demand as a yes or no decision about enrolment.

3.7: Gender Mainstreaming as Global Norm-Making?

As noted in Chapter 2.5, this study uses a concept of global norm-making as both a lens and a mirror: the concept offers a new way of describing the people, places, and processes that education researchers study, as well as a new way of understanding how research and researchers themselves exist in relation to these phenomena. This literature review has highlighted that conspicuously few studies ask how girls’ schooling is evaluated and imbued with meaning at the household level, or in other words, what constitutes the oft-referenced ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling other than a general sense that some girls should indeed try attend school for some amount of time. The concept of global norm-making can help explain how this trend has emerged and become self-reinforcing within research and policy discourses as well as how it has come to bear

upon the lives of the people that are the subjects of these discourses. In this section, I illustrate the utility of such an approach by considering the concept of ‘gender mainstreaming’: how it has been ‘normed’ within research and policy regimes that focus primarily upon access and outcomes, and how it has been differentially contested and experienced in implementation.

The multiple meanings and shifting emphases that have marked the emergence of ‘gender mainstreaming’ as a touchstone concept within official multinational development discourses can perhaps be summarised as a movement away from simply ‘getting women involved in development’ and towards integrating gender-sensitive analyses into all dimensions of policy making and implementation.³⁷ However, this sort of neat conceptual overview belies the extent to which the concept remains disputed and particular enactments of it are always contextually contingent. Many scholars highlight the conceptual tensions, assumptions, and ‘hollowness’ that have accompanied (or perhaps enabled) the establishment of ‘gender mainstreaming’ as what Subrahmanian has called “the fundamental Gender and Development (GAD) buzzword” (2005: 89; see also Daly 2005; Walby 2005; Zalewski 2010), and some worry that this lack of conceptual or theoretical clarity has allowed the term’s feminist undertones to be co-opted to serve the patriarchal interests of neoliberalism (Perrons 2005; Subrahmanian

³⁷ The report from the 1985 World Conference for Women argues for “bringing women into the mainstream of the development process” (United Nations 1985: Paragraph 111) and uses the terms ‘mainstream’ or ‘mainstreaming’ a total of six times; the 1995 report uses the terms forty times and argues more broadly for the need to “ensure the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all spheres of society” (United Nations 1995: Point 25), and the 1997 report of the Economic and Social Council uses the terms no less than sixty-five times in its effort to formally define ‘gender mainstreaming’ as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action...in all areas and at all levels” (United Nations 1997: Ch. IV). More recently, a 2012 World Development Report uses the terms twenty-one times and places greater emphasis on ‘strategic mainstreaming’ and ‘upstreaming’ to ensure that gender-sensitive programs and policies are not compartmentalised into particular regions or sectors (World Bank 2011a).

2005; Woodford-Berger 2005). Scholars who focus upon particular instances of ‘mainstreaming’ in practice tend to underscore how people adapt it differently in different contexts, and thus often share Daly’s contention that the only “common core” to ‘gender mainstreaming’ across contexts is its tendency to be “technocratic” and “non-systemic in compass” (2005: 433; see also Kelly 2010; Mills and Ssewakiryanga 2002; Verloo 2011). These scholars are attentive to the ways that particular instances of ‘mainstreaming’ are shaped by asymmetric power relations that risk undermining the initiative’s original transformative purpose or decontextualising gender inequalities from their intersections with other axes of inequality such as ethnicity or class (Kelly 2010; Mukhopadhyay 2005; Squires 2005; Verloo 2011). Taken together, this range of scholarship about the formulation and implementation of ‘gender mainstreaming’ underscores its indeterminacy as a concept and practice and demonstrates the extent to which it is power- and value-laden, but offers limited insight about how researchers in various fields are and have been entangled in such processes.

A concept of global norm-making (see Chapter 2.5) offers a useful lens through which to consider these questions. If applied to the industry of academic publishing and the networks of influence that shape educational research and policy (see Stambach et. al. 2011), such a lens can shed light on the dialectical processes through which particular ways of thinking about gender have been ‘mainstreamed’ not only into the formulation of international targets and policies, but also into the tendencies of researchers who study and evaluate such policies, and also, ultimately, into the experiences of the people whose lives such policies are meant to affect. In other words, a lens of global norm-making allows for an expanded understanding of how gender is conceptualised,

interpreted, and enacted not only by education policymakers and practitioners, but also by education researchers and the people with whom they work. While conventional analyses of ‘gender mainstreaming’ in the field of education might look towards instances of policy discourse or programme implementation in which actors specifically reference and mobilise the concept of ‘mainstreaming’ (e.g. Kelly 2010; Woodford-Berger 2005), a concept of global norm-making allows a wider lens more attuned to the subtle ways in which official emphases on ‘mainstreaming’ do not simply create templates for policy and ‘toolkits’ or ‘handbooks’ for implementation (e.g. Kabeer 2003, Oxfam 2010; UNDP 2006), but also constitute norms that resonate far beyond the immediate scope of the formal initiative itself.

Framed in this way, one can hypothesise how the effects of ‘gender mainstreaming’ emerge within education research and policy as a particular focus upon access and outcomes, and then become self-reinforcing through the dialectical processes of iteration and recursivity that Stambach et. al. (2011: 458) have identified as constitutive of “global publishing norm-making.” First, evidence of the unique barriers and outcomes associated with girls’ schooling lends momentum to declarations from multinational institutions and other actors that gender-sensitive lenses must be ‘mainstreamed’ into research and policy (see footnote above), and these declarations in turn lead to the collection of more evidence. When further empirical research shows a correlation between girls’ schooling and a particular outcome – be it economic ‘returns,’ reduced fertility rates, or some form of enhanced ‘autonomy’ or ‘empowerment’ – these findings spark further research attempting to test the correlation and argue for or against causation. When the outcome in question is normatively considered to be desirable – as

is likely the case, and likely the reason that the outcome was under investigation in the first place – then this bolsters arguments about the need for policies that increase girls’ access to schooling. These parallel cycles of research and policy about access to and outcomes of girls’ schooling do not necessarily preclude questions about how the value of such schooling is locally understood, but they do not encourage such questions, either. The resulting tendency to gloss over questions about household-level evaluations of girls’ schooling is often only further enhanced by the extent to which some educational researchers and policymakers are already biased towards the view that girls’ schooling is worthy of pursuit and that its value is easily understood if not already self-evident (recall the example of ‘Transforming Education in Pakistan’ discussed in Chapter 2.2).

Seen as an instance of global norm-making, the implications of this trend in the literature are multidimensional: its assumptions reinforce prevailing research agendas, support international policy initiatives that are more concerned with ‘getting girls in school’ than engaging with parents’ ideas about why this might or might not be worthwhile, and structure localised hegemonies through which different actors work to establish girls’ schooling as normative and self-evidently desirable. These different dimensions emerge and shape each other through dialectics that are “asymmetric but mutual” (Halliday and Carruthers 2007; see above, Chapter 2.5), and while none dictates the ultimate meaning of schooling at the community, household, or individual level, each is entangled with the contexts and processes through which students and their parents make schooling decisions and assign meaning to schooling experiences.

In sum, the discursive trends discussed throughout this chapter do not operate in a value-neutral vacuum; their emergence and effects are situated within broader processes of norm-making which span time and space as well as the particularities of specific research projects or policy initiatives. The case of ‘gender mainstreaming’ is but one example of a research and policy discourse which takes for granted the normative assumption that girls *should* go to school, and thus focuses intellectual and material resources towards questions about access and outcomes rather than questions about how schooling is normed and gendered or about its own location (or the location of its various authors and advocates) within such processes. The point is that approaching the subject of girls’ growing equality and visibility within schools as a process of global norm-making can help elucidate how the lived experience of gender is neither ‘transferred’ along with a neat bundle of gender-targeted policies and toolkits nor somehow so locally ‘relative’ that it is unaffected by the normative discourses in which such policies are embedded. This approach helps move beyond the theoretical “impasse” highlighted by Carney et al. (2012) and discussed in Chapter 2.5: more than just an observation of the dialectics between global hegemonies and local contingencies, and more than a simplistic comparison of how purportedly ‘global’ norms manifest differently across purportedly ‘local’ contexts, a global norm-making approach invites exploration of “how the sausage is made” (Anderson-Levitt 2012: 452) through the ongoing contestation and interpretation of different imaginative regimes. The implications for researchers and policymakers are that evaluations of girls’ schooling are locally contingent, that this contingency sits at the nexus of policy-making and norm-making, and thus that efforts aiming to generate or understand the emergence of more

holistic support or ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling at the household and community level must address this nexus and its indeterminacy.

3.8: Investigating Qualitative Aspects of Demand: Precedents and New Directions

This literature review has sought to elucidate a series of interrelated trends in popular and academic discourses concerned with the uptake of girls’ schooling in the development context. It has pointed out the prevailing focus on barriers and outcomes associated with girls’ enrolment in school; it has argued that this trend is at least partially rooted in an economistic ‘schooling as development’ paradigm which lends special focus to measurable ‘returns,’ and it has suggested that household-level perspectives about the value of girls’ schooling have been largely overlooked or taken for granted within this stream of literature. Accordingly, it has shown that policy reports and academic studies that explore common questions about the relationship between girls’ schooling and the change or reproduction of social norms related to gender have tended to cite barriers, outcomes, and enrolment rates rather than the aspirations, intentions, and evaluations that underlie these more easily measurable trends. It has emphasised that most research in this direction has tended to overlook ‘demand’ altogether or to conceptualise it only in limited binary terms that obfuscate the complexities of household-level perspectives and the processes through which these perspectives might emerge and transform in relation to local conditions of supply. The present study’s focus on the qualitative aspects of demand for girls’ schooling is a deliberate response to these overlapping trends in the literature.

Although certainly in the minority, the study is by no means first or alone in its intent to respond to Nelson’s call for more attention to the “substantive features of

demand” (2006: 701) in Pakistan or elsewhere. In a unique mixed-methods study about schooling and fertility change in rural Pakistan, Sathar, Lloyd, and ul Haque conducted a series of interviews investigating “parents’ perspectives on schooling” (2000: 29-49), and many of their findings anticipate the findings and subsequent arguments of the present study. For instance, the authors report parents’ “universal” consensus about a recent shift in popular understandings of the value of schooling for girls, and suggest that this shift might be attributed to a “demonstration effect” whereby parents are motivated to pursue schooling for their daughters due to the influence of mass media and the behaviour of others rather than any straightforward economic rationale (2000: 32-33). Similarly, Pardhan’s ethnographic work in northwest Pakistan seeks to investigate “women’s perceptions of schooling” in response to the “limited research” on this topic (2005); de Groot’s work in coastal Sindh explores “how the villagers perceive the importance of educating...women” (2010: 12), and Lyon works to understand “parental expectations” of female schooling in rural Punjab (2010). Bano’s work in Pakistan’s female madrasas is particularly concerned with the individual desires and aspirations underlying “demand” for this type of schooling (2009: 5), and Changezi investigates “perceptions of female schooling” amongst the Hazara diaspora in Pakistan (2011). Finally, Raynor’s consideration of a school stipend programme in Bangladesh is oriented around an exploration of “attitudes towards girls’ education,” and she draws upon her findings to ask whether girls’ schooling “strengthen[s] traditional gender roles or lead[s] to empowerment” (2005: 83).

More generally, the emerging literature about how parents and children *perceive* the outcomes of schooling (Benhassine et al. 2014; Jensen 2010, 2012; Kauffman 2014;

see Chapter 3.2.3) is a welcome improvement upon studies that simply try to measure the outcomes themselves, but this research on perceived outcomes is still limited by its dominant focus on quantifiable, economistic outcomes such as future earnings. Even Duflo, who has supported much of this emergent research through her work in the Abdul Lateef Jamil Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), acknowledges that this sort of research provides only a partial picture of what parents actually value: observing that tradeoffs are inevitable and that some women in Bangladesh prefer investments in water infrastructure to investments in schooling, Duflo notes that “how one *values* this convenience [of improved water infrastructure], versus educating children or better roads, is not something that economists are well-placed to evaluate” (2012: 1075; emphasis added).

Taken together, these studies of how different stakeholders perceive the value of girls’ schooling provide a solid foundation for the current project, and later chapters will integrate some of their substantive theoretical and methodological insights. However, the present study remains novel in several important ways.

First, it makes an explicit effort to read the aspirations, intentions, and evaluations that inform and constitute ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling as qualitative indicators of broader gendered social norms. In other words, while Sathar et al. (2000) conduct their exploration of ‘demand’ with an interest in exploring family planning and fertility trends, Lyon (2010) investigates parental expectations with the goal of explaining trends in enrolment, and Pardhan (2005) orients her work around the justified but somewhat abstract goal of de-essentialising the ‘third-world woman,’ the present study assumes the bolder goal of using perspectives about girls’ schooling as a lens for

understanding the daily enactment and re-negotiation of gender and power at the household level.

Second, this study conducts its investigation with special attention to how schooling norms are ‘made’ (and gendered) through instances of uncertainty and indeterminacy (see Chapter 2.4), and this enables it to avoid the extremes of concluding that gender norms have ‘either’ changed ‘or’ have stayed the same. This special attention lends itself to a more nuanced understanding of the transmission and contestation of gendered social norms than many conventional indicators can accommodate. For instance, while many different studies have sought to operationalise constructs like ‘autonomy’ by establishing a general measurement of women’s ‘decision-making power’ in different contexts (see Chapter 3.6), the present study works to account for the particular instances in which women or girls might assert more ‘decision-making power’ than is customary. In that same sense, its qualitative focus on evaluations of schooling allows it to account for aspects of social change that might be desired but not yet attained or even attainable. In this way, the study follows upon MacLeod’s point that his focus on ‘aspirations’ allows for a theoretical bridge that appreciates the interaction of ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ without over-exaggerating the force of either (2009: 22; see Chapter 2.4).

Third, the study approaches perspectives about the value of girls’ schooling with a deliberate focus on how these instances of ‘demand’ interact with particular instances of ‘supply.’ This point dovetails into the fourth and most ambitious distinguishing quality of the current study: it aims not only to qualitatively describe the ‘substance’ of different instances of demand, but also to tentatively attempt an explanation of their

‘origins’ – that is, an explanation of how these perspectives and ideas have emerged and transformed over time (see Chapter 1.5). In light of the methodological and epistemological challenges of attempting to discuss ‘change’ without longitudinal data – discussed in further detail in Chapter 5 – this aspect of the study is exploratory at best, and is not meant to provide any ‘hard’ answers about the origins of different instances of demand. Even so, in light of the fact that almost all adult respondents reported having seen attitudes about girls’ schooling change in their lifetimes, it seems vital to attempt an exploration of the processes through which such change has unfolded. With the exception of Sathar et al.’s brief discussion of an apparent “demonstration effect” (2000), this sort of inquiry has seldom been attempted. As such, it has much to offer to scholars and policymakers interested in the factors that shape individual and collective understandings of the value of girls’ schooling.

Chapter 4: The Context of ‘Supply’: Schooling, Society, and Education Research in Contemporary Pakistan

4.1: Overview

This chapter builds upon the broad literature review of Chapter 3 by turning towards Pakistan in particular: its social, political, economic, and cultural history; the history of schooling, especially girls’ schooling, within this context; and the ways in which researchers from within and beyond Pakistan have tended to write about these issues. I provide a relatively brief overview of national history and nationwide trends in education policy, and then focus more closely on the rural areas in Baltistan and the southern Punjab where I conducted fieldwork. I show that most educational research in Pakistan has tended to focus on access and outcomes and references ‘culture’ primarily as a barrier to enrolment, but that some scholars, including some of those introduced in Chapter 3.8, have lent more careful attention to the social interactions and cultural contexts through which people experience and contest the gendered value of schooling. Drawing in particular from anthropologists who have worked in Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia, I focus on themes of asymmetry and interdependence and argue that these are fundamental elements of the contexts in which my research participants engage with ideas about gender, schooling, and personhood.

As noted in Chapter 1.7, this review of the literature is more than a simple ‘set up’ for the empirical chapters that follow; it is also empirical in its own right insofar as it demonstrates how some of the hegemonic ideas identified in Chapter 3 have emerged within educational research and policy in Pakistan: there is a clear focus on access and outcomes – that is, enrolment and rate of return – and more emphasis on achieving these

ends than on understanding the broader norms and values at play. Researchers and policymakers tend to present the benefits of schooling as self-evident, and the concept of ‘demand,’ when it appears within this literature, tends to conform to the trends described in Chapter 3.2 and seldom invites more nuanced consideration of how particular people value girls’ schooling or how these evaluations might diverge or shape each other across contexts. The point here is more than just a critique of how researchers and policymakers have used the concept of ‘demand’; it is also an effort to illustrate the broader imaginative regimes that have animated education policy and research in Pakistan and that have ultimately come to bear upon the lives of my research participants and the ways in which they evaluate schooling.

Each of the three research sites that comprise this study’s empirical core was the locus of a recent gender-targeted schooling intervention, and thus part of my inquiry involves exploring whether and how reported shifts in ‘demand’ can be understood in relation to these recent changes in ‘supply.’ At the most immediate level, this effort to develop a fuller understanding of ‘supply’ requires attention to the particulars of schooling provision in each field site. In a different sense, though, and in keeping with a lens attuned to processes of global norm-making, I work to understand the ‘supply’ of schooling in each context as comprised of ideas, values, and relationships of power that extend well beyond the immediate geography and schooling history of a given field site. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basic sketch of these larger lattices of influence within which each field site is situated and in relation to which particular evaluations of schooling emerge, transform, and are contested over time.

The chapter begins with a summary of several macro-level analyses of ‘development’ in Pakistan in the six decades since the country’s founding in 1947 (Chapter 4.2). This section highlights arguments suggesting that income disparities and political corruption have led to a status quo of under-provision of infrastructure and state services, particularly for the rural poor. This section also emphasises the significance of Pakistan’s ‘Islamisation’ in the 1980’s, and summarises the social and legal implications of this period for girls and women in particular. I argue that these two large-scale historical trends – under-provision of state services and the lingering effects of state-sanctioned religious conservatism – are fundamental to the broader contexts within which my research participants encounter ideas about the potential costs and benefits of schooling.

The next section (Chapter 4.3) provides a more focused overview of Pakistan’s educational history and its current educational landscape. It reviews the Government of Pakistan’s ‘Five Year Plans’ and National Education Policies since Partition and independence in 1947, and demonstrates that these policies have mobilised the logic of human capital and rate of return to justify a recurring focus on building schools and boosting enrolment – but have consistently failed to achieve their own targets while doing so. Against this backdrop of under-provision by the state, this section then describes the prominence of multinational aid organisations within the educational landscape, and suggests that these have been significant channels for the arrival of global emphases on gender equality in schooling. The section also describes the recent proliferation of private schools as a partial consequence of the Government of Pakistan’s emphasis on ‘public-private partnerships,’ and points out that this trend of privatisation

has dramatically broadened access to schooling for some citizens but not others. This section also discusses recent changes in the content and availability of ‘religious’ schooling for girls in Pakistan, both within mainstream schools and in *madrasas*.

The next section (Chapter 4.4) provides a more detailed overview of educational research in and about Pakistan, particularly as it pertains to girls’ schooling. It demonstrates that most research about girls’ schooling has focused on identifying the determinants of enrolment and measuring outcomes in terms of academic achievement and social welfare, with some significant exceptions exploring how gender is reproduced or renegotiated through curriculum and other dimensions of schooling experience. This section lends special attention to the narrow ways in which most scholars have tended to conceptualise ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling, and then highlights a handful of qualitative studies of girls’ schooling in Pakistan which demonstrate how a more nuanced approach can shed light on relationships of power that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The next section (Chapter 4.5) draws more broadly from anthropological work in Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia to highlight several key themes which are particularly salient for understanding social life in the rural villages where I conducted my fieldwork. Studies from southern Punjab and the northern region of Gilgit-Baltistan draw out crucial distinctions between these areas as well as some fundamental norms that resonate across contexts. This scholarship emphasises that asymmetrical relationships of interdependence are central to social life in many parts of rural Pakistan, particularly in areas such as the canal-fed agricultural villages of southern Punjab, where power is usually consolidated amongst the landholding elite. In such contexts, social and economic welfare depend on patronage from one’s powerful allies more so than on

achievement or ability per se, and this point is critical for understanding how parents evaluate the potential benefits of schooling. This scholarship also highlights the centrality of *purdah* as an organising principle in the gendered division of social life, and the extent to which a family's respectability is entwined with the behavior and mobility of its female members. Crucially, though, anthropological work from Pakistan also emphasises that *purdah* – along with other aspects of what it means to be a 'good Muslim' – is a dynamic social norm rather than a static 'tradition,' and that people actively contest and renegotiate the boundaries of propriety even as they willingly submit to the expectations of family members and other respected elders. Taken together, this anthropological work thickens our understanding of the contexts in which my research participants encounter schooling and imagine its normative value. It allows us to reconsider the notions of autonomous selfhood which are often implicit in self-referentially 'global' discourses about girls' schooling, and it strengthens my critique of the tendency to portray demand for schooling as a latent force which, once it surpasses cultural 'barriers,' will propel girls towards a convergent endpoint of rational, secular, empowered individualism.

The final section (Chapter 4.6) returns to a more focused discussion of norm-making as it plays out between differently situated actors in the discursive landscape of girls' schooling in rural Pakistan. This section uses the case of Malala Yousafzai as a prism through which to consider the divergent and often conflicting notions of gender and personhood that emerge through popular discourses about girls' schooling. It shows that purportedly 'Western' perspectives about the value of girls' schooling are hegemonic but not determining, and that different actors contest or reinforce this

hegemony through their advocacy for more ‘local’ norms of educated womanhood, their opposition to girls’ schooling altogether, and indeed, through their academic research. As such, it dovetails into the discussion of research ethics and methodology in Chapter 5, and finally to the presentation of empirical data in Chapter 6.

4.2: ‘We Have No Power’: Inequality, Marginalisation, and Underdevelopment in Rural Pakistan

Interview respondents across this study’s three research sites spoke different languages, pursued different livelihoods, inhabited different positions of social stature, and articulated different aspirations for themselves and their families, but tended to be unanimous in their identification of at least one major concern: a lack of access to reliable electricity. The road to the northern village of Ghande is lined with naked poles from a government-sponsored electrification project that was reportedly canceled before any power lines were attached, so village residents remain disconnected from the grid and rely on a micro-hydroelectric generator built several years ago by a foreign NGO. In the southern villages of Mulweer and Abid, wealthier households are connected to the grid, but the frequency of ‘load-shedding’ blackouts renders them hardly any better off than their disconnected neighbours. Those who can afford the costs of kerosene use small generators at night; others do without – living, as Weiss writes, “with limited resources, clamoring for jobs and decent schools for their many children, plagued by inflation, and...quite literally in the dark” (2011: 245). Although the reasons for this trend are unique to each site and resist easy generalisation, it is nonetheless useful as both a literal and figurative example of how poor infrastructure, social stratification, and

a palpable sense of political marginalisation intertwine in the shaping of everyday life in this study's areas of focus.

Unreliable access to electricity is of course but one of many indicators of 'underdevelopment' in contemporary rural Pakistan. In a useful case study entitled "The Political Economy of Growth without Development," Easterly notes that on almost all measures of social development – including health, sanitation, employment, and education – Pakistan "systematically underperforms" other countries in South Asia and around the world, in spite of its adjusted per capita income being higher than that of a third of the world's other countries (2003: 439). This continuing 'underperformance' is all the more interesting given that in the years since its founding in 1947, Pakistan has averaged an impressive annual economic growth rate of over five percent and has received over sixty billion dollars in foreign aid (Easterly 2003; Husain 2009; Weiss 2011: 245).

Easterly's analysis of political economy suggests that this paradox can be largely attributed to two factors. First, there is a tendency of elites in highly unequal societies to resist taxing themselves for the sake of developing human capital among the masses, particularly when elites are landowners, labour is abundant, and physical capital is scarce, as is the case in Pakistan (2003: 441). The hypothesis here is that elite landowners have little incentive to invest in human capital in the absence of physical capital that would allow the newly educated masses to contribute to industrial growth. A variation of this hypothesis is simply that educated elites have little incentive to dilute their power by educating the masses, and, likewise, that men in a patriarchal agricultural

society have little incentive to educate women, especially in the absence of conditions that would allow women's schooling to translate into increased economic productivity.

Second, Easterly (2003) points out the tendency for ethnically fractured societies to under-provide public goods and social services. He notes Pakistan's turbulent emergence through the trauma of Partition in 1947, and suggests that the country's ethno-linguistic diversity and troubled sense of national identity have inhibited public consensus and political will in support of public provision. Easterly provides evidence to suggest that both of his hypotheses are applicable to Pakistan, but even if one wishes to remain sceptical of the neatness of these hypotheses and their reliance upon the assumption of utility-maximising behaviour, the broader point is that Easterly helps frame the fact of Pakistan's low social development as the product of specific historical processes and social arrangements rather than merely a backdrop to be taken for granted.

Husain takes this analysis a step further by considering the "paradoxes and contradictions" (2009: 1) of Pakistan's political instability, low social development, and high economic growth rate as they have unfolded across six distinct periods since 1947. In the 'flat fifties,' from 1947 to 1958, Pakistan's Punjabi elite struggled to establish political hegemony but alienated Bengalis in East Pakistan as well as Pathans, Sindhis, and Balochis in the smaller provinces of West Pakistan. The imposition of martial law in 1953 and again in 1958 undermined the already fragile authority of the state, and the subsequent period of military rule, from 1958-1969 under General Ayub Khan and then General Yahya Khan, led to increasing internal dissent even as the rate of GDP growth reached unprecedented levels in a 'golden era' of economic productivity. The perception in East Pakistan that the benefits of economic growth were concentrated

within a corrupt circle of military and political elites and that it was a ‘quasi-colony’ of West Pakistan led to the traumatic civil war of 1971, the fracturing of the country into present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh, and tremendous damage to the vision of solidarity that had been the bedrock of the post-colonial national imaginary (Husain 2009: 4-5; Khan 2010).

In the aftermath of this trauma and the widespread frustration with growing economic inequality and political corruption, Z.A. Bhutto rose to power in 1971 with a promise to restore distributive justice through ‘Islamic Socialism.’ However, the promise of the ‘socialist seventies’ was largely unfulfilled as economic growth slowed and income inequalities rose, and Bhutto was overthrown by a military coup led by General Zia ul-Haq in 1977. Bhutto’s execution in 1979 – following a widely publicised and highly controversial trial – was surely intended by Zia to quell political opposition to his military regime, but in retrospect the martyrdom of Bhutto may have only strengthened populist support for his own political party, the PPP, and further exacerbated the bitter antagonisms of Pakistan’s political landscape. Meanwhile, in the ‘revivalist eighties’ that followed, Zia presented himself as a religious reformer and sought to unify the country through a process of ‘Islamisation’ which included the implementation of *Shar’iah* courts and significant changes to education and social policy. The number of *madrasas* in Pakistan expanded dramatically under Zia, spurred on by support from the Persian Gulf (a trend that had begun under Bhutto), direct funding from Zia’s government, and by Zia’s efforts to create government employment opportunities for *madrasa* graduates (Nasr 2010). Zia’s strong central government garnered military and economic support from the United States in the context of Cold

War concerns about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and many argue that the subsequent era of *mujahedeen*, *jihad*, *Kalashnikovs*, and forced migration sowed the seeds of present-day Islamic extremism in Pakistan (e.g. Husain 2009: 6; Lieven 2011; Nasr 2010). After Zia's death in a plane crash in 1988, the 'muddling nineties' brought ongoing political and economic instability in the form of nine different governments, a dramatic increase in external debt, and significant growth in poverty and unemployment rates. Finally, in the 'reforming hundreds,' macroeconomic growth rates improved under Musharraf's military government, but economic inequality persisted, and the transition back to elected governments was fraught with turmoil, corruption, and political antagonism, perhaps most powerfully symbolised by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007 (Husain 2009).

Husain's review of these six periods of political and economic history adds further background to Easterly's analysis of Pakistan's 'growth without development' and to my own suggestion that the context in which my research participants encounter ideas about schooling is one marked by a sense of having 'no power' – a sense of political and economic marginalisation; a sense that public institutions have failed, are corrupt, and are not to be trusted. In this context, access to power and social mobility emerges – if at all – via family 'connections' and kinship networks more so than via the "universalism of educational merit" that Baker (2014) argues is a common value in the "schooled society" (see Chapter 2.3). Lieven makes a similar point as follows:

A fundamental political fact about Pakistan is that the state, whoever claims to lead it, is weak, and society in its various forms is immensely strong... To an extent most Westerners would find hard to grasp, the lack of state services means that much of the time, the state as such – as an agent with its own independent will – does not

necessarily affect people's lives very much, either in terms of benefits or oppressions. (2011: 12-13)

Khan adds nuance to Lieven's remark about the absence of the state by noting insightfully that a sense of state failure and a perception of alienation from state power is in fact a fundamental element of how most people experience 'being Pakistani' (2010: 1-2).³⁸ Likewise, the anthropological work that I review in Chapter 4.5 – especially Lyon's work on power and patronage (2002, 2004) – helps flesh out Lieven's pithy observation about the 'strength' of society. For now, the point is that a history of military governments and corrupt, haltering periods of unstable democracy has led to the continual disenfranchisement of Pakistan's rural poor and the preservation of a status quo in which governing officials are rarely held accountable by the masses. Wealthy landholding families hold tremendous political power, as does the military, and consequently the national budget is perpetually burdened by high defence spending even as only a fraction of the country's richest residents pay any taxes (Schmidt 2009). These budgetary constraints are further amplified by the high cost of external debt servicing and the stress that rapid population growth and the resultant 'youth bulge' (see Chapter 1.6) exerts upon already-limited public infrastructure. Taken together, these factors begin to illustrate why, even after the Government of Pakistan committed to spending at least 4% of GDP on education in 2008 (Government of Pakistan 2008: xxiii), actual expenditure has been estimated to be lower than 1.5% of GDP (Pakistan Education Task Force 2011: 21) – and why, for residents of places like Abid, Mulweer, and Ghande, the link between schooling and 'empowerment' is fraught with uncertainty.

³⁸ Recall, also, the UNESCO (2014: 222) study cited in Chapter 1.6 which found that only 16% of Pakistanis approved of the state's efforts to deal with poverty. See also Walter (2014), who hypothesises that community activism in Gilgit is a direct reaction to perceptions of state failure.

It is widely established that the general trend of marginalisation and low social development outcomes has been most acute for rural women and girls (see Chapter 1.6), but scholars present divergent opinions about the extent to which the welfare and status of women in Pakistan has improved in recent decades. In the opening lines of her contribution to a recent compilation entitled *The Future of Pakistan*, Weiss describes the feelings of possibility, excitement, and fragility that accompany the breaking of dawn after a “very long, dark night” (2011: 236). This metaphor captures her sense of the present moment for women in Pakistan. With female literacy rates slowly on the rise, fertility rates slowly in decline, and rapid urbanisation leading many families to reconsider traditional gendered divisions of household labour (2010: 22-23), Weiss is convinced that “a definite paradigm shift in women’s access to power is occurring today in Pakistan, albeit slowly and in limited quarters” (2003: 589-90). She emphasises that traditional understandings of *purdah* are undergoing “renegotiation” (2010: 23) as women gain new skills and pursue new opportunities. Her analysis is further brightened by the Government of Pakistan’s efforts to reconcile the country’s public image with international norms of ‘gender equality’ and its rhetorical commitment to principles such as those articulated in the United Nations’ Convention to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW; see Weiss 2003).

Other scholars are less optimistic about the scope and depth of the changes that Weiss identifies. Mullally (2005) notes that the institutionalised gender biases of Zia’s ‘Islamisation’ efforts in the 1980’s have begun to erode in some venues, but emphasises that this trend of progressivism has emerged in tandem with pockets of backlash in the forms of Talibanisation, the implementation of *Shari’ah* law, and the political

ascendancy of conservative religious parties such as the MMA. For example, the 2006 Women's Protection Act achieved a significant legislative revision of Zia's notorious Hudood Ordinance – a 1979 law effectively stipulating that rape survivors who pressed charges against their assailants could be imprisoned on charges of adultery unless they produced four male eyewitnesses of the rape – but there is little evidence to suggest that the Women's Protection Act or any other 'progressive' legislation has actually lessened the prevalence of rape or increased the likelihood that rapists will be brought to justice (Kehar 2013). Mullally does not dispute the fact that important changes have occurred: women have gained a significant share of seats in Pakistan's Parliament, and recent legal decisions by Pakistan's high courts have rejected the premise that a man's right to defend his family's 'honour' should supersede a woman's individual liberties or her right to choose whom she marries (2005: 353-55). However, Mullally's concern is that these changes – along with Pakistani feminism more broadly, which is at least as old as the country itself – increasingly meet vitriolic resistance that portrays them as threatening infiltrations of "Western, liberal individualism" (2005: 353; see also Bano 2009; Shah 2014).

Indeed, even as she celebrates the progressive implications of Pakistan's rhetorical commitment to CEDAW, Weiss (2003) notes that the concept of gender equality – in contrast to gender *equity* – often appears to Pakistanis as a 'Western' concept to be viewed with skepticism. Bano (2009) and Shah (2014) make similar observations about 'secular' articulations of Pakistani feminism, pointing out that rights-based appeals for women's welfare in Pakistan have often been less successful than those that present their arguments in explicitly Islamic terms. In Mullally's view (2005),

this fractured discursive sphere does not indicate the hopeful onset of gradual change so much as the extent of further difficulties still to come.

The point here is that the context in which families in rural Pakistan encounter the spread of girls' schooling is one marked by decades of political and economic marginalisation, the enduring hegemony of 'Islamic' values, and an abiding skepticism towards 'Western' influence. These factors do not predetermine how different people will value girls' schooling nor how differently situated people will interpret purportedly 'global' goals for gender equality, but they do shape the basic landscape within which these processes of norm-making unfold.

4.3: 'Free and Compulsory' Education for All?: Schooling Choices and Incentives in a Fragmented System

Just as the Government of Pakistan's rhetorical and legislative commitments to principles of gender equality must be understood alongside the realities of splintered public opinion and the challenges of translating such principles into practice, so also must its official commitments to 'Education for All' be understood in relation to the country's fractured and decentralised educational landscape. Schooling quality and access have always been unevenly distributed in Pakistan, especially along axes of class, language, gender, and rurality: elite English-medium urban schools for boys have existed throughout the country's history, a world apart from the low-quality Urdu-medium government schools that were the only option – if any – available to many rural children, especially rural girls. Access and enrolment have improved dramatically in recent years (see Chapter 1.5), but the educational landscape has only become more fractured. The Eighteenth Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution, ratified in 2010,

includes an article guaranteeing state provision of “free and compulsory basic education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen,” but the same amendment also devolves the responsibility of state provision from the federal to the provincial level, thus prompting some scholars to predict that enforcement of ‘compulsory’ state schooling is unlikely to be consistent (PILDAT 2011; White 2011). Moreover, recent emphasis on the need for ‘Public-Private Partnerships’ seems to suggest that this provincial obligation will likely be fulfilled through collaboration with domestic and foreign non-government organisations (Ali 2012; Fennell 2012; Government of Pakistan 2007, 2008, 2009; Lingard and Ali 2009; Shaukat 2009). As numerous schooling providers have emerged as alternatives to government schooling, their divergent offerings constitute divergent messages about who and what schooling is for. In this sense, an expanded analysis of the ‘supply’ of schooling in Pakistan must account for the diverse channels through which schooling opportunities emerge and schooling norms are (and are not) made.

When attempting to conceptualise Pakistan’s complex web of education providers, it is useful to distinguish between the Government of Pakistan, official development assistance from multinational organisations and foreign governments, foreign and domestic non-government non-profit organisations, for-profit private schools, and *madrasas* or religious schools. This section attempts to briefly describe each of these five categories and illustrate their interactions with each other as well as their particular contributions to the broader ‘supply’ of schooling.

The Government of Pakistan has made rhetorical commitments to the provision of free and compulsory education for all children since as early as 1947, but has

consistently fallen short of its own stated goals. Most of the early National Education Policies and Five Year Plans focused on boosting enrolment via the construction of new schools and the training of more teachers, and also emphasised the importance of inculcating patriotism and Islamic values via school curricula (Bengali 1999; Khan 1997; Lall 2008). For example, the First Five Year Plan, implemented in 1955, proposed building 4,000 new schools and predicted the achievement of universal primary enrolment by 1975. The Second Five Year Plan, implemented in 1960, lent special emphasis to the importance of girls' schooling and proposed opening 15,000 new schools. The Third Five Year Plan, implemented in 1965, proposed building no less than 42,000 new schools, and a revised national education policy in 1970 aimed for universal primary enrolment by 1980. The 1972 Education Plan aimed to build 276,000 informal literacy centres by 1980, but this effort was interrupted by Zia's military coup in 1977, after which the Fifth Five Year Plan aimed to build thousands of new schools and renovate thousands more. Each successive plan lamented the failure of earlier plans to meet their targets, and then – somewhat inexplicably – set even more ambitious targets for itself (Bengali 1999).

It is important to point out that Zia did not discourage girls' schooling per se; in fact, the Fifth Five Year Plan explicitly aimed to close the gender gap in school enrolment by boosting girls' enrolment by nearly ten percent per annum (Bengali 1999). However, Zia's education policies also included a heavy emphasis on 'Islamisation' via revised national curricula, the separation of boys' and girls' learning spaces, and the use of village mosques as providers of formal primary schooling. Many scholars argue that this 'Islamisation' added further constraints to the already-limited expansion of girls'

schooling, especially since the discouragement of co-education amounted to a de-facto requirement for the construction of new girls' schools, even in contexts where the government had already struggled (or failed altogether) to provide reliable school infrastructure of any kind (see Bengali 1999; Lloyd et al. 2007; Lyon and Edgar 2010; Warwick and Reimers 1995).

The Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans followed the established pattern of lamenting earlier failures and promising a dramatic – some might say unrealistic – expansion of infrastructure and enrolment. All of these documents rearticulate the assumption that education is an investment in human capital which will yield high social and economic returns, and they exhibit a somewhat simplistic focus on building schools and boosting enrolment (Bengali 1999). Indeed, in 1998, the new National Education Policy includes a critique of earlier plans which is worth quoting at length:

We have an unprecedented history of producing excellent documents of plans and policies which could not be implemented...The overall strategy, during the period from 1947 to 1997 has remained one of expansion of the existing system and efforts have been directed solely to the establishment of more of the existing type of formal institutions...After spending scarce resources we have come to the conclusion that our approach of mere expansion has been very simplistic...In spite of the huge investment made, the successive failure of the loud promises made in every plan and with every educational policy and putting off the well marked out deadlines, has created a credibility gap. (Government of Pakistan 1998; quoted in Bengali 1999: 24)

Recognising the failure of previous plans and their focus on 'mere expansion' of formal schooling, the 1998 policy proposed investment in informal schools and the creation of a 'non-formal basic education programme' aiming to at least provide literacy to the millions of children currently out of school. The 1998 policy was intended to provide a

roadmap through 2010, but it was terminated prematurely after a review in 2005 and the publication of an influential ‘white paper’ in 2007 (Government of Pakistan 2007; Hameed-ur-Rehman and Sewani 2013; Lingard and Ali 2009). The subsequent 2009 National Education Policy outlined two reasons for this early termination: first, the 1998 policy “did not produce the desired educational results,” and second, Pakistan’s “new international commitments” to the MDGs and EFA required a “renewed commitment to proliferate quality education for all” (Government of Pakistan 2009: 1).

This latter reference to “new international commitments” is particularly interesting, for even as it appears to demonstrate the Government of Pakistan’s obligation to help meet international objectives, it does so in the context of a policy document in which the federal government goes to unprecedented lengths in the abrogation of its own responsibilities as an education provider: the 2009 National Education Policy anticipates the 2010 devolution of responsibility from the federal to provincial level, and it also celebrates ‘Public-Private Partnerships’ (‘PPP’) as a critical component of the strategy for achieving universal school enrolment (Government of Pakistan 2009). Ali (2012) points out that this emphasis on PPP serves the domestic interests of the resource-strapped Government of Pakistan while also responding to hegemonic transnational policy discourses (see also Hussein 2010; Lingard and Ali 2009), and Fennell (2012) notes with concern that the core strategy of PPP lends insufficient attention to the nuances of gender relations and is thus unlikely to help achieve gender equality – and indeed was never intended to do so. In sum, Pakistan’s educational landscape has been shaped by a historical precedent of under-provision from the federal government, and this trend, combined with the deliberate devolution of

responsibility to provincial and non-governmental powers in recent years, has set the stage on which a diversity of other actors play an increasingly significant role.

Recognising this diversity of actors helps shed light on how and why Unterhalter et al.'s observation of disjuncture between “global aspirations for gender equity...and various sites of enactment” (2011: 11; see Chapter 1.4) rings true in rural Pakistan.

The particular influence of the MDGs and EFA upon the Government of Pakistan's education policies might be relatively new, but the presence of foreign aid organisations within Pakistan's educational landscape is as old as the country itself. As a Cold War ally of the United States, Pakistan received a steady flow of military, economic, and food aid, and organisations like the Ford Foundation and the Harvard Development Advisory Service offered significant ‘guidance’ (or pressure, depending on one's perspective) towards market-based reforms (Husain 2009). Combined with further development support from the United Kingdom and multilateral institutions like the World Bank, as well as sizeable loans from the International Monetary Fund, this official foreign aid has funded the construction of schools and the training of teachers, but has perhaps also lent momentum to the negative association of formal schooling with ‘Western’ influence (Husain 2009; see Chapter 4.6). This foreign aid has also shaped the status quo described above – one in which the Government of Pakistan has consistently fallen short of its rhetorical commitments to provide schooling for all, and indeed has been encouraged to collaborate with the private sector and the ‘third sector’ of non-profit NGOs.

Recent examples of this trend can be found in the Government of Pakistan's Social Action Program (SAP) of the 1990's and subsequent Education Sector Reform

Programme (ESRP), both of which were developed and implemented with significant support from international donor governments and agencies (Altaf 2011; Bano 2008). Both programs provided top-down educational funding and infrastructure while also attempting to foster an expansion of non-government education providers, and both have met mixed results. The SAP has been widely criticised as an abject failure: despite billions of dollars of aid from the World Bank, the programme failed to achieve its enrolment targets or significantly improve educational quality, a failure that is most often attributed to the simple fact of bureaucratic corruption and inefficiency (Altaf 2011; Burki 2005: 27-28; Heward 1999a). On the other hand, some scholars have credited the SAP for at least boosting girls' enrolment and literacy rates in remote areas where girls' schools were virtually non-existent prior to the 1990's (Bengali 1999; Husain 2005).³⁹

Meanwhile, the number of private schools operating in Pakistan has grown at an astronomical rate, increasing more than ten-fold over the past two decades (Husain 2005; see Harlech-Jones et al. 2005 for a study of private school expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan). Numerous studies have celebrated this development, pointing out that private schools consistently generate better learning outcomes and that even poor families seem willing to pay the tuition fees that these schools require (e.g. Alderman et al. 2001; Andrabi et al. 2006, 2007; Das et al. 2006). However, other studies have raised the concern that 'market forces' will inevitably neglect the most vulnerable populations, and that the rise of private schools will maintain or exacerbate gender gaps due to the tendency of parents in rural Pakistan to invest more in their sons' schooling than their

³⁹ See Chapter 1.6 for a summary of the growth in girls' enrolment rates since the 1980s.

daughters' (e.g. Aslam 2009; Bano 2008: 473; Day Ashley et al. 2014; Lloyd et al. 2007; also see rejoinder in Tooley and Longfield 2015).

Although scholars diverge in their assessments of the extent to which market-based reforms will lead to long-term equitable outcomes, there is widespread consensus around the idea that stipend programmes and CCTs that target low-income girls can help boost girls' enrolments in the short-term (see Chapter 3.2.3; see also Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Chaudhury and Parajuli 2006; Hasan 2010; Lloyd et al. 2006: 15). These programmes have played an increasingly prominent role in Pakistan's shifting educational landscape: with funding support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the Punjab's ESRP provided school stipends to nearly four-hundred thousand girls in 2012 (Afzal 2013), and similar programmes funded by the Government of Pakistan as well as foreign NGOs and aid agencies offer vouchers and free school lunches to incentivise girls to attend school in Punjab and other provinces (Brookings 2013; Winthrop 2013; World Bank 2005a). The present study is not a direct evaluation of any such intervention, but it is nonetheless noteworthy that respondents in each of this study's three research sites reported either hearing about such programmes or having been involved in one in the past. The point, in other words, is that the broader context of 'supply' of schooling in rural Pakistan is a good deal more complex than what might be assumed from the Government of Pakistan's rhetorical commitment to 'free and compulsory education for all': for some parents, the only available schooling options require the payment of tuition or associated fees; for others, it is possible to actually *get paid* for sending their daughters to school, and for very few is schooling actually understood to be 'compulsory.'

Within this shifting landscape of schooling options and incentives, the role of domestic NGOs – what Bano (2008) calls “traditional voluntary associations” – deserves special mention. In contrast to foreign educational NGOs, which tend to frame their work in the language of human rights and the Millennium Development Goals, Pakistan’s domestic educational NGOs tend to frame the rationale for their work in terms of moral or religious obligation (Bano 2008: 477). Indeed, the majority of these domestic NGOs are *madrasas* (religious schools), and Bano has argued convincingly that these organisations can play a significant role in meeting targets associated with Education for All (Bano 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). The key points of this argument are that *madrasas* have proven to be effective at enrolling boys and girls from poor, rural families, and that, contrary to popular Western assumptions that portray *madrasas* as hotbeds for religious extremism, most *madrasas* are better understood as providers of basic schooling and religious knowledge in a context that is morally legitimated by Islam (*ibid*; see also Asadullah and Chaudhury 2008).

Bano notes that the Government of Pakistan’s recent efforts to ‘modernise’ *madrasas* have been mostly distrusted and poorly received because of their close association with the United States’ ‘War on Terror,’ but nonetheless that *madrasas* can and should be seen as partners rather than adversaries in the broader effort to improve the quality and accessibility of schooling in Pakistan. Although fewer than 1% of Pakistan’s school-aged children are enrolled in *madrasas*⁴⁰ (a dramatically smaller proportion than was estimated by some alarmist Americans in the wake of 9/11, e.g.

⁴⁰ This figure represents the proportion of children enrolled in *full-time madrasas*; it is important to note that many more children – including many in this study’s areas of concern – supplement their ‘mainstream’ schooling with daily ‘tutoring’ in a *madrasa*.

Singer 2001; see Andrabi et al. 2010), Bano's broader argument is relevant to this study for two important reasons: first, she forces a reconsideration of the popular conceptual binary between 'religious' and 'secular' schooling, a point that helps shed light on how Islam shapes some parents' 'demand' for girls' schooling; second, by elucidating how female *madrasas* can be a source of 'women's empowerment' (Bano 2009), she contributes to this study's reconsideration of what the term 'empowerment' might indeed mean in contexts such as those where I conducted fieldwork.

The diverging and intersecting trends described above are meant to provide a rough overview of the 'supply' of schooling in contemporary Pakistan, and all of them come to bear upon this study's three research sites: at various points in their distinct histories, the villages of Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande have each been shaped by the provision (or lack thereof) of government schools, by the influence of foreign aid and NGOs, by the rising tide of privatisation, by school stipend initiatives, and by the possibility of 'religious' schooling as either a substitute or complement to other forms of schooling. This chapter's next task is to address the ways in which researchers within and beyond Pakistan have tended to write about girls' schooling, and how these academic discourses are entwined in processes of norm-making which include the lofty pronouncements of governments and multinational agencies as well as the everyday realities of the parents and children at the center of this study.

4.4: 'Demand is Strong': Education Research in Pakistan

In 2013, USAID published its *Study of Education Research and Policymaking in Pakistan* (SERP) in an attempt to assess the quality of current research and to encourage more research-driven policy, especially in light of the government's renewed

commitment to free and compulsory education for all. The report assessed three types of ‘research producers’ – government agencies, universities, and non-government research organisations (NGRO’s) – and found that most research has tended to focus on school access, curriculum, pedagogy, and learning outcomes (USAID 2013).

Government agencies, especially in Punjab, have begun to systematically collect quantitative data about student learning outcomes, while university researchers have focused more on curriculum and pedagogy. NGRO’s have produced the widest range of studies, with some, like LEAPS, ASER and SAFED, conducting large-scale quantitative studies of access and quality (see Andrabi et al. 2007; SAFED 2008), and others conducting qualitative and comparative studies. The report also found that funding agencies have tended to encourage *ex post* studies to evaluate policy impact more so than *ex ante* studies to explore policy alternatives (USAID 2013). The report does not attempt to explain why the field has evolved in this particular way, but the argument that I developed throughout Chapter 3 provides one plausible explanation: the hegemonic emphases on human capital development, measurable outcomes, and rate of return have encouraged studies that help policymakers get ‘value for money,’⁴¹ and have thus elicited studies that treat ‘gender as a line to be crossed’ rather than attempt more nuanced analyses. There are of course some noteworthy exceptions to this trend, particularly in the form of ethnographic and comparative studies which I discuss below, but in this section I argue that the main thrust of research about girls’ schooling in Pakistan has tended to reflect and reproduce the hegemonic trends identified in Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Recall the TEP and its ‘value for money’ statement in Chapter 2.2; see also Chapter 3.5 and Klees’s (2008) critique of the neoliberal preoccupation with ‘outcomes.’

Scores of studies about girls' schooling in Pakistan have focused primarily on boosting enrolment. I have already reviewed many such studies in Chapter 3 (see especially Chapter 3.2), but it is worth mentioning several more examples here for the sake of emphasis. Hazarika (2001) uses a statistical model to infer the impact of different factors upon girls' enrolment, and finds distance to school to be the most powerful determinant. Similarly, Toor and Parveen (2004) use a statistical model to understand "demand" for girls' schooling, but demand, in their rendering, is no more than a synonym for enrolment. Gazdar uses opinion surveys and enrolment rates to argue that "demand for schooling is high" (2001: 6), and uses a rate of return analysis to make the case for further public investment in "supply" (2001: 42-43). Husain laments that Pakistan has failed to "capitaliz[e]...on the large rates of return of female schooling on economic productivity" (2005: 4), and offers suggestions for boosting enrolment. Brock and Cammish suggest that low female enrolment in Pakistan is caused by a "lack of schools" more so than by any "cultural inhibitions" (1997c: 132), and Heward corroborates this finding with her observation that "most parents [in rural Sindh] do want to educate their children," and that the real problem is under-provision (1999: 210). In all of these studies, researchers treat enrolment (and its implied outcomes) as an end in itself, and lend scant attention to questions about the gendered norms and values at play within recent enrolment trends.⁴²

Some researchers in Pakistan have focused specifically on how school access and attainment are unequally distributed across lines of caste and family history. In his

⁴² For more examples of this trend in research in Pakistan, see references in earlier chapters, especially Chapter 3, to studies including Hamid 1993; Hamid and Siddiqui 2001; Hussein 2010; Mahmood 2004; Saqib 2001; Sawada and Lokshin 2001; World Bank 2005.

multivariate analysis of survey data from over seventy rural villages, Gazdar (2002) finds that the effect of caste upon schooling attainment is more powerful than the effect of wealth. Likewise, Cheema and Naseer (2010) report the startling discovery that in many rural villages, historical gaps in schooling attainment between families have only grown more profound in recent years, despite a general increase in the availability of school infrastructure. They hypothesise that this divergence can be explained by labour market segmentation: if some families or castes have limited access to occupations that offer high returns to investment in education, it makes sense that these families would have less incentive to pursue schooling opportunities. These observations of persistent inequality and differential access between families thicken our understanding of ‘the contexts of supply,’ but they do not shed any light on how people across these contexts actually think about the value of schooling, nor how such evaluations might change over time.

Many studies do attempt to understand parental perceptions of girls’ schooling, but they still tend to rely upon a relatively simplistic framework that asks *if* parents will send their daughters to school, but not *why* this is so. For example, a 1999 evaluation of World Bank interventions in rural Balochistan reported that “in more than 75 percent of villages, parental demand for female education was strong” (Anzar 1999: 71). The report acknowledges that these findings suggest “changing social attitudes towards female education in rural Balochistan,” but makes no further attempt to explain how or why these attitudes are changing (*ibid*). Likewise, Lloyd, Mete, and Grant suggest that the recent proliferation of private schools might reveal “a large reservoir of unmet demand for girls’ schooling in rural areas” (2007: 99), but do not explore the ideas and

intentions that constitute the actual substance of this demand. The authors' literature review is exclusively focused upon determinants of girls' enrolment, and although it mentions "attitudes towards schooling," its focus is on the "traditional" attitudes that form barriers to enrolment (2007: 100-104). The authors discuss "demand-side constraints" such as poverty and parental concerns about female mobility, but their research does not investigate what 'demand' looks like when such constraints are not present.⁴³

More recent reports from Pakistan fit the same pattern. The Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF) was created in 2010 to help implement the Government of Pakistan's 2009 National Education Policy. In 2011, the PETF published an "Education Emergency Report" summarising the country's current levels of educational deprivation and suggesting a way forward. This report identifies the common "myth" that cites "lack of demand from ordinary people" as a cause of Pakistan's low rates of educational enrolment and achievement, and suggests instead that "demand for education is strong" (PETF 2011: 46). Some of the data supporting this claim are drawn from the 2007 Learning and Educational Achievement in Punjab Schools (LEAPS) report, a four-year study of 112 villages in rural Punjab supported by the World Bank and the Government of Punjab (Andrabi et. al. 2007). Heeding the call to look 'beyond access,' the LEAPS report attempts to assess the quality of education at different types of schools in rural Punjab. In its consideration of how the recent expansion of private schools has reshaped access to schooling in Punjab, the LEAPS report suggests that the dominant question for

⁴³ As noted in Chapter 3, Sathar, Lloyd, and ul-Haque's (2000) in-depth qualitative study of parents' perceptions of schooling is a significant exception to this trend, as is the (2012) study conducted by Sathar et al. under Lloyd's supervision. In other words, although much of Lloyd's work has focused primarily upon access and outcomes, a trend from which this study aims to depart, some of her other work sets a strong precedent for the approach of the present study.

many parents is no longer ‘whether’ to send their children to school, but rather ‘which’ school to choose (Andrabi et. al. 2007: 102).

Such confidence in the strength of ‘demand’ for schooling in rural Pakistan may or may not be justified, but what is most relevant to broader argument of this literature review is that neither the LEAPS report nor the Education Emergency Report lend any significant attention to the qualitative aspects of demand – that is, the reasons *why* certain actors apparently believe that schooling is worth pursuing for sons and daughters alike. By obfuscating what Nelson (2006) calls the “substantive features” of demand, this trend in the literature also misses the opportunity to assess and understand these patterns of thought in relation to the broader contexts within which the ‘supply’ of educational infrastructure is situated. In other words, research about girls’ schooling in Pakistan (and beyond, as I have argued) has tended to overlook the particular evaluations that inform ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling as well as the aspects of ‘supply’ that are more complex and diffuse than observable aspects of educational infrastructure alone.

In addition to this stream of literature focused on school access and outcomes, a number of other scholars have explored school curricula and pedagogy and the meanings they attempt to inscribe. Many of these studies find that the national curriculum reflects the influence of Zia’s Islamisation through its emphasis on religious nationalism and ‘traditional’ gender roles (e.g. Ahmad 2004; Durrani 2008; Lall 2008, 2012; Nayyar and Salim 2001). For example, Durrani finds that textbooks portray women as passive and obedient mothers and wives, and rarely as professionals, and thus argues that “in its current form, education is a means of maintaining, reproducing, and reinforcing the

gender hierarchies that characterize Pakistan” (2008: 595). This sort of ‘beyond access’ analysis improves upon studies that focus only on access or learning outcomes, but it also risks overestimating the power of texts to determine meaning and embodied experience (see Kalmus 2004). In this sense, there is much to be gained from the minority of studies that focus more specifically on how people perceive the value of girls’ schooling, and how these perceptions – gendered, uncertain, shifting, and contextually contingent – both reflect and produce the lived experience of what is typically glossed as ‘demand.’

For example, Arnot and Naveed anticipate the present study in their attempt to “uncover the perceived outcomes of schooling of young men and women [in rural Punjab]...without removing them from the relational, interactional, and structured rural world of their village” (2014: 506). The authors critique the “assumed homogeneity of rural families whose gender cultures and positive educational dispositions are diverse and complex,” and ultimately argue that “the rural social structure contains powerful reproductive elements, but...is also able to adapt to change” (2014: 505-506). Pardhan (2005) is similarly attentive to the dialectics of change and reproduction in her analysis of perceptions of schooling in the Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber-Patunkhwa), and anticipates this study’s attention to norm-making in her observation that researchers often inadvertently reinforce oppression by assuming girls to be passive recipients of schooling rather than agents who actively contest its meaning. Lall (2009) compares different “attitudes regarding girls’ education” and finds significant variation across regions and ethnic groups, but her analysis is somewhat limited, with just a few paragraphs attempting to summarise each of Pakistan’s four major regions. Bano (2009,

2012) shows that girls who attend *madrasas* in Pakistan find that this schooling is empowering to them, albeit in a way that is different than the sort of ‘empowerment’ discussed most frequently in multinational discourses about girls’ schooling. As noted in Chapter 3.8, Sathar, Lloyd, and ul Haque (2000) offer a relatively nuanced consideration of parents’ perceptions of girls’ schooling, and pave the way for my own analysis with their finding that attitudes have shifted dramatically in recent years, and that this appears more closely linked to the “demonstration effect” of observing one’s neighbors than to any direct shift in economic costs and benefits. More recently, Fennell finds that perceptions of schooling are highly gendered and that they vary significantly between generations, with parents more confident than children about the likelihood that schooling will lead to economic mobility (2012: 265-269). Zaidi, Sathar, ul Haque, and Zafar explore “what makes education valuable to society, parents, and girls themselves” (2012: 39), and focus specifically on the intersections between schooling, marriage, childbearing, and employment. Interestingly, the authors find that more schooling leads girls and women to develop more aspirations for future employment, but whether women actually work is mostly determined by poverty and their families’ need for income. The authors also find that the question of when and whom women should marry remains out of their control, regardless of how much schooling they attain (2012: 59-60).

Although far less common than large-scale quantitative studies of access and outcomes, this sort of research adds crucial nuance to our understanding of the gendered power relations bound up in shifting school enrolment patterns. This scholarly attention to attitudes and perceptions related to girls’ schooling may or may not help boost

enrolment, but regardless of enrolment, the key contribution of such studies is that they shed light on how people imagine, embody, and produce gendered social relations through the uptake of schooling in particular contexts. For example, Lyon (2010: 25) offers the case study of a father in rural Punjab who chooses to send his daughter to a more expensive school than his sons. A study of enrolment rates or outcomes alone might subsume this case into a larger narrative about empowerment or gender equality, but Lyon's analysis of the father's rationale is revealing: the father perceived a low likelihood that better schooling would lead to more employment opportunities for his sons (mostly due to a lack of the necessary 'connections' or ability to pay the necessary bribes), but a relatively high likelihood that better schooling would lead to a better arranged marriage for his daughter. In other words, we could playfully argue that schooling in this context offered a higher 'rate of return' for the daughter than the sons, but the 'returns,' in this case, are not defined by income or any other easily quantified metric, for the father's main concern was that his daughter would find a husband who would "treat her well."

This simple case study illuminates an important web of assumptions and power relations: the daughter is not expected to pursue formal employment in the future, regardless of her schooling; the sons' potential for employment (or lack thereof) is based more upon the father's social network than upon their aptitude or the quality of their schooling, and, crucially, the daughter and her mother appear to have little to no input into decisions regarding schooling and marriage. Details such as these are atypical within most research about girls' schooling and 'demand' in rural Pakistan, and I have argued that this gap is problematic and that the present study helps to fill it. However,

before introducing my own fieldwork and analysis, it is useful to review some of the broader themes that have emerged from other qualitative research in Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia, and that are clearly reflected in the case study mentioned above as well as in my own findings.

4.5: Asymmetry, Interdependence, and Muslim Selfhood in South Asia: Insights from Anthropologists and Others

In Chapter 3.5, I reviewed the general thrust of critical scholarship that has problematised the hegemonic paradigm of ‘education as development.’ Some of the research discussed in that section is focused in South Asia (e.g. Jayaweera 1997; Jeffery and Basu 1996; Malik and Courtney 2011; Sibbons 1999), but the purpose of that section was to outline the trajectory of critical education research rather than to highlight salient regional themes that help contextualise the ‘supply’ of schooling in the sites where I conducted fieldwork. In the present section I turn to this latter task, using a telescoping approach to begin with some broad themes pertinent to the region and end with some insights specific to my fieldwork sites in Baltistan and the southern Punjab.

Lyon’s case study cited at the end of the previous section offers a glimpse of asymmetry and patriarchy at work within the family unit: it is the father’s prerogative to determine where or if his daughter (and sons) will go to school, as well as whom she will marry. I have already acknowledged the difficulty of measuring or defining concepts like ‘autonomy’ and ‘empowerment’ within contexts where asymmetrical and patriarchal relationships are the norm (see Chapter 3.6), and in this section I work to read such relationships as fundamental elements of ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling in rural Pakistan rather than a barrier to it. This is neither a defense of patriarchal and unequal

relationships in South Asia nor a suggestion that such relationships are uniform and unchanging, but rather an acknowledgement of their prominence within the social contexts where my fieldwork took place, and an acknowledgement that researchers must engage with this prominence if they wish to understand what goes on when people in such contexts encounter ideas about the value of girls' schooling.

Research about schooling in India and Bangladesh provides a helpful model in this regard. Numerous scholars have explored the complex ways in which ideas about the value of schooling are refracted through structures of inequality that are deeply embedded even if slowly shifting. For example, Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery find that schooling in rural north India tends to reproduce caste and class inequalities, particularly in light of recent neoliberal economic reforms, and thus they call for more research attentive to "rural people's perceptions of the value of education" (2005: 2098). In later work, they note that for young Muslim men in rural Uttar Pradesh, the linkages between formal schooling and employment or political power are often tenuous at best (2008, 2008a), and in light of this marginalisation, some men are deeply skeptical of the value of schooling, while others still celebrate "education in an abstract and ideal sense" (2008: 585). Similarly, Balagopalan (2005) argues that informal schooling for marginalised children in Kolkata fails to transform them into 'schooled subjects' freed from the burden of child labour, despite prominent UNICEF discourses that suggest otherwise.

Raynor's (2005) research in Bangladesh is particularly noteworthy for its nuanced consideration of different perspectives about the value of girls' schooling in light of the Female Stipend Programme (FSP), a government-run stipend programme

designed to boost female participation in secondary school. Anticipating my own critique of most research about CCTs (see Chapter 3.2.3), Raynor notes that most research about the FSP employs a narrow quantitative focus on access and retention and fails to assess the programme's impact upon attitudes and perceptions. As she works to fill this gap, she finds that female schooling has assumed multiple meanings: "some interviewees see girls' education as strengthening traditional roles; others see it as leading to some sort of empowerment [...and] others see it as a threat" (2005: 92). Her description of one male informant is illuminating: Mostafa loudly praises the value of girls' schooling, but meanwhile neglects and disrespects his wife, thereby leading Raynor to conclude that "like many other respondents, Mostafa is happy for women to be educated and undertake paid employment – as long as it does not erode his position within the traditional patriarchal structure" (2005: 93; see also Raynor and Wesson 2006).

Oommen's (2005) consideration of "women stepping out of *purdah*" in India highlights a similar dialectic of change and reproduction. Oommen finds that the opportunity to participate in literacy workshops in rural Bihar spurred many women to cross the physical and social boundaries of *purdah*, but that the very possibility of such an act still depended upon permission and approval from patriarchal figures of authority (2005: 173-176). In this sense, Oommen's analysis of "how far the *purdah* tradition has been *overcome*" (2005: 177; emphasis added) strikes me as somewhat coarse, for her own data seem to suggest that although the limits of *purdah* are undergoing re-interpretation and re-negotiation, everyday life for her respondents is still marked by patriarchal control over women's mobility and by the fundamental gendering of public

and private space. Indeed, my own findings reflect a similar process, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters: *purdah* is re-imagined in relation to girls' schooling, but certainly not "overcome."

Doggett (2005) provides one final example of research on girls' schooling in India which is pertinent to this study. Doggett finds that students at an all-girls school in West Bengal are openly critical of gender inequality in India, but even so, "their desire for independence and female autonomy appears to be tempered by an internalisation of the ideals of female behavior and roles that are embedded in a wider patrifocal ideology" (2005: 242). In this sense, Doggett's study joins the others mentioned above in illustrating that asymmetrical social relationships – though no doubt shifting and contested – are fundamental to the contexts where this study takes place, and that this asymmetry is not a 'barrier' that girls surpass as they enrol in school so much as a defining feature of the landscapes in which schooling unfolds.

Indeed, in his own anthropological work on power and patronage in Pakistan's northern Punjab, Lyon argues that asymmetrical relationships within and beyond the household – and, crucially, the interdependence that inheres within these relationships – are "the cornerstone of Pakistani society" (2002: 2). He notes that these asymmetrical power relations are structured by age, gender, class, and caste, and anticipates my own interest in norm-making with his critical consideration of the encounter between people in Pakistan and "foreign aid workers" who take a normative stance against asymmetry and thus "try to urge adoption of [egalitarian] norms and values which are not universally held in their home countries" (2010: 27). His understanding of asymmetry

as essential to social life in Pakistan stands in stark contrast to theories about the inevitability of a convergent ‘world culture’:

Why does anyone participate in what is obviously an asymmetric relationship? Why do Pakistanis not shun these relations of inequality as they enter the global economy and have greater contact with Europe and North America, where equality and democracy have been fetishized and made sacrosanct? [...] The values of the West are not alien to Pakistanis. [...] Yet they continue to form and maintain relationships of inequality at all levels of society. [...] I argue that asymmetrical relationships cannot easily be eradicated from Pakistan and even if they could, [it] would leave people in a perilous state. (2002: 3)

The immediate import of Lyon’s argument for this study is that this asymmetry creates interdependence, and that this interdependence, particularly within the family, is central to ideals of personhood. A respectable man or woman is one who fulfills his or her obligations to other members of the collective, deferring to those with more power – e.g. tenant to landlord, wife to husband, child to parents – while also demanding and receiving services from those with less power, e.g. patron from client, mother-in-law from daughter-in-law, or older brother from younger brother (2002: 1; 2010: 20). In a similar vein, Walter (2014: 41) notes that “the most important” motivator for social activists in Gilgit is “the network of family ties, which creates a basic feeling of interdependence and responsibility.” Likewise, Khoja-Moolji (2014, 2015c) stresses the importance of familial, community, and religious allegiances for girls in Pakistan, and notes that such ‘attachments’ are often in tension with the image of an empowered, self-determining individual that is celebrated in human rights discourses and neoliberal rationalities.

Other recent anthropological work in Pakistan situates this quality of interdependence in relation to the perceived failure of the national state and more fundamental questions about the nature of selfhood and what it means to be a ‘good Muslim.’ Ewing (2010) argues that for many people in Pakistan, recurring discourses about national crisis create a sense of being on the margins of modernity – a perception reproduced by early anthropologists, she notes insightfully (2010: 539) – and that people respond to this sense of marginalisation by publicly bemoaning corruption even as they leverage their own social connections whenever possible. In this sense, Ewing reads public discourses about *qabza* (the unsanctioned seizure of property) as a reflection of “how power and networks prevail over property rights and the rule of law” (2010: 535) – or, in other words, how group identities and obligations become more prominent and visceral in light of relatively weak legal and political substantiation of individual rights and responsibilities.

Indeed, scholars such as Marsden (2010) suggest that it is misleading to think of selfhood as necessarily a matter of individuality and interiority, and that researchers should recognise the ideal of autonomous selfhood as a particular (and contested) cultural construct to be explored and contextualised rather than a biological fact to be taken for granted. Summarising recent scholarly consideration of the variations of ‘Muslim selfhood’ that emerge in different contexts across Pakistan, Marsden notes that anthropologists have become increasingly attentive to “the problems of applying Western notions of ‘agency’ to understand the complexity of women’s lives in Pakistan” (2010: xix). He goes on to explain that:

ethnographic recognition of the complex, multiple layered and often apparently contradictory influences that shape

personal and collective forms of Muslim self-understanding in [Pakistan]...has led anthropologists working in the country to theorise the merits and demerits of the category of 'the self' for understanding Muslim identity in the country today. (2010: xxxi)

Marsden is careful not to over-generalise, and the diverse chapters in his edited volume demonstrate that 'Muslim selfhood' manifests very differently between, for example, upper-class women in Islamabad who identify as pious Sunni reformers (Ahmad 2010), rural men in Chitral who actively resist 'reformist' influences with their own Sufi-derived musical gatherings (Marsden 2010a), and people in Gilgit whose multiple registers of identity are refracted through the prisms of ongoing Shia-Sunni conflict, linguistic differences, and questions of national belonging (Sokefeld 2010). Taken together, then, this scholarship does not create a single coherent picture of 'Muslim selfhood in Pakistan,' but that is exactly the point: recent anthropological work in Pakistan demonstrates that understandings of the self are not predetermined by the monolithic hegemonies of 'Islamic tradition,' conservative reformers, or liberal foreign aid workers, but instead emerge through dynamic and contested processes of norm-making occurring through social interaction at the intersections of these and other imaginative regimes, and that researchers themselves are embedded in these processes (see, e.g., Ahmad 2010: 324; Marsden 2005, 2010; Sokefeld 2010: 256).

The relevance of this point for the present study is that normative evaluations of girls' schooling reflect and produce different ideas of gendered personhood, and thus in my research sites these evaluations are entwined with the key themes discussed in this section: asymmetrical relationships of interdependence, the reproduction of patriarchal control in dialectical tension with agentive acts of change, and the possibility of multiple

but not unlimited ways of ‘being Muslim.’ This is the terrain on which different instances of demand for girls’ schooling take form, and on which “global aspirations for gender equity” are refracted and reinterpreted through the particular “sites of enactment” (Unterhalter et al. 2011: 11) where I conducted my fieldwork.

In my consideration of how evaluations of girls’ schooling intersect with ideas about marriage, *purdah*, and employment in each of my three research sites, I show that the general contours of patriarchy and asymmetry are at play across this terrain, but also that the particularities vary by context. In each case, I show that social expectations pertaining to marriage, *purdah*, and employment reflect understandings of female personhood which privilege group identity and the interdependence of the family above any singular ideal of individual ‘autonomy’ or ‘empowerment.’ I find that the uptake of girls’ schooling does indeed involve an expansion of the physical limits of *purdah*, but that patriarchal control over female mobility remains unquestioned. Similarly, in all three research sites the uptake of schooling is correlated (at least anecdotally) to a delay in girls’ marriage age, but again, patriarchal figures of authority retain the power to determine whom and when a girl should marry. Likewise with employment: in all three research sites, the uptake of schooling has raised new questions about when or if girls and women should seek formal employment, but it is the prerogative of fathers, husbands, and fathers-in-law to answer these questions. As my research participants navigate processes of change and reproduction across each of these three domains, what is at stake is the respectability and general welfare of the *family* more so than the autonomy, empowerment, or rights of an individual daughter or wife. Accordingly, the authority for making decisions about a daughter’s schooling, mobility, employment, and

marriage is located within the *family* – that is, within patriarchal leaders of the family – rather than within the individual daughter. Indeed, Shamim and Qureshi note that “the central role of the family in decision making in the Pakistani context” is so embedded that one of their informants told them that “there is no difference between...an individual and his family; both are one and the same” (2013: 471-472).

I argue that this general trend is consistent across all three of my research sites, but that the particular ways that people think about the intersection of schooling with *purdah*, marriage, and employment vary by context, and sometimes even by household. For example, in the southern village of Abid, some fathers feel that sending their daughters to school for any amount of time would be a violation of *purdah*, whereas others feel comfortable sending their daughters up to around age ten, but not beyond that age. In the northern village of Ghande, many fathers feel that sending their daughters to primary school within the village would be acceptable regardless of age, but they worry that sending their daughters to attend secondary school in a distant town or city would be an indefensible transgression of *purdah* that would reflect poorly on their family. However, some of these fathers note that sending their daughters to a distant secondary school might be acceptable if she could live with a close relative or in a ‘proper’ hostel environment. In this sense, the nuances of demand vary in significant context-specific ways across my field sites, even as core themes of asymmetry, patriarchy, and interdependent selfhood appear to recur across contexts.

I will introduce each field site in detail in subsequent chapters, but at this point it is useful to briefly discuss how other anthropological research in Pakistan helps contextualise my research in Baltistan and the southern Punjab. Ewing observes that

most early anthropologists in Pakistan were preoccupied with “static notions of local culture” (2010: 532), and they sought to identify parallels with caste-based social organisation of Indian villages or with tribal organisation in the Middle East. Only recently, notes Ewing, have anthropologists working in Pakistan turned their attention to questions about how “national, transnational, and global forces interact with local and everyday processes” (*ibid*). Likewise, in his review of the anthropology of Pakistan, Mughal (2014: 6-10) notes that most research has focused on social organisation in Punjabi and Pukhtun villages, and that most research in the Punjab has focused on northern and central regions rather than southern Saraiki-speaking regions. Sokefeld’s review of the anthropology of Gilgit-Baltistan is consistent with Ewing’s broader summary, emphasising that early British and German anthropologists in Gilgit-Baltistan sought to document ‘original’ or ‘primeval’ cultural forms (2014: 21-22), and it is only in more recent years that anthropologists working in the area have begun to focus on themes of gender and transnational discourses of ‘development’ (e.g. Grieser 2014; Walter 2014). Most of this work has focused in the valleys of the Gilgit region and in the city of Gilgit itself, whereas relatively less research has taken place in the villages of Baltistan, the eastern portion of Gilgit-Baltistan. In this sense, the locations of my fieldwork (southern Punjab rather than northern or central; Baltistan rather than Gilgit), as well as the questions I ask (investigating the transnational reimagining of social norms rather than attempting to uncover ‘traditional’ or ‘local’ models of social organisation), are all relatively under-represented in the anthropology of Pakistan, although certainly not without precedent.

Given the early anthropological focus on social organisation, the concepts of caste, tribe, *qaum* (or *qom*), *biraderi*, *zat*, and other forms of group identity have been a significant concern for many scholars, especially those working in Punjab (e.g. Chaudhary 1999; Eglar 1960; Lyon 2002, 2004; Mughal 2014). It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt meaningful discussion of the nuances of these terms, but nonetheless it is necessary for me to clarify how they appeared in my fieldwork and how I use them in this study. Lyon notes that many Pakistanis use the English words ‘tribe’ and ‘caste’ as translations for the indigenous words *qaum* and *biraderi*, and that they use these two indigenous terms somewhat interchangeably (2002: 18, 72-73, 125). Indeed, Lyon notes that while many anthropologists have understood *biraderi* to refer only to patrilineal kin (see also Mughal 2014: 71), and *qaum* to refer to a broader sense of ethnicity or tribe, Lyon’s own informants use the word *biraderi* to connote a general sense of familial closeness, even if not a blood relation (2002: 72-73), and they use the word *qaum* “as a catch all for categories which may be tribe, caste, nationality, or ethnicity,” as well as occupational specialization (2002: 126). Lyon’s informants often disagree about whether one’s *qaum* is defined by one’s occupation, and Lyon notes that many people who identify as belonging to a particular occupational group – for example, Lohari or blacksmiths – do not in fact practice that occupation, but perhaps learned it as a child or at least know that their ancestors were blacksmiths, and thus ‘being Lohari’ is an important marker of identity for them even as they disagree about whether it defines their *qaum* (2002: 127). Consequently, for Lyon, *qaum* is “highly useful, versatile, and amazingly frustrating as a point of reference” (*ibid*).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See also Lieven’s (2011) introduction for general commentary on the intersecting and seemingly fluid

I found something similar in my own fieldwork, particularly in the village of Abid in the southern Punjab, which was significantly more diverse than Mulweer or Ghande. My interpreter in Abid used the English (originally Portuguese) word ‘caste’ as a sort of catch-all to describe the lines along which the village was spatially segregated, the population within which one was expected to marry, and the occupational groups such as Araeen (farmers) with which villagers self-identified. The population of the village was clearly segregated across different axes of linguistic, religious, regional, and ethnic identity – for example, Saraiki-speaking Muslim Khokars (historically farmers in Punjab), Punjabi-speaking Muslim Lasharis (historically farmers in Balochistan), Punjabi-speaking Muslim Jats (historically government servants and ‘Army people’ in Punjab), and Saraiki-speaking Hindu Thoris (historically farmers in Rajasthan) all lived and married separately from each other – and different people explained their evaluations of girls’ schooling by referencing different axes of identity, e.g. ‘our religion forbids it,’ or ‘we are Balochi; it is not our custom,’ or ‘now all Araeen are sending their daughters to school.’ However, the main point is that my interpreter in Abid used the word ‘caste’ to describe the predominant axes of group identity in the village, and thus I follow suit, even as I acknowledge that the term is highly problematic and that caste in Pakistan – however it may be defined – is significantly different than caste in India (see Lyon 2002: 25-27, 125-127; Mughal 2014: 7-8).

It would be fascinating to use consider the imagining and re-imagining of group identity in rural Pakistan through a lens of norm-making, for indeed, the very idea of ‘caste’ (as but one example of group identity) has emerged through the intersection of

notions of kinship and social allegiance in Pakistan, and Sokefeld (2010; 2014) for discussion of *qaum* and other intersecting markers of identity in Gilgit-Baltistan.

ancient Hindu ideas about *varna* and *jati*, colonial Portuguese interpretations of occupational specialisation, subsequent British colonial obsession with naming and classification, more recent political mobilisation around caste-based ‘reservations’ in India, and decades of anthropological studies of kinship and social organisation which have sought to draw out similarities and contrasts across different regions of South Asia. However, for purposes of concision, that study of ‘caste as global norm-making’ will need to wait for another day. Numerous other researchers in Pakistan also use the English word ‘caste’ as the primary reference point for social organisation (e.g. Gazdar 2002; Jacoby and Mansuri 2011), often without the qualifications I have offered above, and thus I feel comfortable venturing forward with this term even as I acknowledge its inadequacy.

As noted in Chapter 1.6, the villages of Abid, Mulweer, and Ghande vary in several important respects. Abid and Mulweer are both located in canal-fed agricultural areas of southern Punjab, but Abid is distinguished by its proximity to non-agricultural employment opportunities and its linguistic and ethnic diversity: while most residents of Mulweer are Saraiki-speaking Sunni Muslims, the population of Abid includes Punjabi and Saraiki-speaking Sunni Muslims as well as a number of Saraiki-speaking Hindus. In both Abid and Mulweer, perceptions of employment opportunities are strongly shaped by family ‘connections,’ and in this sense, research on power, patronage, and social networks in the Punjab is particularly relevant to these villages (e.g. Chaudhary 1999; Chaudry and Vyborny 2013; Lyon 2002, 2004; Mughal 2014). Ghande is located in a remote mountainous village of the Baltistan region of Gilgit-Baltistan, and is more remote than the other villages in terms of distance from the nearest city and lack of

mobile phone connectivity, but also more exposed to foreigners and foreign ‘development’ interventions due to two distinct reasons: the relatively high volume of Western tourists drawn to the nearby mountains, and the historical presence of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in the region. In this sense, anthropological research about the work of the AKDN and its success in cultivating positive perceptions of ‘development’ in Gilgit-Baltistan (e.g. Sales 1999; Walter 2014) helps illustrate the backdrop for the uptake of girls’ schooling in Ghande. Ghande is also distinct in its exposure to forms of Islam which stress the importance of girls’ schooling: the village is populated primarily by Nurbakhshi Muslims, and the broader region of Gilgit-Baltistan is home to many Shias and Ismailis as well as Sunnis. Led by the Aga Khan, Ismailis are widely known for their high levels of literacy and educational attainment (Sokefeld 2014: 18), and many Shias and Nurbakshis have adopted similarly progressive views. However, concerns about women’s mobility and visibility remain paramount in Ghande and other areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (Grieser 2014; Sokefeld 2014: 20), even as the specific boundaries of *purdah* appear far more relaxed than in Sunni-dominated areas elsewhere in Pakistan.

In sum, the villages of Abid, Mulweer, and Ghande are each distinct in important ways, yet also reflect some of the key thematic similarities discussed throughout this section. Anthropological work in Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia has helped illustrate the extent to which contemporary patterns of social change occur against a backdrop of asymmetry, patriarchal authority, and notions of interdependent personhood in which individual autonomy or empowerment is less important than the welfare and respectability of the family and the cohesion of broader social allegiances. My research

findings demonstrate how demand for girls' schooling emerges as a product of these contextual similarities and differences, but it is crucial to emphasise that none of these three fieldwork sites exists in a static vacuum; rather, all are situated within broader flows of transnational influence that I recognise as processes of global norm-making. To illustrate this latter point and conclude this chapter's effort to contextualise my research sites, I turn now to the case study of Malala Yousafzai and the contested discourses about the value of girls' schooling that have emerged in tandem with her ascendance as a global icon.

4.6: 'Girls' Education is a Product of the West': Norm-Making and Contested Regimes of Value in the Case of Malala Yousafzai

In many ways, this study's attention to the indeterminacy and contextual contingency of demand functions to demonstrate that the general rise in girls' school enrolments in Pakistan and beyond is far from a simple 'convergence' of normative constructions of gender and schooling (see Chapters 1.4 and 2.3). Indeed, the empirical findings presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 suggest that even the parents who are most enthusiastic about girls' schooling tend to imagine (and thus produce) its value in terms that are strikingly different than mainstream 'Western' narratives linking girls' schooling to ideas of equality, autonomy, and empowerment. However, this divergence should not be taken to indicate that these 'Western' conceptions of gender and schooling have no bearing upon the lived experience of the respondents at the centre of this study. Rather, when considered through a lens attentive to processes of global norm-making, 'Western' discourses about girls' schooling (or, more accurately, discourses that present themselves as 'Western' and/or are perceived as such) appear to be important features of

the broader contexts which different instances of demand take form. Some conservative Pakistanis critique the very notion of sending girls to school as an inherently ‘Western’ endeavour to serve ‘Western’ interests, and unfortunately this assumption is inadvertently legitimated when scholars and policymakers attempt to justify the promotion of girls’ schooling by linking it to the ‘War on Terror,’ as has often been the case in the years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (see, for example, Afzal 2012; Azhar 2009; Winthrop and Graff 2010). Given that schooling interventions such as the gender-targeted stipend programmes referenced above are often supported by foreign funds, it is perhaps not surprising that they are also perceived to be informed by ‘foreign’ values, and thus are sometimes resisted on these grounds alone.

A troubling example of this wariness towards the influence of ‘the West’ can be found in the discourses surrounding the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in October 2012. On the most obvious level, the brazen attack by the Taliban upon this fifteen-year-old girl while she was on her way to school in Pakistan’s Swat Valley demonstrates some of the political instability, radical conservatism, and physical risks that undoubtedly constitute significant aspects of the backdrop against which some parents and daughters in Pakistan make decisions about schooling. Yet without intending to distract from the truth of this point, it is important to note that this sort of extremist opposition to girls’ schooling is far from ubiquitous in Pakistan, and that the factors shaping low school enrolment and attainment for most girls in Pakistan – especially outside of the most turbulent areas of Khyber-Patunkhwa (formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province) – are far more subtle than the threat of being physically attacked. What is

most interesting, then, is not the fact of Malala's attack so much as the reaction it elicited from others in Pakistan and worldwide.

In claiming responsibility for Malala's attack, the Pakistani Taliban declared in no uncertain terms that it viewed girls' schooling as "un-Islamic" and "a product of the West," and since then has continued destroying girls' schools and attacking those who support and attend them (Siddiqui and Walsh 2013). Scholars, politicians, and activists from Pakistan and around the world denounced the attack on Malala and reiterated the importance of sending girls to school (e.g. Afzal 2012, Brown 2013), sometimes framing the issue as a struggle between "civilization and barbarism" (Galston 2012). Yet within a week, public outrage in many parts of Pakistan began to give way to conspiracy theories about whether Malala was actually a pawn of 'the West' (Walsh 2012), and by the following summer, when a recovered Malala delivered a historic address to the United Nations, a "Malala backlash" seemed to be in effect: many Pakistanis denounced her speech, arguing that it was hypocritical of 'the West' to be so concerned with the plight of one girl while simultaneously condoning the United States' murder of civilians with drone strikes (Shah 2013; Yusuf 2013).

At risk of seeming to legitimate these denunciations or deny the "barbarism" of the initial attack, it is useful to ask what this episode suggests about the interplay of global hegemonies and divergent gender norms in relation to girls' schooling in contemporary Pakistan. In one sense, it might be tempting to read the entire episode as a sort of 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1993) between extremist Islam, which opposes girls' schooling, and 'the West,' which ardently supports it. Yet this sort of reading is far too crude to be useful, and – in a way that is ironically similar to the logic

of the Taliban – it relies upon a Manichean dualism that fails to account for the fact that norms and ‘traditions’ are constantly in flux and under interpretation. In many ways, then, one can argue that girls’ schooling in Pakistan is not actually “a product of the West,” and that this extremist view need not be taken seriously. However, the extremist view becomes more difficult to ignore when considered in light of the history of colonialism and past instances in and beyond South Asia when European and North American powers have cited the plight of women as a moral basis for their military or political intervention (see Abu Lughod 2002, 2013; Khoja-Moolji 2015, 2015a, 2015c; Spivak 1988). In other words, even without conceding to the absurd reductionism of arguments that seek to portray a confrontation between the imagined monoliths of ‘Islam’ and ‘the West,’ it is still possible – and perhaps necessary – to acknowledge that the slow spread of girls’ schooling in Pakistan has occurred through processes in which ‘Western’ actors have differential access to technologies of power, and that they have used this power not only to promote schooling, but also to pursue political and military objectives in the Cold War and more recently in the ‘War on Terror.’ Considered in light of this juxtaposition, the ‘Malala backlash’ is perhaps a bit more intelligible, even if no less repugnant.

Scholarly critiques of discourses about Malala have highlighted the ways in which these discourses work to naturalise a particular narrative about the value of girls’ schooling and therefore ironically work to suppress many of the ‘voices’ that they purport to amplify. For example, Khoja-Moolji (2015: 539) argues that the international fetishisation of Malala is informed by “sturdy narratives about the oppression of Muslim women by an imagined mass of Muslim men/Islam/Taliban; the emancipatory promise

of education; and the valorisation of a particular kind of girlhood grounded in neoliberal assumptions of personhood and citizenship.” Khoja-Moolji contends that these narratives distract from “the historical and political conditions which have produced contemporary social realities,” and they also work to gloss over important contextual differences to present “the figure of the girl...as a stable, fixed, knowable category” and ultimately to “financialize girls...as untapped human capital” (Khoja-Moolji 2015a: 101-102). Perhaps the most salient point of Khoja-Moolji’s critique for the present study is that these hegemonic discourses about the value of girls’ schooling actually obfuscate “indigenous knowledges...[and] the multiplicity of girls’ desires and investments” (2015c: 1-2), even as they claim to elevate girls’ voices. For example, Khoja-Moolji finds that the prominent *Girl Effect* media campaign celebrating “girls’ voices” actually suppresses the testimony of a girl in Islamabad who claims to have willingly left school so that her siblings could go further in their own schooling, and thus Khoja-Moolji argues that “girls’ voices are deployed only to re-amplify the already-established consensus” about “Brown and Black girls as victims of their own families” and the value of girls’ schooling as a universal antidote to this problem (2015c: 2-4). Likewise, Khurshid’s critique of “Malala Yousufzai and Women’s Education” (2015; see also 2015a) shows that poor women in rural Pakistan understand the value being educated in explicitly Islamic terms that celebrate the role of women within the family. Khurshid shows that the idealisation of being ‘*parhi likhi*’ (literally ‘reading and writing’; more colloquially translated as ‘educated’) frames the value of female schooling in terms that are uniquely Pakistani and Islamic, and thus Khurshid argues against the prevalent ‘Western’ discourses that present girls’ schooling and

empowerment as a dichotomous alternative to the oppressive forces of Islam and the family.

If nothing else, then, the discourses surrounding the Malala episode illustrate the extent to which the real or imagined influence of ‘the West’ is often at play in the making of gender and schooling in contemporary Pakistan. This influence is by no means absolute or monolithic, for indeed, as argued by Khoja-Moolji and Khurshid and as shown in my own empirical findings, evaluations of girls’ schooling in rural Pakistan often diverge in significant ways from the hegemonic narratives that have come to be associated with Malala. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the promotion of girls’ schooling by foreign governments and NGOs has been tightly entwined with asymmetrical processes of norm-making that promote a particular version of gendered personhood, and these asymmetries must be considered within the expanded notion of ‘supply’ that this chapter has sought to provide.

Chapter 5: ‘Through Lenses That Grind Each Other’: Accounting for Asymmetry, Intersubjectivity, and Norm-Making in Research Design and Methodology

Will any unequal relationships exist between anyone involved in the recruitment and the potential participants? If yes, i) describe the nature of the unequal relationship; ii) explain how ethical problems arising from the unequal relationship will be resolved.

-Question 10c from CUREC/2, a form I was required to complete for the University of Oxford’s Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) before commencing my research

5.1: Overview

This chapter explains my research design and methodology: how and why I approached my fieldwork with what Robson describes as a “flexible design” that intentionally “evolves during data collection” (2002: 87); how and why this design did indeed evolve over the course of my seventeen weeks of fieldwork; what methods and sampling strategies I employed; what kinds of data I generated,⁴⁵ and how I have sought to make sense of this data in a way that is conscious of its limitations but still insistent upon its value. Central to this discussion is the question featured in the epigraph of this chapter: I consider asymmetries of power between myself, my research participants, and my research assistants (who were also participants), and I reflect on what these asymmetries reveal and obscure.

The title of this chapter is a playful adaptation of Geertz’s classic observation that “we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding, and...they look back on ours through ones of their own” (1984: 275). Geertz’s point about the inevitability of bias and subjectivity surely holds true, and throughout this chapter I reflect upon my own biases as well as those of my research participants. However, I also expand Geertz’s maxim to emphasise the interactive and dialectical processes of norm-making

⁴⁵ My use of the term ‘data generation’ rather than ‘data collection’ is deliberate, and is meant to indicate the fundamentally interpretive characteristics of this project which I discuss at length throughout this chapter.

that occurred throughout my fieldwork: intentional or otherwise, my interactions with research participants (as well as their interactions with each other) involved the collision of different evaluations of girls' schooling – the grinding of different lenses against each other – and the reimagining of them in an “asymmetric but mutual fashion” (Halliday and Carruthers 2007: 1138; see Chapter 2.5).

To illustrate this point, let us return to the interview with Nasreen's family which I described in the opening pages of this study (see Chapter 1.1; recall also the anecdote from Mulweer in Chapter 2.6). In that episode, Nasreen's mother, who had never attended school, stated that she hoped Nasreen's schooling would help Nasreen find a job in the future. Tahir, a well-educated male accountant employed by the local NGO which promoted girls' schooling, was translating this statement from Saraiki to English when he suddenly interrupted himself and explained to me in English that “she [Nasreen's mother] hasn't got any proper idea about education; she is just saying that.” This begs the question: what constitutes a ‘proper idea about education,’ and who gets to determine this? I argue that Tahir's apparent disregard for the mother's evaluation of Nasreen's schooling reflects his own normative stance as well as his assumptions about mine, and that his positioning as my research assistant makes his views more persuasive to Nasreen and her family, even if these views are not in fact aligned with my own. Even if Nasreen and her family could not understand what Tahir said to me in English, the point is that this moment of interaction reflects a larger cycle of norm-making in which divergent regimes of value intersect and shape each other in the production of demand for girls' schooling.

Similar interactions recurred throughout my fieldwork, and I explicate many of them in the empirical chapters that follow. The men and women who served as my hosts, gatekeepers, research assistants, and key informants were local teachers and NGO employees whose positive evaluations of girls' schooling were already well-known to other residents of their villages, and indeed, some of them explicitly advocated for the value of girls' schooling at the same time that they were helping me collect census data or conduct interviews. Despite my initial intentions to maintain some degree of 'neutrality,' I quickly realised that my own presence as an educational researcher from a prestigious foreign university was anything but value-neutral, and that, as Grieser observes about her research in Gilgit, "knowledge which is imparted or gained from fieldwork is being created in the course of fieldwork, and it is being created in interaction" (2014: 156).

Recognising this asymmetric intersubjectivity raises important questions about research ethics and epistemology. What are the ethical implications of recognising that the questions we ask of others are freighted with power and that they project particular regimes of value? Likewise, how are we to understand the lives of others if what they tell us is shaped (even if not altogether determined) by what they think we want to hear? How are we to research 'demand' for schooling while also acknowledging that particular instances of demand emerge from imaginative regimes in which research itself is embedded? Contrary to what is implied by the final imperative clause of the epigraph above, I do not believe that I (or anyone) can neatly 'resolve' such questions. Instead, I work to hold them at the foreground of my inquiry, and I wrestle with them throughout this chapter and the chapters that follow.

5.2: 'Hanging Around and Picking Things Up': Ethnography as an Epistemological and Methodological Orientation

The qualitative, exploratory, interpretivist approach of this study is a direct product of my intent to disrupt hegemonic research and policy discourses about 'demand' for girls' schooling – discourses, I have argued, that reflect aspects of the 'neoliberal social imaginary' through their portrayal of demand as a latent force that, once 'cultural barriers' are removed, propels people towards a certain ideal of rational, autonomous, and economically productive personhood. As I have explained throughout the preceding chapters, one of my core objectives in conducting this study was to depart from the well-trod path of measuring access and outcomes and instead to develop an expanded understanding of how differently situated people imagine and contest the value of girls' schooling. This is fundamentally a question about how people produce and experience meaning through social life, and my interest in this sort of question undoubtedly emerged from my undergraduate study of cultural anthropology and my prior experience conducting educational research in South Asia under the banner of that discipline. Accordingly, my sense of how to explore and answer such questions has been strongly shaped by the traditions of ethnography. For reasons mostly having to do with the relatively limited duration of my fieldwork (seventeen weeks), but not altogether unrelated to the knowledge politics associated with conducting research in an inter-disciplinary Department of Education, I do not wish to claim that the present study is an 'ethnography' per se – nor am I overly concerned with how we choose to employ that word or which discipline can claim to be its rightful owner. However, it is important to acknowledge that the tradition of ethnography has informed my methodological and epistemological orientations, for this acknowledgement helps

explain the source of my core questions, the strategies and methods I employed while exploring these questions, and the particular types of knowledge that this exploration intends to contribute.

This study draws inspiration from the traditions of ethnography in three basic ways: it is a self-conscious exercise in ‘writing culture’;⁴⁶ it builds upon Geertz’s ‘semiotic’ understanding of how humans tend to experience locally-situated meaning through cultural forms (1973), and it responds to Abu-Lughod’s call for ‘ethnographies of the particular’ as a means to better understand the nuance that can be lost within the study of macro-level trends (1991; see above, Chapter 2.4). However, what is even more fundamental to the design of the study is its assumption, following Walford, that “there is important knowledge which can be gained in no other way than just ‘hanging around’ and ‘picking things up’” (2008: 9). I assumed from the outset that macro-level quantitative analyses of enrolment trends or ‘rate of return’ could not fully account for the nuanced ways in which people produce and experience the gendered meanings of schooling, and that, as Bogdan and Biklen suggest, striving to collect “the ‘facts’ of human behaviour” can undermine our ability to “grasp the basic interpretive nature of human behaviour and human experience” (2007: 38).

With these principles in mind, I commenced my fieldwork with a relatively open-ended research plan: I would visit three villages, and in each village I would work

⁴⁶ With the term ‘writing culture,’ I reference the etymological root of *ethnography* as well as the seminal text by Clifford and Marcus (1986). A more literal etymological interpretation of *ethnography* might be ‘people-writing,’ but the Clifford and Marcus formulation is useful for the extent to which it implies the risk that the act of writing about culture can become an act of imagining, essentialising, and then textually establishing ‘culture’ – and thus demands the authorial reflexivity that I take to be as constitutive of ‘ethnographic’ writing as the supposed object of such writing. My focus on norm-making, and my reading of myself and my research into such processes, is in many ways an extension of this reflexive ‘turn.’

to document the ‘qualitative aspects of demand’ by administering questionnaires, conducting interviews, and engaging in participant-observation. I assumed that I would be able to employ a consistent sampling strategy and consistent methods across all three sites – for instance, interviewing the same number of in-school and out-of-school girls in each village, and administering questionnaires to the same number of fathers and mothers – and that this would enable me to develop roughly comparable datasets. My assumption was that by conducting fieldwork in three villages rather than only one, I would be able to more accurately assess the ways in which evaluations of girls’ schooling emerge and transform in context-specific ways.

In retrospect, many of these assumptions were somewhat naïve, and they began to fall apart early in my fieldwork as I found myself confronting two distinct challenges pertaining to access. The first was logistical and concerned my own physical capacity to be where I wanted to be: challenges associated with acquiring visas, managing the suspicions of government intelligence agents, gaining permission to enter certain households or neighborhoods, and maintaining my own personal security all constrained my ability to follow a rigid sampling process across all three sites. For example, I originally planned for my final period of fieldwork to be twelve weeks long (following the first and second trips of five and six weeks, respectively), but this was cut in half by the refusal of various government officials to issue me a visa for that amount of time, despite my extended efforts navigating bureaucratic networks in London, Lahore, and Islamabad.⁴⁷ Likewise, I originally planned to spend more time in the village of Abid,

⁴⁷ My trials and tribulations at Pakistani Consulates and passport offices in London, Lahore, and Islamabad are almost worthy of a separate study in their own right. Suffice to say that 2011 and 2012 were

but my host NGO was unwilling to receive me there until the local government had issued a letter of support, and thus I spent considerable time waiting – and making observations – in the NGO’s office in Lahore. The second challenge was subtler and concerned my growing recognition of the extent to which my ‘access’ to various participants was mediated by my hosts and research assistants. As noted above and as discussed in further detail in subsequent sections, most of the people who helped me arrange, conduct, and translate interviews were clearly biased in favor of girls’ schooling, and at first this struck me as a major weakness in my study. I worried that my data would be uneven and not systematically comparable between sites, and that all of it would be tarnished by the selection bias and interpretive blind spots brought on by the fact that my hosts and research assistants were so closely linked to pro-schooling NGOs in each location.

Eventually, though, I began to see all of these challenges as simply new forms of data, offering new angles of insight into the broader social landscapes in which schooling becomes meaningful. It was here that Walford’s (2008) model of “hanging around and picking things up” began to really resonate, along with Robson’s (2002) model of “flexible design” and Srivastava and Hopwood’s (2009) idea of “reflexive iteration”: a process through which each new piece of data can inform the next stages of data collection and analysis. For example, while at first I was frustrated by the frequency with which my interviews would be ‘interrupted’ by the personal opinions of my research assistants or by neighbours or other family members who wished to debate the value of girls’ schooling, I eventually became fascinated by such interactions as

difficult times for a young white American male to gain the trust of Pakistani bureaucrats, politicians, and intelligence officers.

micro-examples of the broader processes through which my informants attempted to convince each other of their views about the value of schooling. Perhaps my most crucial realisation in this regard was that my research assistants – the people through whom I gained access to schools, households, students, and parents – were themselves ‘key informants’ whose shifting (inter-)subjectivities were as worthy of study as anyone else’s.

The result of all of this is that my data is ‘uneven’ and not well-suited to systematic comparison between field sites. I conducted interviews, administered questionnaires, and generated daily field notes in all three villages, but in some cases I had more access to men than women, or more access to parents than children, and so on. I conducted a complete household census in the village of Ghande but was unable to do so in Abid or Mulweer. I shared meals and tea with friends and strangers; I attended weddings and funerals; I spoke to household servants and to local government officials; I sat in NGO offices and was a participant-observer in numerous conversations about organisational strategy and budgeting; I observed classrooms and even taught the occasional English lesson – but I did not do each of these activities ‘systematically’ in each research site. At one point during my research in Ghande, my host’s daughter became violently ill and I spent several days trying to support my host and his family as they waited nervously at the hospital down-valley in Skardu. Such episodes were not part of my ‘formal’ research about how people evaluate girls’ schooling, but they were not quite beyond it, either, because they unquestionably helped thicken my understanding of the contexts in which such evaluations emerge and transform.

It is with this perspective that I proceeded with my multi-site fieldwork and that I now proceed with my comparative analysis of the three sites: I recognise that my data is uneven and not conducive to systematic comparison, but I maintain that what I was able to ‘pick up’ sheds valuable light on the particularities of each site as well as how these sites are situated in relation to each other and in relation to broader imaginative regimes about the value of girls’ schooling. In this sense, what is most ‘ethnographic’ about the character of this study is not so much the specific methods it deploys or its particular balance of words and numbers, but rather its intentional lack of focus upon a fixed set of variables or a single hypothesis to be tested, and its openness to ‘hanging around and picking things up’ – an openness that Grieser (2014: 183) describes as a willingness to “value and expand on one’s own individual experiences” rather than simply “trying to pursue only some certain, expected knowledge.”

This flexibility is more than just an opportunistic approach to generating data; it is also reflective of my own broader epistemological and ontological assumptions about the nature of knowing and being. Broadly speaking, these assumptions overlap with the concerns central to the traditions of social constructionism, phenomenology, and Freire’s conception of “praxis” (see Crotty 1998; Freire 1970): namely, that ‘reality’ is made and experienced through a combination of individual and collective interpretation, and thus – paradoxically – that our work as social scientists (and as social actors) can make sense of it only by being “relentlessly self conscious” (Smith 1982) about the interpretive lenses through which such sense-making occurs. I pledge allegiance to no single tradition of social inquiry, but my general object and mode of inquiry cannot be separated from this broader intent to shed light upon the overlapping lenses through

which reality is shaped and understood. This approach allows me to acknowledge that social norms and values are fluid, imagined, and constantly up for individual and collective re-interpretation, while simultaneously affirming that for some of my research participants, these aspects of social life constitute a dimension of experience as fixed and as far beyond interpretation as a collapsed school building or a washed-out road.

Likewise, I can approach gender – unlike sex – as a dynamic social construct, but can also treat it as an entirely ‘real’ feature of the experiential landscape that this research explores.

In sum, then, within the wide stream of contemporary research about girls’ schooling in Pakistan and beyond, this study distinguishes itself and its ‘nearest kin’ through its intentions to explore how particular people in particular instances make sense of their worlds, to shed light on how these particular ways of sense-making have emerged over time, and to do so, first and foremost, by ‘being there,’ spending time with people, and ‘picking things up’: conversations, numbers, expressions, intonations, tensions, and other glimpses of life being lived. To label such methods and intentions ‘ethnographic’ as opposed to simply ‘qualitative and exploratory’ is primarily an exercise in semantics, but such labels are nonetheless useful for the extent to which they indicate the intellectual lineage from what I take inspiration and the sort of intellectual contribution towards which I aspire.

5.3: Access, Key Informants, and an Ethic of Listening

My personal relationships with ‘key informants’ in all three research sites became the foundations upon which I built my understandings – however partial – of what was ‘going on,’ and thus the ethical and epistemological implications of these

relationships call for further explanation. In Mulweer, I relied upon Tahir, a male employee of the NGO that was my host, and Kaniz, a female teacher at the school operated by the NGO. In Abid, I relied upon Farooq, a male ‘social mobiliser’ employed by the NGO that was my host in that village. In Ghande, I relied upon Sherbhaz, a respected male elder in the village, as well as Ali, a male teacher at a school in the village, and to a lesser extent, Munawar, a male who was founder and director of the local NGO that operated the school where Ali worked.⁴⁸ As noted in the previous section, at the start of my fieldwork I thought of these people primarily as gatekeepers and research assistants who would help me carry out my study, but eventually I came to see each of them as key informants as well. For reasons including age, gender, level of education, and proximity to influential NGOs, each of these key informants inhabited positions of relative power within their villages. Likewise, for reasons having to do with my being a white male American from Oxford University, and having to do more broadly with the legacies of British and American hegemony in Pakistan, I inhabited a position of power relative to all of my key informants – though I hasten to add that this power was not absolute, and that they knew I was dependent on them and were not afraid to ask for favours in return. All of these asymmetries shaped the types of access afforded me through my relationships with these key informants.

To begin with, I should emphasise that regardless of the extent to which my relationships with these ‘insiders’ may have helped me gain access to various people and environments, what I was able to learn and understand was always structured by my own ‘outsider’ status as a white, male, non-Pakistani, non-Muslim researcher. There

⁴⁸ To be clear, the NGOs I worked with in these three villages were separate organisations with which I formed separate relationships, and I am not aware of any link or contact between them.

should be no doubt that what I could see and interpret from this position was different than what an ‘embedded’ female Pakistani researcher would see and interpret. My ongoing reflexive challenge was to humbly and self-consciously work to use these points of difference as sources of creative insight rather than blinding bias.

In this regard, it is worth noting that my unique subject position allowed me to transcend gendered divisions of space and social life in ways that would likely have been impossible for ‘native’ male or female researchers, and that indeed seem to have been impossible for other non-native male researchers. Lyon (2002) and Mughal (2014: 63) report having had very little interaction with women during their fieldwork in Punjab, and Grieser (2014: 162) reports that Western males had a difficult time gaining access to local women in Gilgit. In contrast, I was able to interview women in all three of my field sites, including in the Saraiki-speaking region of southern Punjab where Mughal conducted his research.⁴⁹ In this sense, my experience was more similar to that of Grieser (2014), whose outsider status as a Western woman allowed her to access both male and female spaces while doing fieldwork in Gilgit, and who reflects at length upon the ethical and epistemological implications of this disruption. Following Grieser and others who have written about the challenges and possibilities for non-native researchers

⁴⁹ Mughal (2014: 63) reports that interviewing women was very difficult, and interacting with women in any capacity was possible only in the presence of men. In contrast, I conducted many interviews with women, always with a local research assistant, but often without any men present. Given that Mughal conducted his fieldwork in southern Punjab around the same time that I was conducting fieldwork in the same general area, the stark difference in our access to women is somewhat of a puzzle. (The contrast with the experiences of male researchers in Gilgit and with Lyon’s experiences in northwest Punjab is less of a puzzle, because I did not work in those areas.) One hypothesis is that Mughal’s Pakistani origins denied him the sort of ‘outsider’ status that I was afforded as a white American. Another hypothesis is that my expanded access can be attributed to my female research assistants and my connections to local NGOs. A third hypothesis is simply that Mughal was working in a more conservative area of the southern Punjab. I am unable to determine which of these, if any, provides adequate explanation; I can only report that I frequently found myself in all-female spaces and that I did what I could to ‘pick things up’ in these contexts even as I recognised that my presence within them was disruptive and that I was anything but a ‘fly on the wall.’

seeking to ‘gain access’ to the lives of Muslim girls and women (Hamzeh and Oliver 2010; Haw 1996), I worked to view my own interactions with participants as part of the larger intersubjective “journey through discursive fields” (Haw 1996: 324) through which differences are encountered, re-made, and sometimes – within limits – re-evaluated. In this sense, the obvious chasm between my participants and myself allowed my fieldwork to become a sort of microcosm of the larger processes of norm-making that are at the centre of this study: interactional processes through which different people encounter different imaginative regimes and sometimes adapt or adopt them, even as they are circumscribed by their distinct social contexts.

These theoretical perspectives about intersubjectivity and norm-making certainly allay my concerns about the validity of what can be learned through the asymmetrical relationships between me, my key informants, and my other research participants, but they do not shed much light on the ethical complexities that arise through these asymmetries – and they certainly do not ‘resolve’ them in the clean way that is implied by the CUREC question quoted at the start of this chapter.

I diligently sought to obtain informed consent from all individuals who participated in the study, but I soon realised that this was both logistically and conceptually more complex than I had anticipated. I had originally planned to obtain parental consent for participating students by sending students home from school with a Participant Information Form and a Consent Form written in Urdu, but high levels of parental illiteracy necessitated that school representatives or other ‘key informants’ verbally communicated with parents to ensure that all information was understood. Likewise, in the case of household visits I relied upon my key informants to help

identify and introduce me to families who met my sampling criteria. My interpreters and I delivered participant information and sought verbal consent before commencing interviews, and I sought to ensure that all interview participants were aware that participation was optional and that they could opt-out at any time. In addition, I frequently debriefed with my key informants in an attempt to ensure that my interactions with other participants were sensitive to the many ways that participants could feel vulnerable or threatened by my presence. These measures acted as a safeguard against the potential for the study to deceive, exploit, or pose direct risks to participants, but it would have been impossible to mitigate the asymmetries at heart of my research design and the ways that these asymmetries could bring forms of coercion to every interaction.

At times, my efforts to gain consent seemed only to highlight the conceptual challenge of defining ‘consent’ in contexts such as those where I was working.⁵⁰ For example, in cases where a school principal ordered her teachers to speak with me, it was difficult for me to subsequently discern consent from subtle coercion. The same was true when school representatives or local leaders ‘asked’ residents if they would like to participate in my study: there can be no doubt that these interactions involved subtle (and sometimes overt) forms of pressure. In addition, following Kvale (2006), I recognise the “dominance” of the interviewer in the interview process, and even more so in the analysis of what is said and observed. As Kvale points out, the researcher always holds a “monopoly of interpretation” (2006: 484), and although I worked to share and refine my interpretations through member-checks with my participants, I cannot claim

⁵⁰ See Shamim and Qureshi (2013) for a provocative discussion of the challenges of ‘informed consent’ in Pakistan; recall from Chapter 4.5 that their argument also informs my own understanding of asymmetry and interdependent selfhood in Pakistan.

that any aspect of this research process unfolded on ground that was neutral, value-free, or equally accessible to all participants. Instead, I acknowledged early in the process that my position as researcher was indeed a position of power, and that this asymmetrical positionality was often amplified by my relationships with my key informants. Rather than attempt to dodge ethical scrutiny by claiming to transcend or ‘resolve’ these power dynamics, I committed myself to engaging with asymmetry in a way that was sensitive and relentlessly self-conscious.

An episode that transpired during my first visit to Mulweer provides a painful illustration of how my position of power meant that my decisions as a researcher could have unforeseen consequences on research colleagues and participants. Upon my arrival in Mulweer, the Executive Director of my host NGO – a man about whom I say more in Chapter 6.3 – assigned the NGO school’s female English teacher, Kaniz, to be my primary interpreter and research assistant. Kaniz sacrificed significant time and energy to support me while designing and implementing questionnaires, conducting interviews, and clarifying interview transcripts. The Executive Director insisted that Kaniz did not need to be compensated for this work. Before departing Mulweer three weeks later, I gave Kaniz a gift of two-thousand rupees, or about twenty-five dollars – roughly equivalent to a quarter of her monthly salary. When the Executive Director learned of this, he confronted Kaniz. The result of this confrontation was that Kaniz gave the money to the Executive Director and resigned from the organisation. Shocked and guilt-ridden after learning of this turn of events, I contacted the organisation’s President and told her my side of the story, not knowing what she had heard from the Executive Director. She subsequently fired the Executive Director – whom she had already

suspected of corruption – and reinstated Kaniz. During my subsequent visits to Mulweer, Kaniz continued to act as my uncompensated assistant. When I attempted to privately discuss with Kaniz what had transpired with the Executive Director, Kaniz politely asked that I not speak of it again.

It would be an egregious understatement to note that this episode raises serious ethical questions about my subject position in Mulweer. Suffice to say that I drew from this episode some difficult lessons about pragmatic research strategy, as well as some important insights about gender and authority in Mulweer (see Chapter 6.3 and 6.4), but that I remain altogether uncertain – and unapologetically so – about when, how, and if to ‘intervene’ during instances of perceived injustice. I regret having unintentionally created a turbulent situation within the organisation’s administration, but I also resist the urge to idealise an alternative of researcher ‘neutrality’ in which the discrepancy between my own values and the values of the Executive Director would have remained forever invisible and insignificant. This sort of hypothetical ‘bracketing’ strikes me as both impossible and amoral, and thus I am resolved – albeit with no small amount of discomfort – to accept that episodes such as this one, though certainly undesirable, might at times be an inevitable byproduct of the cycles of contestation, interpretation, and norm-making within which fieldwork necessarily occurs.

The range of ethical concerns that frame this project are captured by two reactions I frequently elicited from children and adults who participated in the study. The first was a question: ‘What will this study do for *us*?’ I took the question to be a reminder of my responsibility to work towards making a contribution not just to academic discourses, but also to the real people at the centre of my research. At the

same time, I also took this question to be a reminder that my presence as a white foreigner was often freighted with expectations of ‘help’ in various forms, and that while seeking access and consent I needed to take caution to ensure that my respondents’ expectations were not unrealistic or misinformed. I tended to answer this question by saying something about my intention to help outsiders better understand the challenges and aspirations that characterised everyday life for my research participants, and would attempt to convey my sense that this sort of increased understanding can indeed inform social change – but also that such change would depend on a number of other factors far beyond the scope of my research.

The second common reaction was an expression of gratitude: ‘Thank you for taking interest in our village and our problems.’ Or even, in some cases: ‘It is a blessing and honour for us that you come to our home.’ Again, my response to such comments was and is a mixture of discomfort and inspiration. I felt indebted to all of my respondents for even agreeing to speak with me, and the fact that they often seemed to feel that they owed something to *me* was a stark reminder of the asymmetrical power dynamics that inescapably framed our interactions. My awareness of these dynamics does not make them disappear, but it at least helps me maintain humility, sensitivity, and a commitment to what Hastrup (2004: 469) refers to as “the ethical demand...to ‘get it right’ – not in any ontological sense, but in being true to the world under study and the epistemological premises of anthropology” (quoted in Grieser 2014: 182).

This ethical commitment to ‘getting it right’ amounts, for me, to an ethic of listening: a recognition that my work as a researcher is embedded in cycles of norm-making; that the lens through which I see the world is asymmetrically endowed with

power to shape the lenses of others; and that with this power comes a responsibility to listen, to observe, and to interact in a way that allows the lenses of others to also shape my own. This ethic of listening cannot ‘resolve’ the unequal relationships that characterise our world, nor can it – or should it – prevent us, as researchers and social beings, from inhabiting our own normativity and allowing our values to inform our actions. What it offers, rather, is to help ensure that as we go about interacting with others and trying to make sense of the world we share, we are as thoughtful and as empathetic and as human as we have it in ourselves to be.⁵¹

5.4: Sampling Strategy and Summary of Data

I selected research sites and respondents with the goal of investigating different axes of variation. During earlier stages of the project, I considered attempting to purposively ‘maximise’ variation in background characteristics or to employ a random sampling strategy. The benefit of either strategy, I imagined, would be to increase my capacity to make generalisations about the extent to which my respondents were representative of a larger population. As the project progressed, however, I became increasingly confident that its greatest potential contribution was not the generalisability of its substantive findings, but rather the extent to which its findings could highlight complexities – that is, patterns, fissures, nuances and discrepancies – in the qualitative aspects of demand within and between different research sites and different households. Consequently, I selected sites and respondents through a process that purposively sought to explore interesting points of variation but was not strictly committed to ‘maximising’

⁵¹ I take inspiration here from Inglis (2010), who credits Geertz with teaching that “the proper study of humankind is humanity, and that you can only do it properly by becoming as fully human as you have it in yourself to be.”

variation. This purposive approach was complemented by a degree of ‘convenience sampling’ and opportunistic ‘snowball sampling’ (Marshall 1996; Robson 2002; Walford 2008a).

The rationale for seeking variation follows from my basic argument that to better understand demand for girls’ schooling – and especially to understand how it changes over time – we must approach it as a dynamic and contextually contingent web of normative evaluations rather than a simple yes or no decision about enrolment. Such an approach does not require a varied sample per se, but variation between sites and respondents is precisely what brings to light the contextual specificity of each. In other words, I sought to explore and situate the qualitative aspects of demand across a range of different contexts for the explicit purpose of complicating – and thus complementing – the studies that approach demand with the question of ‘how much’ but not the question of ‘what kind’ (see Chapter 3.2).

As noted, I sought variation along multiple axes. The three research sites varied in their past and recent exposure to different educational interventions, their degree of rurality, and their proximity to urban and semi-urban opportunities for females to seek higher education and potential employment. Sites also varied in their exposure to different streams of ethnic and religious influence: residents of Mulweer were exclusively Saraiki-speaking Sunni Muslims; Abid was home to Punjabi and Saraiki-speaking Sunni Muslims and Punjabi-speaking Hindus, and Ghande residents were mostly Balti-speaking Nurbakhshi Muslims.⁵²

⁵² See Chapter 4.5 for further introductory discussion of similarities and differences between sites. See Chapters 6, 7, and 8 for more about the specificity of each site.

Within each site, I sought to interview parents with at least one daughter between the ages of six and sixteen – that is, parents for whom the question of whether or not to send their daughter(s) to school was not merely hypothetical. I worked to include parents from households that varied in several important ways. The first was simply whether or not parents were sending their daughters to school, and for how long. The second was parents' economic status and type of employment. The third was geographic location within the village. When appropriate, my household sampling considerations also included family caste and religion. My relationships with key informants proved to be a powerful avenue towards gaining access to a wide range of respondents, but inevitably introduced a significant measure of selection and self-selection bias into the processes through which participants were identified and through which they offered consent.

Alongside these household interviews, I also generated data from current students and teachers at girls' schools in each research site. Sampling within these populations involved collecting background information from all consenting members of the eldest class or classes of girls at each school, and occasionally conducting interviews with consenting students from within these classes. Populations of teachers were small enough that it was possible to interview all or most of them. The rationale for focusing on older students in particular was simply that these students were more likely to have clearly-formulated perspectives about the potential value of girls' schooling.⁵³ The study surely would have benefited from a wider sample of interviews with students – for instance, interviews asking how boys perceive the value of girls' schooling or their own schooling – but these questions were beyond its scope.

⁵³ Sathar (2000: 39) employs a similar strategy, deliberately seeking out respondents who are most likely to have strong views about the recent uptake of girls' schooling.

In Mulweer, I was the guest of a prominent local NGO that built and managed a girls' school down the street from its office. I lived with other male staff in a set of rooms directly above the office, and had full access to the students and teachers at the school. My access to households in the villages was mediated by the NGO, which meant that it was generally limited to households that were already sending at least one daughter to the NGO school.

Over the course of my two trips to Mulweer (first for four weeks, and then one week), I used a simple questionnaire to collect quantitative family background information and qualitative responses to a few basic questions from thirty-seven female students – all of the consenting students from Class 6, 7, 8, and 9 who were present in school on the days I administered the questionnaire.⁵⁴ I conducted a total of thirty-eight formal interviews that included ten active female students, six female teachers, seventeen fathers, and twenty-seven mothers.⁵⁵ As shown in the table below (Figure 5.3.1), these interviews varied in length, location, and number of participants. I interviewed several of the six teachers on multiple occasions, but otherwise each respondent only participated in one interview. In addition to data gleaned from these questionnaires and interviews, I also generated daily fieldnotes documenting my impressions of life at the school, in the NGO office, and on the streets and in the households of the village. I provide examples of fieldnotes, questionnaires responses,

⁵⁴ Despite their different grade levels, all of these students study together in the same classroom and thus can be thought of collectively as the 'eldest class' of girls at the school. From within this 'eldest class,' only one student did not consent to complete the questionnaire.

⁵⁵ Throughout this study, I describe household interview participants in terms of their relationship (e.g. 'mother,' 'grandmother,' etc.) to the school-aged girl(s) whose schooling prospects were the focus of the interview.

and interview transcripts in Annex 1, along with an example of an interview schedule and a questionnaire in Annex 2 and Annex 3.

Figure 5.3.1: Mulweer Summary of Interviews

#	Date	Location	Participants	Recording Length
1	2011.3.28	Mulweer- Household	Father, mother, daughter (student)	58 minutes
2	2011.3.30	District Education Office	Assistant Education Officer	No recording
3	2011.4.1	School office	Student	43 minutes
4	2011.4.2	School office	Student	22 minutes
5	2011.4.4	School office	Mother and daughter (student)	30 minutes
6	2011.4.4	School office	Student	26 minutes
7	2011.4.5	Mulweer- Household	Mother and father	23 minutes
8	2011.4.5	Mulweer- Household	Mother and father	30 minutes
9	2011.4.5	Mulweer- Household	Mother	No recording
10	2011.4.5	School office	Six female teachers, one female principal	72 minutes
11	2011.4.6	School office	Four female teachers	38 minutes
12	2011.4.6	School office	Student	21 minutes
13	2011.4.6	Household	Mother and father	22 minutes
14	2011.4.6	Household	Mother	17 minutes
15	2011.4.7	Household	Mother	14 minutes
16	2011.4.7	Household	Mother	10 minutes
17	2011.4.7	Household	Mother	18 minutes
18	2011.4.7	Household	Mother and father	10 minutes
19	2011.4.9	Household	Father	14 minutes
20	2011.4.9	Household	Mother (wife of above)	19 minutes
21	2011.4.9	Household	Three mothers	13 minutes
22	2011.4.12	School office	Four students	18 minutes
23	2011.4.12	Tea stall	Father	17 minutes
24	2011.4.12	Tea stall	Father	12 minutes
25	2011.4.12	Tea stall	Father	10 minutes
26	2011.4.13	Household	Three fathers	12 minutes
27	2011.4.13	Household	Five mothers	23 minutes
28	2011.4.14	School office	Student	15 minutes
29	2011.4.14	Household	Father	11 minutes
30	2011.4.14	Household	Two mothers	10 minutes
31	2011.4.14	Household	Three mothers	15 minutes
32	2011.4.14	Household	Mother	14 minutes
33	2011.4.14	Household	Mother	14 minutes
34	2011.4.15	School office	Three teachers	16 minutes
35	2012.2.14	School office	Five teachers	45 minutes
36	2012.2.16	School office	Teacher and student	66 minutes
37	2012.2.17	Household	Father and daughter (former student)	39 minutes
38	2012.2.17	Household	Four fathers	36 minutes

In Abid, I was working in collaboration with an educational NGO that is based in Lahore and manages the implementation of a UNICEF-sponsored school-improvement intervention in a number of locations throughout Punjab. I spent roughly a week getting to know the NGO in their Lahore office while I waited to receive government permission to visit Abid, and then another week with their field staff in Abid. This abbreviated timeframe meant that my interactions with students, teachers, and parents were shorter but more deliberate. The NGO works with two different government schools in adjacent *bastis* (neighbourhoods) of the village of Abid, so I visited both schools and a selection of households from both *bastis*. Similar to Mulweer, I used a basic survey instrument to collect quantitative family background information from the eldest class of female students at each school. This amounted to a total of twelve students. Unlike Mulweer, I did not attempt to collect any written qualitative responses from these students. I conducted twenty-three formal interviews that included eighteen mothers, eleven fathers, and five teachers or school administrators. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview any current students in Abid, but I did interview several young women who had been among the first in Abid to attend school for any amount of time. In the table below (Figure 5.3.2), the first twelve interviews took place within one *basti*, and then the subsequent eleven in the other *basti*.

Figure 5.3.2: Abid Summary of Interviews

#	Date	Location	Participants	Recording Length
39	2012.2.20	Courtyard of government school #1	Two female teachers	No recording
40	2012.2.20	Household	Mother	20 minutes
41	2012.2.20	Household	Father, mother, and uncle	35 minutes
42	2012.2.20	Household	Two mothers and brother-in-law	25 minutes
43	2012.2.20	Household	Mother and daughter	24 minutes
44	2012.2.21	Household	Father	20 minutes

45	2012.2.21	Tea stall	Elected community leader	27 minutes
46	2012.2.21	Household	Mother	23 minutes
47	2012.2.21	Household	Mother	9 minutes ⁵⁶
48	2012.2.21	Household	Three mothers	30 minutes
49	2012.2.21	Household	Father	28 minutes
50	2012.2.22	Office of private school #1	Male principal	23 minutes
51	2012.2.22	Classroom of government school #2	Two female teachers, one mother, and one former female student	45 minutes
52	2012.2.22	Household	Two mothers and grandmother	30 minutes
53	2012.2.22	Household	Father and mother	22 minutes
54	2012.2.22	Household	Two mothers	7 minutes ⁵⁷
55	2012.2.22	Household	Three mothers	30 minutes
56	2012.2.23	Household	Father	22 minutes
57	2012.2.23	Household	Two fathers	20 minutes
58	2012.2.23	Household	Two fathers	24 minutes
59	2012.2.23	Household	Father	23 minutes
60	2012.2.23	Office of private school #2	Male principal	13 minutes
61	2012.2.23	Household	Father and aunt	21 minutes

Unlike in Mulweer and Abid, where my presence was tightly interwoven with my relationship with a local NGO, my work in Ghande emerged through a series of less formal connections. During the summer of 2011, I spent roughly five weeks there and in Skardu, a large town about six hours' drive 'down-valley.' I returned during the winter of 2012 and spent an additional four weeks in Ghande. Throughout these two trips I was the guest of local contacts who soon became trusted friends. My access to schools and households in Skardu and Ghande was mostly negotiated through these friends, although emerging relationships with a local NGO in Ghande and its foreign partner NGO became an important part of my research strategy by the end of my tenure there. During the first trip, I administered questionnaires and conducted scoping interviews at some

⁵⁶ This interview was shortened after we realised that the participant did not have any daughters and thus did not meet our inclusion criteria.

⁵⁷ This interview was actually longer than seven minutes, but the recording was shortened because of agitation by a local young man observing the interview.

schools and households in Skardu, and this became the background for my interest in the village of Ghande, where I spent the remainder of that trip conducting informal observations and building relationships. During the subsequent trip to Ghande, I worked with teachers from the two local schools to conduct a complete census that worked to chart the educational history of all 143 households and 976 residents of the village (see Annex 5.1 and 5.2). This census data – the first of its kind to be assembled in Ghande, to the best of my knowledge – helped contextualise my twenty-seven formal interviews with mothers, fathers, teachers, and community leaders (see below, Figure 5.3.3). Data generated through these interviews were further supplemented by my field notes that reflected upon my daily visits to the village schools and my frequent interactions with community members in their households, in the household where I was a guest, and on the muddy streets of the village. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview any current female students in Ghande, but I did manage to interview several female teachers and other young women who had recently been in school. I also spent considerable unstructured time with the daughters of my key informant, none of whom were attending school.

Figure 5.3.3: Ghande Summary of Interviews

#	Date	Location	Participants	Recording Length
62	2012.3.2	Household	Mother	No recording
63	2012.3.2	Household	Local NGO leader	No recording
64	2012.3.3	Household	Local VCC leader	No recording
65	2012.3.3	Household	Father	30 minutes
66	2012.3.3	Household	Mother and grandmother	26 minutes
67	2012.3.3	Household	Mother	18 minutes
68	2012.3.4	Household	Male teacher from private school	No recording
69	2012.3.4	Government school office	Male principal	33 minutes
70	2012.3.4	Household	Father	18 minutes

71	2012.3.4	Household	Mother	No recording
72	2012.3.4	Household	Mother	No recording
73	2012.3.5	Household	Local religious leader (meerwai)	59 minutes
74	2012.3.5	Household	Father and mother	No recording
75	2012.3.5	Government school classroom	Female teacher	22 minutes
76	2012.3.10	Private school office	Four male teachers and male principal	33 minutes
77	2012.3.10	Government school office	Male teacher	40 minutes
78	2012.3.10	Household	Mother	No recording
79	2012.3.10	Household	Mother	No recording
80	2012.3.10	Household	Mother	No recording
81	2012.3.10	Household	Father	No recording
82	2012.3.10	Household	Father and mother	No recording
83	2012.3.10	Household	Mother	No recording
84	2012.3.10	Household	Mother	No recording
85	2012.3.11	Household	Nine male teachers from local private and government schools	No recording
86	2012.3.12	Private school office	Male teacher	No recording
87	2012.3.13	Private school office	Three female teachers	No recording
88	2012.3.13	Private school office	Female 'lady health worker' and male teacher	No recording

The tables above begin to illustrate the winding road of my fieldwork and the varying types of data I generated at each of my three research sites. The next section provides further details about how this data generation actually unfolded, and how I have sought to make sense of it.

5.5: Methods and Analysis

As noted above, I imagined during the early stages of this project that my methods would be neatly consistent and symmetrical in each of my research sites. I envisioned a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews that, if administered to a random sample of parents and school-aged girls in multiple communities, would allow for the generation of robust 'profiles of demand' that could

be compared and contrasted between different research sites and between respondents from divergent backgrounds. This plan proved untenable not only because of logistical and epistemological challenges of ‘access’ discussed earlier in this chapter, but also because I realised that such methods would not enable me to explore the qualitative aspects of demand at the level of nuance that struck me as necessary. For example, I realised that questionnaires would be a useful tool for exploring community characteristics such as school participation rates between different gender and age cohorts, but that they were far less reliable when used to explore respondents’ qualitative evaluations of girls’ schooling. Consequently, I only used questionnaires to explore attitudes and perspectives during my first visit to Mulweer, and then for the remainder of my fieldwork only used questionnaires as a means of assembling background information. Similarly, I set out with a clearly-defined schedule of interview questions, but I soon adapted my approach so that I could be more flexible while conducting interviews and making observations.

My process for arranging, conducting, and interpreting interviews was somewhat unorthodox, and it reflects the epistemological constraints and opportunities associated with my own subject position and my relationships with my key informants. As noted above, the original premise of my relationships with key informants in each village was that they would be my ‘research assistants.’ It is important to note that none of them had previously received any formal training in qualitative research methods, and thus my work in each site began with an informal training and orientation process.⁵⁸ All of my

⁵⁸ In the case of Abid, I was fortunate to be able to meet and train my key informant, Farooq, in my host NGO’s office in Lahore prior to my arrival in the village. This allowed us to ‘hit the ground running’ upon my arrival in Abid and make the most of my relatively short time in the village.

research assistants were fluent in English, so it was relatively straightforward for me to explain to them that I was interested in understanding how different people think about the benefits (or lack thereof) of sending girls to school. I also emphasised the importance of informed consent and asked that they try to communicate to potential respondents that participation was entirely optional. I then shared with them my schedule of interview questions (see Annex 2) and reviewed each question to ensure that they understood what I was trying to ask. This process was iterative in the sense that our conversations about my questions helped me refine the questions and sometimes helped me generate new questions.⁵⁹ I concluded the preliminary orientation process by emphasising that the primary role of the research assistant was to translate my questions to the respondents, and then to translate the respondents' responses back to me. As noted above, this process was rarely as neat as I had hoped, and my research assistants often interjected their own opinions and commentary during the interview process. However, as noted, I soon came to see these interjections as valuable sources of data in themselves, and, likewise, I came to see my research assistants as key informants and interview participants rather than simply as translators.

After completing this 'orientation' process, my key informants and I began arranging the interviews themselves. I explained my sampling goals pertinent to each site – e.g., an intent to speak with some parents whose daughters were attending school,

⁵⁹ For example, during my first visit to Mulweer, I sat down with Kaniz and the female school principal to discuss my plans for interviewing students and their parents. After reviewing my prepared questions asking respondents to explain their evaluations of girls' schooling, the school principal suggested that I add a 'scenario' question in which I would ask respondents to pretend that I was opposed to girls' schooling, and to convince me otherwise. I integrated this suggestion into my standard interview process in all three research sites, and it tended to elicit insights that might have remained otherwise obscured. This suggestion from the school principal also helped spur me towards thinking more creatively about what an 'interview' can entail.

and some who were not – and the key informants then generated a list of possible respondents, often with the consultation of their friends and colleagues (e.g. Kaniz, a teacher, often sought input from the principal of her school). The key informants then sought consenting participants by calling the mobile phones of potential respondents or by contacting them in person. After receiving verbal consent from potential respondents, my key informants and I made plans to visit households or meet the respondents elsewhere when appropriate.

My own role and the role of my key informants during the interview process varied significantly depending on the language in which we were conducting the interview. In the rare cases where the interview respondent was conversational in English, I would conduct the interview myself, and my key informants would play the role of liaison – guiding me to the location of the interview, introducing me to the respondent, and then sitting quietly beside me while I conducted the interview. However, in the majority of cases, we would conduct the interview in Urdu, Saraiki, Punjabi, or Balti, depending on the preference of the respondent. In such cases, the flow of the conversation would go something like this:

WO: [Asks question in English.]
Key Informant (KI): [Translates question into preferred language of respondent.]
Respondent (R): [Answers question in preferred language.]
KI: [Translates answer into English.]
WO: [Asks KI for clarification of translation if needed; otherwise, asks next question in English.]
KI: [Translates question into preferred language of respondent]
R: [Answers question in preferred language.]

Of course, real human interactions are never as formulaic as what I have outlined above, and it was not uncommon for the key informant and I to go back and forth several times

in English while clarifying a given point, or for the key informant and the respondent to go back and forth several times while clarifying a point in a different language.

Moreover, it is important to emphasise that most respondents spoke at least a little bit of Urdu as well as their regional language, and that I was (and am) capable of carrying on a basic conversation in Urdu.⁶⁰ Thus, for example, my key informant would usually introduce me to the respondent in Urdu, and the respondent and I would then converse in Urdu for a few minutes at the start of the interview. Likewise, if my key informant and the respondent were speaking in Urdu, and I could understand what was being said, I would sometimes interject in Urdu to ask a clarifying question without needing my key informant to translate the previous statement into English for me. For example, this is an excerpt from an interview in Abid:

WO: [In English] And what do you think is the best thing
that your children will gain from school?
KI: [Translates question into Urdu.] *Apne bacce iskul men
sabse eham chees kya seekh hoge?*
R: [In Urdu] *Talim.* [Education.]
WO: [In Urdu] *Kyun? Talim kya feda hai?* [Why, what's
the benefit of *talim*?]
Mother: [In Urdu] *Tameez.*
KI: [In English] Manners.⁶¹

In this instance, I asked a question in English, my key informant translated it into Urdu, the respondent answered in Urdu, I asked the next question in Urdu, the respondent answered in Urdu, and then my key informant translated it to English. When described as such, this process sounds frenetic and confusing, but in practice such interjections did not interrupt the general flow of the conversation.

⁶⁰ Recall description of my Urdu proficiency from footnote in Chapter 1.2.

⁶¹ Interview 54. Note that in my standard process of transcription, I did not transcribe what was being said in Urdu; I simply transcribed the English version of what I said and what my key informant translated from what was said by respondents. I made this choice for the sake of efficiency but I realise that it would have been ideal to transcribe everything.

I recorded most interviews with a digital recording device, and managed to transcribe most interviews within three days of recording. Here, too, my key informants played a crucial role. I benefited greatly from the fact that my key informants were usually available for consultation while I was transcribing recorded interviews. When a translation seemed unclear, or when it seemed as though my key informant had not translated the full extent of what was said, I would often listen to the recording again with my key informant(s) and discuss what was said and how to translate and transcribe it most appropriately. In some cases – especially in Ghande – I did not record interviews and instead transcribed in shorthand, either because respondents asked me not to use the recording device or because I chose not to for the sake of maintaining a relaxed atmosphere.

There are many important questions to be asked about the challenge – some might say impossibility – of conducting robust qualitative interviews in a language that one has not mastered. The potential for misunderstanding is perhaps even greater in multi-site projects such as mine, when the researcher relies upon multiple interpreters and has no good means of testing reliability between them. As my own Urdu proficiency improved over the course of my research, I played an increasingly active role in asking questions and explaining my project to respondents, but there were still many instances – particularly amongst the poorest and least educated respondents, who tended to speak little to no Urdu – when I was entirely dependent upon my key informants to communicate questions to respondents, and to relay their responses back to me. As noted by MacPherson (2006: 134-152) and others, this sort of arrangement can allow interpreters to dramatically distort the meanings of a given statement or question,

whether through an intentional effort to please or subvert the researcher, or through a genuine misunderstanding of the larger context of what is being said or asked.

I tried to mitigate this risk by openly discussing and practising translation strategies with my key informants throughout our work together, and by frequently checking my understandings of ‘what was going on’ against their own. In Ghande, these conversations often took place around the woodstove in Sherbhaz’s house; in Mulweer, it was often in the evenings with Tahir on the rooftop of the NGO office, or occasionally with Kaniz and other female teachers during staff breakfast, and in Abid, it was usually while having lunch or tea with Farooq. I would typically discuss the general themes I had been observing during our interviews – e.g., ‘it seems like parents vary in terms of how they perceive the limits of *purdah*’ – and sometimes went beyond general themes to unpack the usage of particular words or phrases that had caught my interest while I was transcribing interviews. What I gleaned through these check-ins helped me recover some of what may have been ‘lost in translation’ during the actual interviews, and also helped me refine and clarify what I was trying to ask. Of course, to the extent that my key informants and I all had systematic interpretive blind spots of our own, these check-ins could only offer minimal contributions to my efforts to get closer to the ‘truth’ of what our interview respondents were trying to say. Nonetheless, the point is that my analysis of interview transcripts – as well as my planning and execution of the interviews themselves – was not static or formulaic, but instead emerged through ongoing dialogue with my key informants.

The distinction between the Urdu words *talim* (education) and *iskul* (school) provides a good example of how I attempted to track meanings across different

respondents and field sites even as I knew that these meanings were being filtered through the lenses of my key informants and through linguistic idiosyncrasies which were beyond my grasp. When preparing for interviews or reviewing recordings of recent interviews, I would emphasise to my key informants that we needed to discern between the perceived costs and benefits of ‘going to school’ (*iskul jana*) versus those of ‘education’ (*talim*) in the abstract. Regardless of the language into which my key informants were translating my questions, I deliberately sought to distinguish between perceptions of specific schooling experiences or opportunities and broader ideas about ‘education.’ I emphasised this point to my key informants by using the English words ‘schooling’ and ‘education’ as well as the Urdu words *iskul* and *talim*. I have attempted to maintain a similar semantic distinction between the English words ‘schooling’ and ‘education’ throughout this study (see footnote in Chapter 1.2), even as I acknowledge that the two are intertwined and that evaluations of particular schooling opportunities and experiences emerge in part from broader assumptions about the value of ‘education.’ In subsequent chapters, I develop an argument about how parents’ evaluations of girls’ schooling often seemed to emerge from a general appreciation of *talim*: a word used in Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, and other South Asian languages to mean ‘education,’ but etymologically related to *talaat*, meaning the appearance of the sun or the coming of light,⁶² and sometimes translated to me simply as ‘credentials.’ Needless to say, it is possible to appreciate ideals of being ‘educated’ or ‘enlightened’ or ‘having credentials’ while still worrying about the social or economic challenges

⁶² I am grateful to Dr Amy Stambach for bringing this etymological link to my attention, and I argue that the ways in which my respondents articulated the meaning and value of *talim* does indeed reflect a sense of the purity and dignity associated with being ‘enlightened.’ However, it is also important for me to acknowledge that none of my respondents explicitly associated *talim* with *talaat*.

associated with actually going to school, and thus it should not be surprising that many of my respondents who articulated a strong appreciation of *talim* still did not enroll their daughters in school, or only enrolled them for a few years. My ongoing dialogue with key informants helped me to stay attentive to such nuances, but even so, I readily admit that my limited language skills (particularly in Punjabi, Balti, and Saraiki) constrained my understanding of how ideas about ‘schooling’ and ‘education’ were entwined for my respondents.

With that said, I also contend that my reliance upon key informants led to a surprising and substantial enrichment of my study. Given that all of my key informants were residents of the villages where I was conducting my research, I often felt that I was facilitating and observing a semi-structured conversation between community members, rather than that my interpreter was mediating a formal interview between myself and a respondent. This is not to suggest that I think my presence was insignificant, and that I was simply observing a ‘natural’ interaction. To be sure, my presence determined the premise and the direction of every interview. Yet even so, I was continually and pleasantly surprised to find that my key informants and my respondents often seemed genuinely invested in sharing their ideas with each other. For instance, parents in Mulweer – especially uneducated mothers – often seemed to enjoy speaking with Kaniz, a young and relatively well-educated female English teacher from a nearby village, about their hopes and concerns for their daughters’ schooling. Occasionally, as mentioned above, conversations took on a slightly argumentative tone: despite my frequent requests that they withhold their own opinions, my key informants would sometimes criticise parents for not sending their daughters to school, and respondents

would attempt to defend themselves. At first, I was distressed by the obvious lack of ‘objectivity’ that my interpreters were bringing to our conversations, but I came to see their biases – and their means of communicating such biases to me and to our respondents, and what this elicited from respondents – as yet another source of valuable data, a live example of norm-making in process.

As I slowly loosened my initial attachment to what Roulston (2010) identifies as a “neo-positivist” conception of researcher objectivity during interviews, I became increasingly creative and open-minded about how I conducted them. At first, I sought to interview only one person at a time, and to follow a strict interview schedule. This quickly proved unrealistic, as the circumstances of interacting with parents in large joint households often meant that other household members – sisters, spouses, children, grandparents – would observe or join the conversation. In their own fieldwork in rural Punjab, Arnot and Naveed (2014: 512-513) experienced a similar phenomenon, and, like me, they work to read these instances as sources of valuable data rather than as disruptions to an idealised notion of ‘proper’ social science. At first, I tried to minimise this sort of ‘interference,’ but I soon came to appreciate the fact that the indignant interjection of a grandmother or the wry remark of a sister-in-law could stimulate our conversation in unexpected ways. Sometimes, when I sensed dissent between family members, I deliberately and playfully sought to probe their divergent views. The ensuing exchanges – entirely unplanned and unexpected – often proved illuminating.

For instance, in Abid I was interviewing a father who had chosen not to send his daughter to school, and was momentarily displeased when this man’s uncle arrived and joined us uninvited midway through the interview. However, I soon realised that the

uncle disagreed with his nephew's perspectives about girls' schooling, and in the conversation that unfolded I was able to observe how these men argued about the impact of schooling upon the marriageability, employability, and general respectability of girls in the village. Similarly dynamic exchanges emerged elsewhere and often: during an interview in Mulweer, for example, a father invited his daughter to explain how she had insisted upon going to school as a young girl – and then, criticising her (and my) naïveté about the social risks of schooling, offered his own account of why he eventually made her discontinue her schooling at Class 8. Likewise, in Ghande, my conversations with parents were occasionally interrupted by teachers who sought to convince them to send their daughters to school. I read all of these episodes as instances of norm-making, and I explicate each of them in further detail in the chapters that follow. For now, the point is that the subtle tensions and insights I gleaned from observing such exchanges could not have emerged in a more structured interview setting, and certainly could not have emerged from a written questionnaire.

This methodological approach to interviews is somewhat akin to what others have called 'ethnographic interviewing' (Forsey 2008), the 'postmodern interview' (Roulston 2010), or the 'active interview' (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The shared premise of these approaches is that interviews are social events, and that the 'reality' that they offer to illuminate is not one of facts and figures so much as one of contextually-situated modes of understanding, debating, and explaining particular aspects of individual and collective experience. As Forsey notes (2008: 61), this amounts to a sort of middle way between the positivistic assumption that interviews reveal reality 'as it is' and the romantic view that interviews are inherently valuable

simply for ‘giving voice’ to individuals. Instead, I aimed for my interviews to help locate my respondents’ perspectives – subjective, impressionistic, and undoubtedly influenced by my own presence as a researcher – within broader contexts of social pressure, shifting ideas, and economic constraints and opportunities. Following Forsey, I hoped that my intentionally flexible interview style would enable me and my eventual readers to “appreciate the intricate stories that influence and shape individual choices that people make, the complexities they face, and the realities they create” (2008: 69).

The same could be said of the research design as a whole. Throughout my collection of qualitative and quantitative data across my three research sites, I did not reach any clear ‘saturation point’ at which it seemed that my data were ceasing to surprise me.⁶³ This was particularly true of the qualitative data: formal interviews and informal conversations continually seemed to lead to more questions than answers, and it would be fallacious to claim that this study – or perhaps any such study – could not be further enriched by more fieldwork. Yet the overarching intention behind the design, implementation, and continual re-definition of this project was not to reach any final conclusions about its object of inquiry so much as to point towards possibilities for new questions and new ways of understanding, and to do so in a way that approaches people and their ideas on their own terms and in the contexts of their daily experience.

I analysed qualitative and quantitative data with an approach that was iterative, exploratory, and descriptive. The approach was iterative in the sense that ‘analysis’ was ongoing throughout the research and writing process. The comments, anecdotes, and

⁶³ Forsey acknowledges the same, wryly noting that “ethnography is rarely as neat as the methodological rubrics would want it to be” (2008: 65).

interactions that confused or surprised me during fieldwork informed my ongoing questions and reflections, and these threads slowly coalesced into ‘themes’ with which I coded my interview transcripts and field notes. I identified fifteen themes that corresponded to the study’s two main questions, and used a ‘copy and paste’ coding method (Forsey 2008: 68) to tag and re-organise different sections of my notes and transcripts in relation to these themes. When I encountered data that illustrated respondents’ understandings of the value of girls’ schooling – that is, data that corresponded to the first research question – I grouped them together according to themes such as employment, marriage, manners, and Islam. When I came upon data that suggested how or to what extent these understandings may have changed over time – data corresponding to the second research question – I grouped them according to themes such as influence of teachers, influence of media, and influence of ‘seeing’ others. In addition to these fifteen themes that emerged in relation to my two main research questions, I identified four additional themes that corresponded to the broader background question of what factors constrain girls’ enrolment and persistence in school. Readers can find a full outline of these nineteen themes in Annex 4.

This process of thematic coding was instrumental in helping me identify patterns, tensions, and fissures within my data, but I do not wish to exaggerate the scientific rigour that the language of ‘coding’ might suggest. Following Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 323), I used the coding process as a means of exploring my data and identifying further questions within it – not as a means of solving a problem or answering a grand question. The process was undoubtedly impressionistic, and some codes inevitably overlapped with each other or captured my attention more strongly than others. The

process did not follow any pre-conceived theoretical framework, but this is not to say that my generation and assignation of thematic codes was somehow purely inductive or a-theoretical. Rather, the process was an ongoing dialectic that mirrored Trondman's observation that "data can, on one hand, not speak for itself, and theory, on the other hand...cannot be proved by data as if it was a God-like first and last instance" (2008: 125). In other words, my theoretical assumptions and interests both shaped and were shaped by my analysis and interpretation of empirical data.

For some, this acknowledgment of researcher subjectivity would seem to devalue my interpretations as 'merely' my own – yet I prefer to follow scholars such as Thomas and James, who, in their pointed critique of 'grounded theory' as a self-loathing search for an "epistemological security blanket" (2006: 780), point out that 'bracketing' a researcher's *a priori* assumptions is not only impossible, but also misguided in the sense that the particular biases attached to a given researcher's subjective personhood are precisely what make qualitative research worthwhile (see also Grieser 2014). In this sense, I make no claim to having seen or interpreted the world 'as it is,' but rather only to have reported it as it appeared to me.

5.6: Beyond 'What Works': Research Limitations and Intended Contribution

The potential limitations to this study are many and obvious. To name a few: the scientific rigour of my research questions are limited by their descriptive and exploratory orientation; my sample was biased by participant self-selection and by practical constraints upon my access to certain families; my survey and interview data are limited by their reliance upon participant self-reporting; the validity of my observations was limited by the potentially distorting effects of my own presence, and

the strength of my analysis and interpretation of this data is limited by the biases and blind spots inherent to my ‘outsider’ status, all of which are exacerbated by my lack of fluency in the primary languages of my respondents. Rather than treat these limitations as a parenthetical set of concerns to be addressed and then set aside, I have let them come to light throughout this chapter. Indeed, the shape of this entire study has evolved out of my awareness of these limitations. This self-consciousness and reflexivity informs my recognition of the limits of what can be known, but I proceed with the conviction that the limits of what can be known should not predetermine what can be asked.

In the wake of recent debates about the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘what works’ paradigm in contemporary educational research (for example, Berliner 2002; Hargreaves 1996; Oancea and Furlong 2007; Oancea and Pring 2008; Slavin 2002),⁶⁴ I acknowledge the utility of research that tests the effectiveness of specific educational interventions, but I also recognise a need for research that explores how ‘effectiveness’ is defined differently by different actors and contexts, and thus challenges the assumptions that many interventions take for granted. The purely descriptive basis of this study makes it particularly vulnerable to the critique that educational research is often “soft, squishy, unreliable and imprecise” (Berliner 2002: 18), and some scholars have suggested that this sort of descriptive work can be valuable only insofar as it helps build theories or identify variables to be used in future experiments (Slavin 2002: 18). Yet this conception still treats descriptive research as the servant of a larger ‘what works’ framework that remains unquestioned, and thus the rationale for the present

⁶⁴These scholars critique the ‘what works’ paradigm as it has tended to manifest in research and policy discourses in the United States and the United Kingdom; for an example of the way in which the same trend has appeared in relation to girls’ schooling in the development context, see Herz and Sperling 2004 or Sperling and Winthrop 2016.

study goes further: rather than simply help prepare us to perform better experiments, ‘quality’ descriptive research can draw our attention to forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that are altogether beyond the reach of experimentation. In this sense, I suggest that to assess the quality and contribution of this study, we must consider the extent to which it helps us reframe or thicken the way we approach paradigmatic questions about gender and schooling – specifically, questions about how concepts like ‘demand’ are entwined in larger webs of gendered norm-making that stretch across research, policy, and embodied experience.

My use of the word ‘paradigmatic’ in this context follows Cowen’s concern that educational research is often trivialised by a focus on hot topics rather than paradigmatic questions – “problems which are at the edge of our existing understandings, even a bit beyond them, and which require imagination and new categories of thought to sort out tentative answers” (2003: 19). To ask such questions with no regard for what can be empirically verified is to invite the sort of “anything goes” relativism that “neo-realists” love to hate (Smith and Hodkinson 2002). Yet if we allow our assumptions about what can be measured to predetermine the bounds of what can be asked, we squander the opportunity for research to disrupt, de-centre, and destabilise rather than simply “answer” our dominant questions (Oancea and Pring 2008; Edwards 2002; Walford 2001).

I situate this study somewhere within this tension. On the one hand, I am quick to point out that the study is firmly rooted in empirical inquiry: much more than an exercise in self-reflection and impressionistic description, this is an account of how particular people in particular contexts have articulated their evaluations of girls’

schooling, and how or to what extent these evaluations have changed over time. Even without assuming that all survey and interview respondents will reliably articulate their current evaluations of girls' schooling,⁶⁵ or that all respondents are able to recall, explain, and report upon how their perspectives may have changed over time,⁶⁶ I am compelled to take seriously the themes that emerge from my empirical data: for example, the fact that respondents across all three sites reported having observed in recent years a significant change in attitudes towards girls' schooling. On the other hand, I hasten to add that the study raises questions and suggests possibilities which seem worthy of consideration regardless of the extent to which they are grounded in 'hard' data. I have sought to show that most research about girls' schooling has focused upon measurable barriers and outcomes, and that this has distracted from paradigmatic questions about how norms are made, contested, and re-imagined across time and space and gradients of power. Such questions can lead toward only a certain type of truth –

⁶⁵ The issue of respondents' willingness and ability to identify and articulate the rationale for their evaluations of girls' schooling boils down to the question of to what extent individuals can reliably explain why they hold particular opinions. The limited reliability of such explanations is precisely the justification for my flexible, exploratory methods of qualitative investigation. In other words, there might be good reason to doubt respondents' capacity to reliably explain their attitudes via a multiple-choice questionnaire, a written survey, or even in a verbal response to a direct interview question about why girls should or shouldn't go to school. However, the obvious benefit of my 'hanging around and picking things up' was that it enabled me to approach such questions via multiple angles at once, and at deeper and deeper levels of nuance, to the effect that I was able to discern a reasonably multifaceted sense of the interwoven ideas that informed 'demand' for different respondents.

⁶⁶ The reliability of human memory is limited at best, even with reference to specific events (e.g. Kahneman 2011; Loftus and Palmer 1974; Schacter 1999). The reliability of recalled attitudes is thought to be even more dubious: while social scientists commonly rely upon retrospective accounts of matters such as voting behaviour or employment records, the use of retrospective reports of attitudes is far less typical (Jaspers et. al. 2009: 287). Proponents of dissonance theory and self-perception theory suggest that 'consistency bias' leads individuals to assume that their past attitudes were similar to their current attitudes, and recent evidence of 'aggregate trend bias' suggests that individuals' recollections of their own past attitudes are strongly influenced by perceptions of larger social trends (Jaspers et. al. 2009: 288-289). Each of these biases imposes constraints upon a given individual's abilities to recall past attitudes, and thus, by extension, upon an individual's abilities to identify and explain a possible change in attitudes. Some recent research suggests that "recalled attitudinal data can perhaps be useful for providing descriptions of the aggregate" (Jaspers et. al. 2009: 298), but this suggestion is tentative at best.

they surely will not tell us ‘what works’ or prove the validity of a theory that can be universally generalised – but our understanding of the world is less robust if we decide *a priori* that such truth has no value.

In sum, I strive for ‘quality’ in a way that mirrors Lincoln and Guba’s concept of “authenticity” and the need to go beyond the conventional scientific paradigm and its attendant “technical criteria for ensuring reliability” (1986: 83). A broad range of qualitative researchers have answered Lincoln and Guba’s call for more naturalistic criteria of rigour, and thus I follow a well-trod path in my commitment to seeking “trustworthiness” through methods such as persistent observation, triangulation, member checks, transparency, reflexivity, and openness to scrutiny (see Bridges 2009; Oancea and Furlong 2007; Oancea and Pring 2008; Pring 2001; Walford 2001). I take inspiration from recent scholars who have worked to open a conversation about quality that allows for a dimension of “practical judgment” and is able to account for criteria such as creativity, cogency, and sensitivity to context (Bridges 2009; Oancea and Furlong 2007). In this sense, the ultimate ‘quality’ of this study can be sought not so much in its depiction of objective ‘truth’ as in its capacity to provoke uncertainty and generate new questions for its subjective audience.

Chapter 6: ‘Now Their Minds Have Changed’: Transformation and Continuity in Mulweer

6.1: Overview

This chapter and the two that follow it carry out the sort of analysis that the previous five chapters have shown to be lacking and necessary: an analysis of demand for girls’ schooling which focuses on the making and remaking of norms rather than only on enrolment rates and measurable ‘returns.’ In reporting what I saw, heard, and did during fieldwork, I locate particular people and their evaluations of schooling within larger imaginative regimes that are hegemonic but not determining. I orient my analysis around norms pertaining to marriage, employment, and *purdah*, and, rather than read these norms as mere ‘barriers’ to the enactment of a convergent ‘world culture,’ I read them as structuring (albeit shifting) features of the social and cultural landscapes in which people imagine and experience the value of girls’ schooling. Indeed, I show that discourses predicting this sort of convergence – discourses which read girls’ school enrolment as synonymous with an empowered, autonomous, economically productive personhood that is inevitable and obviously desirable – are themselves but one thread of the broader processes of norm-making in which I locate myself and my research participants.

This chapter focuses on Mulweer, and the next two on Abid and Ghande, respectively. I begin each chapter by describing the village of focus, the recent growth of girls’ school enrolment in that village, the local NGO whose recent gender-targeted schooling intervention is correlated to this change in enrolment, and the key informants who shaped my understanding of what was going on. Then I explore how differently

located respondents articulate their evaluations of girls' schooling, particularly in relation to the themes of marriage, employment, and *purdah*. My comparison between the three sites highlights context-specific differences and similarities in what Nelson (2006: 701) calls the "substantive features" of demand, as well as in the processes of norm-making through which demand emerges and transforms. I show that a baseline of patriarchal authority underpins the change in girls' school enrolments across all three field sites, and indeed that even the most ardent advocates for girls' schooling tend to agree that decisions about schooling, marriage, employment, and the appropriate limits of *purdah* are within the purview of fathers and husbands rather than daughters or wives. Likewise, I also show that many people who support girls' schooling do not necessarily think that boys and girls should attend school for the same reasons or that they should attain the same amount of schooling. At the same time, I show that men, women, and children challenge and reimagine these norms through ongoing social interaction, and that their stated reasons for doing so often have less to do with human capital, economic returns, or 'autonomy' than with locally contingent ideals of respectability and gendered personhood.

My interviews and observations in Mulweer suggest that the link between the desirability of girls' schooling and the desirability or perceived likelihood of girls' future employment is indirect at best, and that the recent spike in girls' school enrolments can be attributed at least in part to a substantive shift in parents' evaluation of the social respectability of girls' schooling. Yet the shift is far from monolithic: even within my limited sample, parents diverge noticeably in their evaluations of the non-economic outcomes of girls' schooling, and this divergence raises important questions about how

individual and collective evaluations of schooling emerge and transform. The latter portion of this chapter engages with these questions, drawing upon respondents' narratives of change to make several tentative observations about the extent to which and the means by which attitudes about girls' schooling in Mulweer seem to have changed in recent years. These observations amount to a central argument that the past decade in Mulweer has yielded the emergence of a contested ideal that assigns an immediate social value to girls' schooling, regardless of any long-term economic outcomes, and that this contested ideal has emerged through processes of norm-making in which parents and children 'see' other girls attending school and debate the value of this trend with each other and with school representatives.

6.2: Approaching Mulweer

Located roughly seven kilometers away from the Indus River in southern Punjab, Mulweer is a predominantly agrarian village that consists of a few dusty streets surrounded by irrigated fields of wheat and cotton and is home to several thousand residents living mostly in thatched-roof clay homes. The centre of the village includes a few shops selling tea, vegetables and dry goods; other products must be purchased from a larger town located roughly ten kilometers away. No definitive healthcare is available in the village, and no schooling is available beyond the level of 'matriculation' (Class 10). There are very few cars or shops in the village. Women collect cotton (*phutti*) during winter, since only female hands are thought to be soft enough to handle cotton; in summer, women help men harvest wheat, tie and carry bundles, and then thresh by hand. Electricity came to some parts of village over the past decade, but most houses are still not connected to the grid, and those that are connected experience frequent blackouts

due to ‘load shedding.’ Within the houses and shops that do have electricity, televisions and radios are somewhat common, and groups of men often crowd together to watch ‘PTV’ (Pakistan Television; a state-owned broadcasting network) in tea shops and other public venues in the village.

Residents diverge significantly in their observance and interpretation of *purdah*, as will be shown throughout this chapter, but in general women in the village do not leave home unaccompanied by male family members except to work in the fields. It is important to emphasise (as noted in Chapter 1.1) that my use of the term *purdah* refers to the maintenance of symbolic as well as physical forms separation between men and women, and thus that in my reading, women who leave the physical confines of the home have not necessarily rejected or ‘overcome’ *purdah*; rather, they interpret and enact ideals of *purdah* in different ways.⁶⁷ For example, when women in Mulweer ride in a car (e.g., to attend a wedding in a nearby village), they often place opaque screens inside the windows of the car to limit their public visibility. Likewise, most women and girls wear a headscarf (*chador* or *hijab*) whenever in the presence of men, even within the home, and some wear a full veil (*burqa*) in public. The degree to which a woman will cover her face and head is context-dependent: for example, while at ease in the NGO office or in the classrooms of the school, female employees of the NGO sometimes wore their *chador* across their shoulders with their heads uncovered – even in my presence – but would cover their heads when walking the short distance from the office to the school, and would cover their faces and avert their eyes while walking through the center of the village.

⁶⁷ Contrast with Oommen 2005, as discussed in Chapter 4.5.

The *tehsil* (municipality) in which Mulweer is located is predominantly rural; the 1998 Pakistan Census reported its total population to be 432,136; 12% of which was urban (51,792); 88% of which was rural (380,344). In March 2011, the District Education Office conducted a survey of 64,000 households in the *tehsil*. The survey was intended to assess enrolment rates and the number of out-of-school children. Preliminary findings were made available to me during a visit to the District Education Office on 30 March 2011 and are displayed below in Figure 6.2.1.

Figure 6.2.1: Demographic and Enrolment Data in Tehsil of Study, 2011

	A. Children aged 0-9	B. Children Aged 4-9	C. Already enroled (aged 4-9)	D. Out-of-school children (aged 4-9)	E. Enrolment rate (C/B)
Boys	75,106	45,625	20,538	25,087	45%
Girls	68,064	39,414	14,999	24,415	38%
Total	143,170	85,039	35,537	49,502	42%

Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful in subsequent attempts to access data specific to school type (government/private) and location (urban/rural or village-by-village). Likewise, I was unable to access data that would indicate the extent to which the enrolment rates shown above have changed over time. If this *tehsil* is assumed to be roughly consistent with national trends, one would expect that the current girls' net enrolment rate of 38% actually marks a significant upward jump from what one would have found a generation earlier (see Chapter 1.6).

Regardless, the aggregate data shown above is relevant on at least three counts: it demonstrates low net enrolment rates in the absolute sense; it demonstrates a gender gap in primary level enrolment; and it demonstrates an alarmingly disproportionate sex ratio of 110 male children for every 100 female children (female share of child population is

47.5%). This sex ratio is slightly more uneven than the national average of 108 males for every 100 females (see World Bank 2005: 4), and such biologically unnatural inequalities in population are often considered to be a proxy for more deep-rooted gender inequality (see Sen 1999: 190-191).

The NGO that was my host initiated a gender-targeted schooling intervention in 2005 which has continued until the time of writing, and all data suggest that girls' school enrolments in the village have increased dramatically over this time period. The intervention included construction of a girls' school with services available until Class 10, recruitment of female teachers from nearby villages, provision of free transportation to and from school, and ongoing periodic outreach events during which teachers and administrators encourage parents to send their daughters to school. Prior to the establishment of the school in 2005, Mulweer offered government primary schools for girls and boys, but no schooling options beyond Grade 5. Today, the government boys' school still exists, and is partially funded by the NGO. The government girls' school has closed. For the few girls who complete Class 10 (matriculation) in Mulweer, further private and public schooling options exist roughly 5 kilometres and 9 kilometres away, but such options are significantly more expensive due to fees associated with transportation and tuition.

The NGO is privately run and privately funded but has received endorsements and grants from various foreign governments. However, its relationships with government entities in Pakistan tend to be antagonistic. The Founder and President of the NGO is a local woman widely renown (and controversial) for her women's advocacy work. She has publicly denounced the local, provincial, and national governments as

corrupt and sexist, and she and her staff insist that the government has ‘done nothing’ for the people of Mulweer – a sentiment echoed by most of my respondents in Mulweer. When I asked the Founder whether she ever considered seeking the support of government agencies in Pakistan, she laughed and dismissed the idea as impossible. Likewise, during my time in the village I never heard or saw signs of any NGOs other than the NGO which was my host. In this sense, for better or worse, my host NGO presented itself as (and was generally perceived as) the dominant player in the schooling landscape in Mulweer.

Enrolment records provided to me by the NGO suggest that between the years 2005 and 2011, the number of girls enrolled in the NGO school grew from 150 to 617. Due to a combination of increasing enrolment rates for children born more recently and a higher dropout rate after students pass Class 5, the school’s enrolment profile is heavily skewed towards the younger classes: at the time of fieldwork, over 100 students were enrolled in the Nursery Class, but only 4 were enrolled in Class 10. Given the high social and economic barriers associated with sending girls to school outside the village, it is safe to assume that the growth in enrolment at the NGO school loosely represents overall change in school enrolment among girls in Mulweer.⁶⁸ Thus, even though I was unable to track overall village-level changes in enrolment since the establishment of the NGO, the NGO school’s upward enrolment trend and abundant additional anecdotal evidence suggest that the NGO intervention sparked a significant jump in the number and proportion of girls in the village that attend school. Nonetheless, girls’ enrolment

⁶⁸ One complicating factor is that a small number of girls attending the NGO school in Mulweer are actually from neighbouring villages, and have begun to attend school in Mulweer because of the NGO school’s reputation for providing higher-quality schooling than nearby government schools.

and attendance were far from universal: the NGO Founder estimated that at least 600 school-aged girls in Mulweer remained out of school at the time of research, and I frequently observed attendance rates significantly below the recorded enrolment. In short, despite the clear growth in girls' school enrolment and attendance in recent years, it was entirely commonplace to see school-aged girls working in the fields beyond the walls of the schoolyard while some of their peers attended classes inside.

A background questionnaire that I administered to all students in classes six through nine⁶⁹ revealed that most of these girls were on the edge of historic inter-generational change: among the mothers of the 37 students, 28 had never been to school, and an additional six had never completed Class Five (see Figure 6.2.2). In other words, 34 of the 37 girls enrolled in Classes 6 through 9 had already surpassed their mothers' level of schooling. Among these 37 students, reported parental occupations indicated that fathers were mostly engaged in agricultural or manual labour, and mothers were mostly housewives. Among 34 living fathers, 17 were reported as 'farmer' and 8 were reported as 'mason,' meaning that they make and sell mud bricks. Other reported paternal occupations included 'rickshaw driver' and 'factory worker' in the nearest larger town. Of 37 living mothers, 32 were reported as 'housewife,' three as 'teacher,' one as 'farmer,' and one as 'doctor.'

Figure 6.2.2: Schooling Background for Parents of Students in Classes 6-9

	No School	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Mothers	28	6	0	3
Fathers	19	6	8	3

⁶⁹ I intended to administer the questionnaire to all female students who had surpassed Class 5, but the students in Class 10 were not present on the day that the questionnaire was administered. All of the 37 students in Classes 6 through 9 consented to the questionnaire. Readers can find the questionnaire itself in Annex 3, and can find a selection of student responses in Annex 1.3.

Background data about students' siblings indicated that among the 37 girls in classes 6 through 9, there were a total of 124 sisters and 75 brothers. It is worth noting that girls' share of this population – 62.3% – is a major divergence from national and Tehsil-level demographic trends (see above, Figure 6.2.1).⁷⁰ One possible explanation for this divergence is that families with fewer sons are more likely to send their daughters to school (see Sawada 2001), and thus this sample has self-selected from such families. Among siblings aged older than six, 85% of brothers and 74% of sisters had ever attended school. These statistics are dramatically higher than the *tehsil* enrolment rates reported in Figure 6.2.1, but this divergence makes sense insofar as the reporting students are self-selecting from families that are already sending at least one of their daughters to school.

Taken together, these data provide the background for the recent change in girls' enrolment patterns in Mulweer. The remainder of this chapter digs deeper into the complex and sometimes contradictory web of ideas that surround this trend.

6.3: Behind Closed Doors: Key Informants and Asymmetries within a 'Women's Organisation' in Southern Punjab

The NGO that was my host and entry point in Mulweer self-identifies as a 'women's organisation,' and it has been recognised and celebrated as such by numerous international media outlets and political figures. Its mission statement includes a commitment to eliminate violence against women through education, and its website introduces the girls' school in Mulweer by noting the Founder's belief that education is

⁷⁰ As shown in Figure 6.2.1, the District Education Office data suggested that girls' share of *tehsil* population was only 47.5%, though of course the comparison is of limited validity since the *tehsil* demographic data was specifically for children aged 0-9, and the sibling data does not involve age parameters.

the first step to empowering women.⁷¹ That being the case, it is interesting to delve more deeply into some of the organisation's internal dynamics and some of the stated views of its employed administrators and teachers. The tensions that emerge from such an exercise are pertinent to this study insofar as the NGO plays a dominant role in the 'supply' of girls' schooling opportunities in Mulweer, and thus its organisational norms both illustrate and partially constitute the broader context in which I locate and approach 'demand' for girls' schooling.

As noted above, my primary research assistant and key informant in Mulweer was Kaniz, a female English teacher at the NGO school. The Executive Director assigned Kaniz to be my research assistant, and this official endorsement of our working relationship – as well as the personal rapport that I developed with Kaniz in the weeks that followed – enabled me to engage with other women in Mulweer to an extent that seems uncommon for male researchers in Punjab (see Chapter 5.3). I typically ate breakfast and lunch with other female employees of the NGO, including the Founder, and I spent many hours in the office of the NGO school speaking with female teachers and the female school principal. Most of my interactions with mothers and daughters in households across Mulweer were mediated by Kaniz, and these interactions would have been inconceivable if not for my relationship with her. Women welcomed us into their homes, even when men were not present, and generally seemed comfortable sharing their stories and their opinions about girls' schooling. I feel grateful for this access and what insights it allowed me to glean about the lives of others, but I also recognise that it was shaped by at least two axes of asymmetry: first, Kaniz's relationships with her peer

⁷¹ For the sake of protecting anonymity, I refrain from quoting the organisation's website or public documents.

teachers and with other women and girls in Mulweer were slanted by her status as a fluent English speaker employed by the prominent local NGO; second, and more importantly, my relationship with Kaniz was shaped by my own asymmetrical position as a white male researcher to whom she had been assigned by her employer.⁷²

Meanwhile, my position as a male guest of the NGO also afforded me unique insights into the lives of its male employees. As noted, the organisation's Founder and President is a woman, but she plays a relatively small role in its everyday leadership and management. These tasks fell under the purview of two men, the Executive Director and Tahir, the accountant introduced in Chapter 1.1 and again in Chapter 5.1. On most evenings after work, these men would watch soft-core pornography and would engage in illicit conversations with women on the Internet.⁷³ The Executive Director had a wife and child in Lahore, and he frequently boasted to me about his sexual relationship with his wife. The Executive Director often made disparaging and sexually suggestive comments about the female teachers at the school, and occasionally joked about firing the teachers that he found to be disrespectful of his authority. These subtle power dynamics crystallised somewhat dramatically in the episode summarised in Chapter 5.3, in which the Executive Director ordered Kaniz to work without compensation as my

⁷² For example, my fieldnotes from February 15, 2012, include the following anecdote: "Conversation with Kaniz about her humiliation and discomfort within [NGO] staff. She wants to quit; feels that colleagues are jealous of her relationships with guests (ie me, or the [international NGO] ppl she hosted yesterday), but still ask her to do more work without compensation—'how can we change the attitudes of the people?' Tremendous irony here given that she is referring to dynamics within an NGO that purports to be doing exactly that."

⁷³ On the subject of Internet usage at the NGO, it is worth noting that the Founder is illiterate in English and thus does not read or write emails. The Executive Director and Accountant handle the Founder's emails and sign with her name. This practice struck me as especially troubling in the relatively frequent instances when female survivors of gender-based violence throughout Pakistan would email the NGO's 'hotline' address, thinking they were confiding in the female Founder, only to have their emails read and answered by the men described above.

research assistant, and then forced her resignation after learning that she had accepted a parting gift from me.

In addition to the ethical and epistemological implications already discussed in Chapter 5.3, the story of my relationship with Kaniz is relevant to this study insofar as it highlights a backdrop of patriarchal authority that characterises the internal dynamics of the NGO as well as the broader context in which the NGO conducts its ‘women’s empowerment’ work. As a well-educated, unmarried, employed woman who has moved away from her home village to work at the NGO school, Kaniz represents a sort of archetypal ‘empowered woman’ in Mulweer – and indeed, the NGO Founder, the school principal, and other teachers all point to Kaniz as an example of what girls should aspire to become. Yet at the same time, Kaniz is clearly disempowered within the NGO, and her remaking of norms pertaining to marriage, employment, and *purdah* occurs within a larger context of patriarchal authority. In this sense, my relationship with her, and her broader positionality within Mulweer and the NGO, can be read as an example of disjuncture between “global policy aspirations for gender equity...and various sites of enactment” (Unterhalter et al. 2011: 11). The next section extends this analysis beyond Kaniz and the NGO and into the broader social landscape of Mulweer.

6.4: ‘She Bows Before the Circumstances’: Marriage, Employment, Purdah, and Patriarchal Authority in Mulweer

When describing the impact of the NGO upon women in Mulweer and surrounding areas, one of the female teachers at the NGO school offered the following affirmation:

In Mulweer, there is definitely good change because of [the NGO Founder]. Women have become powerful to

raise questions for their rights, because they have seen the same example from her.

-Tanreer, female teacher⁷⁴

This sort of reference to ‘women’s rights’ was common among teachers and other employees of the NGO, and indeed, plenty of anecdotal evidence strengthened reports of change along such lines. However, it is important to note that with reference to certain decisions – particularly those relating to marriage, employment, and female mobility – male authority and the attendant expectation of female submissiveness remained unquestioned. The coexistence of these seemingly orthogonal trends complicates any simplistic indicators for women’s ‘empowerment’ or ‘autonomy’ (see Chapter 3.6), and also raises difficult questions about the ethical and epistemological justifications for idealising ‘choice’ as an ultimate good and a desired outcome of schooling (see Chapter 2.1).

In contrast to her colleague’s optimistic statement about how “women have become powerful” in Mulweer, a different female teacher offered the following explanation of why many females in Mulweer do not go to school or pursue employment after schooling:

They just compromise for their families. That is the main reason. In Islam there are equal rights for each and every thing, for both men and women, but at some point in family, she has to compromise, she has to give up all her priorities, so when these things happen in her life, definitely she just bows before circumstances...If we are insisting for something and that we want to do that thing, and parents are also insisting that this is not good for you, though we know that thing is good for us, then they [parents] just start weeping, and children cannot see their parents in such difficult situations if they are weeping, so they just bow before the circumstances.

⁷⁴ Interview 10.

-Naseer, female teacher⁷⁵

Granted, this teacher is referencing ‘families’ and ‘parents’ rather than ‘fathers’ per se, and in a sense her statement says as much about hierarchy between generations as between males and females. However, her statement that “*she* must bow before the circumstances” is clearly gendered, and general anecdotal observations suggest that deference to the authority of elders is expected even more from females than from males. Indeed, one might argue that “the circumstances” are perpetuated by men and women alike; what is more significant here is the extent to which women are expected to “bow” to them.

The pervasiveness of this assumption can hardly be overstated. For instance, a different teacher offered the following summary of the range of employment options that would be acceptable for women to pursue:

If she has permission from husband or father or brother,
definitely she can work in each and every field.

-Siddiqi, female teacher⁷⁶

This statement was offered as a testament of change and an appreciation of the expanded range of choices for women in Mulweer, but the introductory conditional phrase indicates the clear limits of this range. Likewise, a mother described her own daughter’s future schooling prospects as follows:⁷⁷

M: We are hoping that we could get her a high level of education, but it depends on circumstances.

⁷⁵ Interview 10.

⁷⁶ Interview 10.

⁷⁷ In the following interview excerpt and throughout this study, ‘WO’ refers to the author, and abbreviations such as ‘M’ (for ‘mother’) and ‘F’ (‘father’) refer to the respondent being quoted. The presence of an interpreter can be assumed, but is only noted if particularly significant in a given instance. For the sake of personalisation and easy referencing, italics are used at the end of excerpts to assign pseudonyms to respondents.

WO: Do you care to say more—what kind of circumstances might change? If you want to keep her in school, what might affect that?

M: Because it is tradition and custom of this area, girls just get married very soon, even at the age of [my daughter].

WO: And do you feel that this is not your decision—that you do not have the ability to choose when [your daughter] will get married?

M: It will be according to the will of my husband.

-Mother of Samia⁷⁸

As one might expect, the assumption that certain significant life decisions remain beyond the purview of women has immediate implications for how parents choose to invest in the schooling of their children. For instance, consider this father's explanation of why boys need more schooling than girls:

Boys should get more education because if a boy is highly educated he can go to another country or some other place to earn money, but a girl is restricted to the four walls of the house. Because if she is married, maybe her husband will not permit her to move anywhere, so she will have to move according to the will of the husband.

-Father of Rokia⁷⁹

It is important to emphasise that this father is not 'opposed' to girls' schooling in any conventional sense. His own daughter was attending school at the time of the interview, and on a typical survey he would almost certainly be considered to exhibit 'demand' for girls' schooling. Nor is he clearly opposed to the possibility of his daughter's future mobility or employment. Yet even so, for this father it appears to be a foregone conclusion that the primary arbiter of his daughter's future will be her husband. In other words, for this father – and for many of my other respondents across all three research sites – ideas about the value of girls' schooling reflect and reproduce a baseline

⁷⁸ Interview 20.

⁷⁹ Interview 25.

assumption of patriarchal authority, and in turn this assumption informs intersecting concerns about marriage, employment, and *purdah*. These concerns are not a ‘barrier’ to demand per se, but they do yield a very particular type of demand: one in which an ‘educated woman’ is more fully able to inhabit her asymmetrical social location with dignity and respectability, even if she is not necessarily employed, freely mobile, or wholly autonomous.

Indeed, conversations with parents in Mulweer (as well as Abid and Ghande) revealed that evaluations of girls’ schooling tended to be driven by practical considerations of family needs more so than by ideals of individual opportunities. This finding is consistent with past and recent scholarship that has recognised “the central role of the family in decision making processes in the Pakistani context” and elsewhere (Shamim and Qureshi 2013: 471; see Chapter 4.5). However, this is not to suggest that concerns about individual welfare were not also at play. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with a mother in Mulweer:

WO: So how far in school do you hope [your daughter] will go?

M: My daughter has got education until 8th standard...but after that there was no opportunity for [further studies at a government school], so I sent her to [an NGO] school...Before this I thought that 8th standard would be enough for my daughter, but when I have seen many problems in such areas, I have decided that she should get more and more education.

WO: So this is a very interesting point for me – you say you thought 8th standard was enough, but then you saw more problems. What problems did you see?

M: Because my daughter has seen many changes in her family and her father. Because her father is suffering from some troubles.⁸⁰ So I have sent my daughter to school so that in the future she may be able to earn something for

⁸⁰ Her father had recently fallen ill.

family. Because father is no more able to do such things.
So maybe she will become a source of such things for her
family, for her sisters and brothers.

-Mother of Mehavesh⁸¹

From this excerpt, it is clear that the primary motivator for this mother to continue her daughter's schooling is not any ideal of individual freedom; it is a pragmatic assessment of family needs. Taken out of context, one could infer that this mother values her daughter's schooling only in these terms, and that she has no regard for the broader ideals of women's rights and empowerment which are embedded in the official narratives of the NGO. Yet this is hardly the case. Later in the interview, the mother shared the following perspective:

If a woman is educated then she can choose what is right
and wrong for her. But if she is uneducated she is forced
for everything – for example she is asked to get married to
that person, don't talk to any person except for parents,
and things like that.

-Mother of Mehavesh⁸²

The juxtaposition of these responses is illuminating. The latter perspective clearly reveals a valuing of Mehavesh's capacity to make informed choices, while the former suggests that actual decisions about her enrolment or non-enrolment have been informed by a matrix of considerations far more complex than what might be assumed from such ideals. Suppose that Mehavesh's father had maintained good health, and she had left school after eighth class. Within the analytical frameworks critiqued in Chapter 3.2 and throughout this study, this hypothetical departure from school would indicate 'less' demand, but I have argued that this sort of analysis is so coarse that it is almost meaningless. On the other hand, approaching demand as an ongoing and contested

⁸¹ Interview 7.

⁸² Ibid.

process of norm-making allows us to appreciate that decisions about enrolment emerge through the collision and re-imagination of much broader regimes of value: ideals of autonomous, empowered personhood commingle with norms of patriarchal authority, female submissiveness, and duty to one's family, and this commingling unfolds through context-contingent social interactions that complicate simplistic discourses about convergent 'world culture.'

Consider the following excerpt from a conversation with a student named Khadija, who was in Class 10 at the time of my first visit to Mulweer. The excerpt begins after I asked whether Khadija expected that she will end her studies for marriage:

K: It depends upon my parents' will. If I am continuing my study, and parents just tell me we are going to get you married, then I would just say once or twice – but if they are insisting on the marriage, it will be okay.

WO: But once or twice you will say what?

K: I want to study further.

WO: And tell me why – why do you want to study further?

K: I'm fond of education, and it is also the wish of my father that I should get at least BA and become a teacher.

WO: Ah, okay. So do you think boys should have more education, or girls should, or same?

K: Both to equal level.

WO: Okay, and do you think your parents agree with that as well?

K: Yes.

[...]

WO: When boys and girls do go to school, do you think they need to learn the same things?

K: Different for girls and boys...Because girls are at home; they are responsible to run a house.

-Khadija, female student⁸³

Has Khadija simply surrendered to the hegemonic norm of female submissiveness? She clearly knows that she wants to study further, and even expresses a willingness to

⁸³ Interview 28.

challenge her parents “once or twice” if they ask her to leave school for marriage. It would be easy to argue that this excerpt reflects the extent to which Khadija is disempowered within her family and her society, that she has been indoctrinated with the belief that girls belong at home, and thus that the goal of an educational intervention should be to keep her in school at all costs.

Yet Khadija’s story is not so simple. She expresses no doubt that girls and boys have different roles in her society, nor that obedience to one’s parents is a virtue. In fact, she even traces her desire for schooling to a desire of her father’s – a desire that, considered on its own terms, would seem to lend itself to being overridden in the event that her father decided it were time for her to marry. The crux question, then, is what to make of Khadija’s statement that “if they are insisting on marriage, it will be okay.” Is this a tragic concession to patriarchal norms and a surrender of individual rights? Or is it an acknowledgment that in this case, Khadija has ‘reason to value’ multiple possibilities, and that some of these possibilities are in tension?⁸⁴ I argue the latter, and suggest that understanding demand for girls’ schooling in Mulweer (and elsewhere) requires serious acknowledgement of this tension.

6.5: ‘Education is Good for All – but for Different Reasons’: Norm-Making through Non-Economic Evaluations of Girls’ Schooling

This section highlights the checkered ways in which parents in Mulweer evaluate girls’ schooling in relation to different social and economic pressures and possibilities.

While some parents voice an appreciation of ‘being educated’ as a social asset worth

⁸⁴ I use the term ‘reason to value’ with reference to the capabilities approach, which I briefly discuss in a footnote in Chapter 2.1. For further discussion of how Khadija’s story highlights limitations of the capabilities approach, see Oppenheim 2012.

pursuing regardless of its potential for direct monetary returns, others report a lack of interest in sending their daughters to school unless employment is a guaranteed outcome, and still others worry that sending their daughters to school is in fact a social *liability* not worth taking, especially in the absence of immediate economic benefits. Meanwhile, many parents who endorse the value of girls' schooling still insist that boys and girls should attend school for different reasons and for different amounts of time, given their fundamentally different social locations. This divergence of perspectives about the non-economic benefits of girls' schooling sheds light on the dynamic web of contested social norms that constitute 'demand,' and invites further exploration of how these norms emerge and transform.

Many parents in Mulweer contrast the relatively high cost of schooling⁸⁵ and of lost household labour with the low likelihood that school will generate economic benefits for their daughters, and this sort of analysis often becomes the stated rationale for non-enrolment. Consider, for example, this statement from a mother whose daughter had recently stopped attending school after completing Class Six:

According to my mind primary education is enough for her, because this is basic education, and she doesn't need any job, and she has to work in the fields.

*-Mother of Razia*⁸⁶

This mother's economic rationale is clear, and conventional frameworks for approaching 'demand' might ask how to either decrease the economic costs or increase the economic benefits that appear to have shaped her decision. However, what is most striking to me about this mother's statement is that she (and/or her husband, who was not present for

⁸⁵ There are no tuition fees at the NGO school, but parents are expected to cover incidental fees for stationery and daily snacks—estimated at roughly 150 rupees (less than \$2) per month.

⁸⁶ Interview 9.

this interview) decided that girls' schooling was worth pursuing in the first place, even with no apparent expectation that it would lead to future employment. In other words, while the lenses of rate of return and human capital theory can help explain why Razia stopped attending school, they do not explain why she started and persisted for six years even in spite of dismal opportunities for direct economic 'returns.' To answer this question, I suggest that we need to look more closely at how parents in Mulweer have come to consider girls' schooling to be valuable and desirable regardless of its economic outcomes.

When I asked about the most valuable benefits (Urdu: *feda*) that girls could gain from attending school, many parents articulated an aspiration for future employment and income-generation, but such outcomes were seldom expected and were generally considered to depend upon "fate" or "God's will." On the other hand, parents consistently and confidently emphasised that their school-going daughters would benefit from learning about Islam, manners, and 'household things' (*ghar ki chees*) that would help them become better wives and mothers. Consider the following bits of dialogue from interviews with three different mothers:

Our children have gotten obedience [from school], and when we compare our children with other children in our village they are much better.
-Mother of Hatima⁸⁷

First of all, after getting home she completes her homework, then takes care and helps with me with my household work, and is quite unlike other girls [who] just come out of their home and start playing with others. She's very obedient. And these things definitely she has learned from school.
-Mother of Mehavesh⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Interview 5.

WO: So, what do you think is the most valuable thing that Sameena has gained from going to school?

M: Reading prayers [*parhna namaz*].

WO: Okay, and what else?

M: Cooking food and learning about knitting...

[Interruption: neighbour's daughter enters room and greets research team; laughter ensues.] See, that girl, because she is not educated, she doesn't know when you shake hands you use your right hand, so she just used her left hand.

*-Mother of Sameena*⁸⁹

For each of these mothers, 'being educated' carries a normative social value that is not dependent upon the likelihood of direct economic gain or even upon the immediate practical benefits of acquiring household skills or religious knowledge. This dimension of normative evaluation is easy to overlook: from the standpoint of human capital theory, for example, one might attempt to argue that learning to knit increases self-sufficiency and thus is an efficient investment even if it does not generate income, or that learning to read the Qur'an is economically rational because it will enable future mothers to tutor their children or their neighbours' children, thereby reducing the need to pay for a third-party tutor and possibly generating some income. This sort of analysis might be sound, but it is far from comprehensive, and it fails to address how girls' schooling has come to be not only economically rational – if it is at all – but also normatively desirable. In the excerpts above, the references to 'obedience' and comparisons to 'other girls' reflect emergent social norms and shared notions of propriety that reflect and reinforce a collective affirmation of the 'educated girl' as a desired ideal. For these parents, 'being educated' is not just a matter of being employable, being more adept at household work, or knowing how to shake hands

⁸⁸ Interview 7.

⁸⁹ Interview 20.

properly; it is also a matter of being a good Muslim and a person worthy of collective approval and admiration.⁹⁰

Among the parents in Mulweer who share this positive evaluation of girls' schooling, it is common to describe the entire enterprise of becoming educated, polite, and morally upright as an explicitly Islamic commitment with explicitly Islamic benefits. Parents frequently express pride that their daughters are learning to read the Qur'an – especially in cases where a daughter is on track to become a *hafiza* (someone who has memorised the whole Qur'an) – but the link between 'being educated' and being a 'good Muslim' entails more than just the technical acquisition of religious knowledge. For example, two female teachers at the NGO school explain the benefits of girls' schooling as follows:

When girls come back [from school] they greet their parents [in a new way], and the greeting is also part of Islamic education, and they learn to respect elder ones, and this is also part of our religion.

-Female teacher⁹¹

The most valuable thing is that they learn how to spend their life according to Islam.

-Female teacher⁹²

From the standpoint of these teachers and the many parents of school-going girls who echo these sentiments, sending girls to school is something more than a strategic way to boost their 'human capital'; it is also – and more fundamentally – a way to ensure their development into respectable Muslim women.

⁹⁰ See Khurshid (2015, 2015a; discussed in Chapter 4.6) for a similar argument about how normative evaluations of educated womanhood ('being *parhi likhi*') have emerged in uniquely Pakistani and Islamic terms which are not directly linked to the prospect of employment or monetary gain.

⁹¹ Interview 11.

⁹² Interview 34.

It is worth noting that this particular way of valuing girls' schooling seems to have supported the recent growth in girls' enrolment in Mulweer, but it does not necessarily support their persistence in school. For example, consider the following statement from a father in Mulweer:

People prefer here to send their sons to school [for longer],
and for girls they prefer they should just – they should
finish the holy Qur'an [and then drop out].

-Father of Shaheed⁹³

In this description of parental preferences, 'demand' for schooling is clearly gendered, and thus also 'gendering' in the sense that gendered evaluations of schooling come to bear upon the lived experience of being male or female. Like many others in Mulweer, the father shows a clear towards schooling for boys, but this is not to say that he considers girls' schooling to be trivial or meaningless. On the contrary, parents in this rendering clearly seem to value girls' schooling as a source of Islamic learning – or more broadly, as a means of actualising Muslim personhood – but they value it in a way that diverges from their valuing of boys' schooling, and that allows or requires girls to drop out after a few years.

On the other hand, other parents in Mulweer frequently cite the Prophet Muhammad and argue that the Qur'an emphasises equal education for girls and boys. The excerpt below makes it clear that this interpretation of the Qur'an is contested, or at least that it is often understood to be in tension with observance of *purdah*:

In Islam, men and women have equal rights...So why do people say boys should get more education, why not girl? They just say that girl should be in veil all the time; she should be confined in the four walls of the house, but it is my opinion that...she has to get more education. But most

⁹³ Interview 26.

people do not consider this idea; they just think that women should not have so much education.

-*Father of Mohmena*⁹⁴

It is important to note that the parents and teachers who conceptualised girls' schooling as an Islamic commitment with Islamic benefits were not delineating between *madrasa* education and the 'mainstream' education offered by the NGO school. Some parents who sent their daughters to the NGO school would also send them to study the Qur'an at a local *madrasa* in the early morning, but many parents felt that the *madrasa* was unnecessary: the curriculum offered by the NGO school included an 'Islamiyat' class in which students would learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic,⁹⁵ and parents often claimed that this training was as good or better than that which was offered at the local *madrasa*. In other words, parents tended to assess the differential value of *madrasa* and mainstream schooling not in the stark terms of 'religious' versus 'secular,' but rather by asking which form of schooling would more reliably help their daughters attain the emergent ideal of 'being educated' and thus being a better wife, a better mother, and a better Muslim.

For example, consider this exchange with a mother in Mulweer:

WO: Did you ever consider sending your children to a madrasa?

M: [...] There is one [*madrasa*] near the [NGO] school. But the scholars there, they are not teaching such valuable things to the students.

WO: So I'm very interested in this – what are the valuable things that you want them to be learning?

⁹⁴ Interview 13.

⁹⁵ Islamiyat (also spelled Islamiyat) entails the study of Islam and Islamic history, and was introduced as a compulsory subject in all Pakistani schools by Z.A. Bhutto in 1973. The Government of Pakistan's 2009 National Education Policy states that Islamiyat should be taught to all students from Grade I to Grade XII with the objective of providing "opportunities to learn and apply the fundamental principles of Islam in their lives with the purpose of reformation and development of society" (Government of Pakistan, 2009: 24). Non-Muslims are not required to participate in Islamiyat classes.

M: We hope our children will get Islamic manners, and we hope that they will get proper amount of education. And my youngest daughter wants to be a police lady in the future.

WO: And you think they can get Islamic education better from [the NGO school] than from a *madrasa*?

M: If there is a good teacher at school level, then it is most preferable to learn all of these things at school.

*-Mother of Huma*⁹⁶

This mother's rationale complicates simplistic assessments that cast the distinction between *madrasa* and mainstream schooling in the Manichean terms of extremism versus modernisation (e.g. Fair 2008; Singer 2001; see also Bano 2009; Lingard and Ali 2009), and it also reinforces the extent to which 'demand' for girls' schooling in Mulweer often pivots around a valuing of 'Islamic manners.' The scope of this shared affirmation of simply 'being educated' was far from universal – indeed, many respondents reported a sense of being at odds with their neighbours or even their own family members – but nonetheless it seemed to retain a certain persuasive power for parents and daughters navigating the indeterminacy of different costs and benefits associated with girls' schooling.

Indeed, in some cases the persuasive force of this ideal seemed enough to supplant the need for economic incentives altogether. The following excerpt is from an interview with a male farmer who had not sent his older children to school, but had recently begun sending his younger daughter and son:

WO: If somehow, if it were possible, would you give permission for your daughter to have a job?

F: I will not give permission.

WO: Are you interested to say more about that?

F: Because of the concept of the village – people consider it bad, the going out of the girls.

⁹⁶ Interview 32.

WO: So, do you think most people in the village have started sending their daughters to school?

F: Yes, most are going to school. But because people with master's degrees are unemployed here, because they cannot pay...a bribe, so they cannot get a proper job – so that's why [some parents] are not sending them to school.

WO: So in your mind, if school does not help someone get a job, does it have any value?

F: Yes, if a child is going to school and cannot get a proper job in future, definitely education will help – he or she can get proper etiquettes and manners.

-Father of Pati⁹⁷

From this father's point of view, future employment for his daughter is not only unlikely due to corruption and stagnation in the labour market; it is also undesirable due to social norms of *purdah* that constrain female mobility beyond the household. Yet even so, this father sees value in the "etiquettes and manners" that his children can gain through schooling, and apparently this is enough to justify his choice to enrol them.

This positive association of 'etiquettes and manners' with girls' schooling is noteworthy, especially when considered against the fact that other parents in the same village reported a concern that schooling might lead their daughters to become rude or dishonourable. One must wonder, though, how far this particular variant of 'demand' will sustain a child's enrolment. The father's unwillingness to allow his daughter to seek future employment beyond the home is clearly not a complete impediment to her schooling, but it might indeed become an eventual justification for withdrawing her from school. As one teacher reports:

If our families are well-educated but they have a good background, they just say, 'if our girl will get higher education, then what will be the use of that, because we will not allow them to do any job.' So they [girls] just remain in house.

⁹⁷ Interview 25.

-Salma, female teacher⁹⁸

The use of the word ‘but’ here is significant: it emphasises that ‘a good background’ – that is, a higher family status – often correlates with more conservative exercise of *purdah* and thus lower likelihood that girls will stay in school beyond basic levels.⁹⁹ The broader point, then, is that parents’ affirmations of the non-economic value of girls’ schooling might lead to enrolment, but these affirmations remain situated within a broader context of normative assumptions about what sort of future is possible and desirable for girls to pursue.

Indeed, it is important to note that the social value assigned to girls’ schooling in this context does not overlay neatly onto some of the ideals of gender equality and female ‘empowerment’ that have become commonplace in popular discourses about girls’ schooling. Although many respondents insisted that girls and boys should receive the same education and opportunities, many others – including most of the female teaching staff at the school – asserted that school should prepare girls for domestic life, and should prepare boys for future employment and mobility:

[Boys and girls] should get different things from school. Because a girl should learn such things from school that she can run a house in a very good way, and boys should get different education, because they are responsible to earn money for the house.
-Father of Huma¹⁰⁰

Because man is the owner of house, he has to run a family, so he should have a different type of education. And maybe a girl is educated, but she is not going to go for a

⁹⁸ Interview 10.

⁹⁹ See Basu 1996: 61; Weiss 2011: 243. Basu links this trend to the notion of ‘Sanskritisation’ well-known among South Asia scholars, whereby the adoption and exercise of conservative restrictions upon women’s mobility becomes a means of enacting and displaying one’s status and economic security.

¹⁰⁰ Interview 12.

job anyway so at least she should get that level of education so she can run a house in a good way.

-Female teacher¹⁰¹

Girls' education should concentrate on religious studies mostly, and men should concentrate on, next to religious studies, they should concentrate on English and other subjects that will help them in career to earn money... Girls should get religious education because they have to face their family, and they have to grow their families and raise children according to Islamic values, so they should concentrate on these things.

-Naureen, female student age 15¹⁰²

These views illustrate and perpetuate the continuation of patriarchal gender norms in the household and family, but they also affirm the value of girls' schooling as a source of basic dignity within these contexts. These quotations – along with others included earlier in this section – reflect an underlying sense that girls' schooling carries with it an immediate social value that is independent of its instrumental capacity to deliver skills or boost incomes.¹⁰³ This notion might be unremarkable in a setting where girls' schooling has been the norm for generations, but in a village in contemporary Pakistan it warrants further exploration.

One could reasonably argue that parents who value their daughters' schooling as a route towards manners and dignity are no less 'instrumentalist' than parents who value

¹⁰¹ Interview 10.

¹⁰² Interview 6.

¹⁰³ To a certain extent, Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' (1973) and subsequent delineation of 'social capital' and 'symbolic capital' (1977; 2004 [1986]; see also Bourdieu and Boltanski 1978) provide useful frameworks for thinking about what this study calls the 'non-economic value' of girls' schooling in Mulweer. However, Bourdieu's applicability to this study is limited by the fact that his attention to these 'forms of capital' and their relation to schooling focused primarily upon the mechanisms and socially reproductive consequences of their transmission through schooling rather than the extent to which and the processes through which they affect the desirability of schooling. Bourdieu's work on 'distinction' and 'taste' (1984) perhaps comes closer to explaining how particular traits or mannerisms become desirable (consider the hand-shaking example offered above), but the heavy emphasis on class stratification – though quite possibly applicable to Mulweer and elsewhere in Pakistan – is beyond the scope of this study.

their daughters' schooling as a route towards future employment. However, the distinction here is that for the former parents, the desired outcome would seem to be achieved – at least in part – almost immediately upon entry to school, whereas for the latter parents, it would depend entirely upon the attainment of a job at some point in the future. This distinction appears particularly salient when one considers the relative levels of risk and reward associated with different instances of demand: if demand for girls' schooling entails an appreciation of the immediate social value of 'being educated,' the necessary investments in schooling appear far less risky than if demand is primarily oriented around the uncertain potential for schooling to become a route to future income.

Seen in this light, statements about the immediate and self-evident value of schooling take on a new resonance. The excerpts below provide further examples of the extent to which some parents seemed to understand girls' schooling to offer this immediate social value:

We know that education [*talim*] is good, but because we are uneducated, we don't know what thing is good and what thing is bad. But we know education is good.

-Mother of Shazia¹⁰⁴

WO: What do you think is the most valuable thing that these children are gaining from going to school?

M: Education [*talim*]. And awareness [*shaoor*].

WO: And what is the most valuable part of that education? Why do you think that education is a good thing to have?

M: Definitely education is good because a girl or boy just gets awareness in this way. The purpose is to respect the elders.

-Mother of Laureeb¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Interview 33.

¹⁰⁵ Interview 16.

WO: And why do you think people want to send their children to school?

F: Education [*talim*] is good for all, and in this way they can get awareness.

WO: And what do you think she is getting from school that is most valuable?

M: Education.

-Father of Fatima¹⁰⁶

WO: So why did you decide to send them to school – how did you think schooling would help them?

F: Just to get education [*talim*], even if they do not have any job – just to have awareness.

-Father of Khadija¹⁰⁷

It would be easy to skim over the recurring statements that ‘education’ is the most valuable benefit that girls can gain from school, for at first glance it almost seems to beg the question. Indeed, for these parents – and presumably for most readers – the value of ‘education’ (*talim*) and ‘awareness’ (*shaoor*) for their daughters seems to be self-evident. Yet in this particular context, such a notion is anything but an established norm supported by historical precedent and unanimous consent. Rather, as demonstrated throughout this study, this notion is frequently challenged and re-negotiated in interactions between and within families. In such contestations, the possible benefits of *talim* and *shaoor* are weighed against concerns that schooling – or at least ‘too much’ of it – will tarnish girls’ reputations and complicate critical social relationships.

As noted in Chapter 5.5, the word *talim* is used in Urdu and many other South Asian languages to mean ‘education,’ and I found that it was also linked to broader ideals of being clean, pure, or enlightened, as well as to a pragmatic interest in being ‘credentialed.’ In this sense, the ways in which my respondents refer to *talim* seems

¹⁰⁶ Interview 26.

¹⁰⁷ Interview 29.

similar to how Khurshid's respondents talk about being *parhi likhi* – a phrase that literally means 'reading and writing,' but which Khurshid finds to be more broadly associated with ideals of respectable Muslim womanhood (2015, 2015a). I occasionally heard respondents refer to *parhi likhi*, or even use the English word 'education' when talking about the potential benefits of girls' schooling. Regardless of the specific words they used, the main point is that many respondents in Mulweer articulate an appreciation of girls' schooling as a source of respectability and dignity, regardless of economic 'returns' – but also that this normative ideal is in tension with other ideas about what constitutes appropriate female personhood.

Indeed, some parents worry that too much 'awareness' can lead girls to become rude and disrespectful, and almost all parents express concern for social expectations pertaining to marriage and *purdah*, particularly as girls reach puberty. The following excerpts from conversations about schooling and marriage begin to hint at some of these concerns:

M: Because I have only one daughter, it is my desire to send her to school. If she will get a proper job and get education, it will be good.

WO: [...] Do you think that your husbands have different ideas about education than you do?

M: Until primary or middle level they think education is good, but after that it means they are able to get married, so they do not permit daughters to go to school.

WO: So let me get this right – you and your husband will both support your sons to stay in school for a long time, but your husband would only permit your daughter until a certain level – but you disagree?

M: Yes, we disagree with this point, that our husbands do not permit our daughters who are too old to go to school, and we just wish they should go to school, but it's not in our control.

-Mother of Zahida (speaking for herself and her female neighbour)¹⁰⁸

M: My eldest daughter is committed to someone, and the other family is insisting to get her married [and terminate her schooling] very soon, but my husband has just refused them so that after her matriculation he will decide if she gets married or if she will study further.

-Mother of Huma¹⁰⁹

In addition to highlighting the primary authority of patriarchal figures in decisions about girls' enrolment and marriage, these quotations reveal critical disparities in parents' evaluations of how much schooling is necessary and appropriate for girls to obtain before marriage. The excerpts describe two different situations – the first excerpt highlights tensions between husbands and wives, while the second highlights tensions between two fathers trying to arrange the marriage of their children – but both work to illuminate limitations in the extent to which the desirability of 'being educated' is enough to displace other features of the social landscape within which this ideal has emerged.

In some cases, the ideal seems not to have emerged at all. Consider this excerpt from a conversation with a father who had forced his daughter to stop attending school after Class 8:

F: All the time when she went to school, we paid her expenses, but now we cannot afford expenses. Even at that time we were not in a position to do that, but we paid her expenses.

WO: And why did you choose to do that? Did you think school was good for her?

F: At that time we thought our girl will get educated. But the men of this neighbourhood [*basti*] who got educated and learned, they are still jobless.

¹⁰⁸ Interview 30.

¹⁰⁹ Interview 32.

WO: So I'd like to know more – in the beginning, when she first went to school – can you say more about that?

F: You just listen to me. When girls get educated, we've seen on TV, they show everything, and we cannot bear that.

WO: But – at first you thought it was good? Why did you think it was good at first?

F: In the beginning, we thought that education was good, but when we heard such things, then our heart could not bear that.

-Father of Shabana¹¹⁰

There should be no doubt that economic constraints played a role in this father's decision-making process: he clearly articulates his concern with the cost of schooling and the apparently low likelihood that becoming 'educated and learned' will help his daughter find a job. However, it would be dangerously simplistic to conclude that, therefore, a simple reduction in the cost of schooling or an increase in the perceived likelihood of future employment would have kept his daughter in school. The other constraint – and the one most interesting when contrasted with the views of many other parents quoted above – is the perception (apparently perpetuated through television) that educated girls 'show everything'; that is, they become promiscuous, rude, and dishonourable.

This perception was widely acknowledged, even by those who considered it to be misguided. The daughter of the man quoted above provided her own summary of these common assumptions:

People are of the view that girls, after getting more education, become more learned and aware and they are just talking in front of their parents, or brothers, and with some rude behaviours. So they are strongly of the view that girls should not go to school, or they'll just start standing before them.

¹¹⁰ Interview 37.

-*Shabana, female student age 16*¹¹¹

A different female student cited such concerns as the primary constraint upon girls' enrolment in Mulweer, and hypothesised that their origins could be traced to an actual event:

WO: Do you know many girls your age who are not going to school?

S: Yes, many girls.

WO: And what do you think are the main reasons they are not going?

S: Their parents do not permit them.

WO: And do you want to say more – why do their parents not permit them?

S: If they are a few minutes late from school, parents consider they are too late – so they should just sit in the house and get married. [...] There was a girl our age and one day she went to school and never came back. And many parents heard that she had left, and went with someone, so that is why parents are worried now.

-*Samri, female student age 15*¹¹²

Respondents in each of the study's three fieldwork sites periodically referenced similar examples of girls for whom schooling had been a gateway into the sort of sexually transgressive behaviour implied by Samri's euphemistic statement that the girl in question "went with someone." Such cautionary tales carry immense rhetorical power regardless of their historicity, and the frequent citation of these mythic examples of deviance is provocative when juxtaposed against equally frequent references to schooling as a source of manners and dignity.

These instances of divergence suggest that the idealisation of *talim* and *shaoor* has taken root in some households and neighbourhoods but not others, and this begs the further question of why this is the case. Neighbours and family members with similar

¹¹¹ Interview 37.

¹¹² Interview 22.

background characteristics often strongly disagreed about whether schooling would lead to particular outcomes – for example, employment or manners – and also with regard to the key question of *how desirable* such outcomes may be. Consider this explanation from Razia’s mother, who was first quoted at the beginning of this section, about why she terminated her daughter’s schooling after Class Six:

M: She has got manners [from schooling], but because we don’t have such manners, we don’t have education, so we have to stop her education.

WO: Hm. So – the manners that she got, you thought were not useful? Or tell me more about that.

M: Yes, we considered so. (laughing)

-Mother of Razia¹¹³

Unlike most of the parents quoted above, but similar to the father quoted just previously, this mother was not persuaded that the non-economic benefits of her daughter’s schooling would justify its costs. It is indeed possible that the incentives of a stipend programme or new job opportunities could persuade this mother and the previously-quoted father to allow their daughters to stay in school for a marginally longer period of time, but to consider this a ‘change in demand’ would seem to miss the point: while there can be no doubt that shifting economic costs and opportunities influence enrolment decisions, a more nuanced exploration of ‘demand’ elucidates the parallel significance of shifting and inconsistent normative evaluations of girls’ schooling and the ideals of ‘education,’ ‘awareness,’ and ‘manners’ that may or may not be associated with it. Recognising that these norms are indeterminate and in flux forces consideration of how such norms change and emerge over time, and the remainder of this chapter turns its attention towards these key questions.

¹¹³ Interview 9.

6.6: 'They Have Become More Aware': A Qualitative Change in Demand?

To begin, it is worth recalling Nasreen's father (see above, Chapter 1.1), who reports that his own relatives had first opposed his intent to send his daughter to school, but then offered words of praise after seeing her progress beyond Class Five. Nasreen's father explains this shift in thinking as a direct result of the fact that his relatives "have become more aware." This explanation is interesting on its own terms, but all the more so when one acknowledges the extent to which the language of 'awareness' implies a normative assumption that the observed attitudinal shift belongs to a larger trend that is largely obvious, linear, and inevitable. When one suspends such an assumption, the reported shift appears even more remarkable: by affirming the value of Nasreen's schooling, the relatives have not merely begun to see what is 'already there,' but rather have begun to participate in the generation and affirmation of a new framework through which to understand the value of girls' schooling. The same could be said with reference to a mother who explained recent attitudinal change in Mulweer in the following terms:

Before this, people were just ignorant – they don't know the value of anything. But nowadays there is awareness and people are more aware than some time before.
-Mother of Aisha¹¹⁴

These reports of changing 'awareness' (*shaoor*) invite exploration of paradigmatic questions about how norms and values transform over time. Such questions are distinct from questions of behavioural change, and one of the core arguments of this study is that these two modes of change are often conflated inappropriately: a school lunch programme or stipend programme, for example, might increase enrolment and decrease dropout rates, but it would be inappropriate to assume that the behaviours associated

¹¹⁴ Interview 31.

with these trends would necessarily indicate a shift in normative evaluations of schooling. However, respondents such as Nasreen's father and Aisha's mother provide reason to think that some form of attitudinal change is indeed underway in Mulweer, and that the mechanisms and pathways of such change should be explored in further detail.

As noted above (Chapter 5.6), there are good reasons to be suspicious of the reliability of self-reported recollections of attitudinal change. Yet even if we do not take them at face value, the strength and consistency of such reports were noteworthy to say the least. Consider the following three excerpts:

In my time, our ancestors did not consider education to be a good thing, so I have just got to primary education. But now we know that without education, there is nothing for our children.

-Father of Masooda¹¹⁵

Ten years back, parents did not consider education so good for their children, but definitely now change has come, because those who were not reading and writing at that time, if anyone in their family is educated, now they can make other members of their family more aware, so definitely a change has come.

-Tanreer, female teacher¹¹⁶

WO: Okay. And when you think about your life, have you seen change in the way that people think about girls' education?

M: Thinking is good about girls' education.

WO: Okay, thinking is good today, but was it the same when you were a child?

M: No, we don't have any idea at that time about girls' education, but nowadays there is positive thinking.

WO: But what do you remember – what was the situation then; what was the reason you did not go to school?

M: There were no schools at that time, and also our parents were not interested in our studies.

-Mother of Sameena¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Interview 19.

¹¹⁶ Interview 10.

What is important here is that parents report a change not only in *whether* they and their relatives send their children to school, but also *why* this is so. In other words, it would be less interesting if parents reported a general indifference towards schooling or a consistent historical hunger for schooling, for in either case it would seem that the recent change in enrolment was a simple outcome of supply-side changes in the availability of schooling opportunities, and was neither cause nor effect of any larger change in attitudes. Yet this is hardly the case, and their reports of attitudinal change are worth exploring even if we cannot discern whether such changes are cause, effect, or simply correlations of the generational transition in enrolment patterns. The father of Masooda reports a shift from disdain to superlative appreciation. Tanreer reports a shift in ‘awareness’ and begins to hint at some of the intra-family drivers of change that are discussed in further detail below. The mother of Sameena reports a shift from indifference to “positive thinking,” and with the latter part of her final statement she makes the critical point that might be expected, but cannot be assumed: along with a tangible increase in girls’ schooling opportunities, the NGO’s intervention has also induced a shift in the extent to which – and, as shown elsewhere, the reasons for which – parents are “interested” in girls’ schooling in the first place.

It might be tempting to assume that this change in demand has been precipitated simply by the change in supply – that is, that a simple increase in the availability of schooling and a reduction in obvious ‘barriers’ to enrolment has sparked new ideas about the value of such schooling. Indeed, in a very broad sense, the findings of this study might support such an assumption. Yet this sort of blanket assumption would

¹¹⁷ Interview 20.

explain nothing about why demand seems to have emerged differently in different households, and in some households seems hardly to have emerged at all. It is here that respondents' narratives of causation become interesting.

6.7: 'We Can See That Education Is Good': Introducing the 'Demonstration Effect'

One recurrent theme is that parents 'see' other children going to school, and – similar to what Sathar et al. (2000) identify as a 'demonstration effect' (see above, Chapter 3.8) – follow suit accordingly. Consider the following excerpt from a conversation with a mother who had not sent her older daughters to school, but had recently begun sending the younger daughters:

WO: I'd like to hear more about the specific decisions to send your children to school. [...] Why are some children not going to school?

M: Because before this there was no awareness – and when we got awareness, our daughters were too old to go to school. And after that we have started to send the younger ones to school. [...]

WO: Okay – so I'm very curious; you said before there was no awareness, and now there is this awareness – what changed?

M: We have proved it by ourselves – because when we see others, and compare it to ourselves, we see education is very compulsory. [...] If one boy or one girl is going to school, then seeing that, some others are going to school.

-Mother of Shabeena¹¹⁸

It is possible, of course, that this mother is misremembering her own decision-making rationale, and that a range of 'unobserved variables' were actually more significant determinants of the decisions to send the younger daughters but not the older ones. For example, it is possible that in earlier years schooling was less accessible to this mother and her husband due to poverty, a lack of transportation infrastructure, or a greater need

¹¹⁸ Interview 27.

for children's labour in the household or the fields.¹¹⁹ Yet even if that were the case, it remains significant that this mother cites a shift in 'awareness' as the primary driver of enrolment decisions in her household, and that she attributes this awareness to 'seeing' others.

The following excerpt from a conversation with a father suggests that this 'seeing' occurs not just between families within the village, but also between families in the village and families living elsewhere:

When we compare the ideas of the village people to the city people, [in the city] most girls are going to school, and people appreciate that both girls and boys should go for a job. So here in the village when we see the people in cities that they are sending their daughters to school, we also consider that it is good to send daughters to school.

*-Father of Bano*¹²⁰

This father cites the possibility of jobs for girls, and, as noted above, this sort of economic incentive is by no means an insignificant factor in parents' enrolment decisions. Yet my reading of these narratives is that the persuasive power of 'seeing' other girls attend school has more to do with shifting normative frameworks than with economic incentives per se. As shown in Chapter 6.5, many parents in Mulweer have begun to associate girls' schooling with manners, respectability, and Islamic piety, and the normative value of such associations seems to lend greater force to experiences of 'seeing' while also being re-affirmed in the process.

The following three excerpts help illustrate this point:

WO: Can you tell me about the reason that none of your daughters have gotten formal education?

¹¹⁹ Note that most scholars would consider such factors to be 'demand-side' issues, but this study has sought to suggest otherwise.

¹²⁰ Interview 24.

F: Because they were not fond of education and we were ignorant of such situation.

WO: So – you said you were ignorant of such situation, but now has your attitude changed about education?

F: Yes, now everyone is sending his or her children to school.

WO: Everyone in Mulweer?

F: Not all, but many.

WO: And what do you think has caused this change?

Why are more children in Mulweer going to school today?

F: Because of education [*talim*] – everyone is getting education, so the situation is changing.

-Father of Sidra¹²¹

In this first excerpt, the shifting enrolment trend seems to have more to do with a rising tide of social norms than with a series of calculated economic decisions. This point becomes even more clear in the next excerpt:

WO: For your children who are in school, do you think that education will help them get a job?

M: We hope so, but it depends upon fate.

WO: Is there anything in particular that you want your children to learn in school?

M: They are just getting awareness.

WO: And so – have you noticed in your lifetime, have people's attitudes changed about school?

M: Yes, attitude is good and changing in a very good way about education.

WO: Can you say more – what do you mean changing in a good way?

M: The good change is that in this way our children get awareness, they can talk to anyone anywhere.

WO: And what do you think has caused this change in attitudes?

M: Because when we compare the children who are educated and who are not educated, we can see that education is good and they have more awareness.

-Mother of Laureeb¹²²

¹²¹ Interview 23.

¹²² Interview 16.

Laureeb's mother hopes that schooling will lead to employment, but appears far from confident about this possibility. In contrast, she seems confident that schooling will lead to 'awareness' and a certain social agility – "they can talk to anyone anywhere" – and she attributes her recognition of this likelihood to her own 'seeing' of other educated children.

M: Before this, people were just ignorant – they don't know the value of anything. But nowadays there is awareness and people are more aware than some time before.

WO: And what do you think has caused this change?

M: Education.

WO: So is that because more people in this area are getting education?

M: Yes, because of the reason that we see some people who are educated, and they have manners, they have etiquettes, they are seeing you in a good way – that is the reason.

-Mother of Salma¹²³

The third excerpt drives the point home: Salma's mother cites 'awareness' as both cause and effect of the rising levels of schooling, and traces this trend back to 'seeing' the admirable behaviours of other "people who are educated."

6.8: 'I Just Resisted': Daughters Pushing the Limits

Parents were not the only group of respondents who cited the importance of 'seeing.' Students and teachers also made frequent reference to the persuasive power of observing the habits of neighbours and other children who attend or have attended school, and they did so in a way that not only sought to explain the processes causing change, but also indicated an active strategy for driving or inducing such processes. This is a significant distinction insofar as it highlights a degree of agency and individual

¹²³ Interview 31.

assertiveness within what might otherwise seem like a passive, gradual, and somewhat random shifting of ideas.

The following excerpt from an interview with a female student illustrates this distinction. The excerpt below cites the significance of parental ‘seeing’ in a way that is consistent with many other reports, and it also provides some clues about how, exactly, parents are led to see what they see:

WO: When did you begin coming to school?

S: I was seven years old.

WO: And what do you remember about that – how did your parents decide to send you to school?

S: Because other children of my village were going to school, so when my parents saw this, they decided to send me to school... There are some girls who are wanting to go to school but parents do not permit them to go to school, but if some girls are very good but their parents are not convinced to send them to school, they say again and again to their parents, and give the example of other girls who are going to school, and in this way they can definitely convince their parents.

-Shazia, female student age 14¹²⁴

The key moment in this passage is Shazia’s claim that some girls will “give the example of other girls” as a strategy for persuading their parents.¹²⁵ This might sound familiar to readers whose own children have employed a similar strategy to get what they want – and why shouldn’t it? To deny that children and adolescents play an active role in driving generational change would seem naïve when discussing more liberal or ‘progressive’ societies, but in the case of Pakistan most academic and popular commentary proceeds from the assumption that conservative household norms locate all authority with male adults. There is indeed a good basis for this assumption of

¹²⁴ Interview 4.

¹²⁵ See Seeberg (2008) for a related analysis of how girls in rural China ‘clamor’ to go to school and ultimately influence their parents’ decision-making.

patriarchal authority, and I have already shown that Mulweer is certainly no exception to this general trend, but the point here – recalling Abu-Lughod’s reminder that “within these limits, people contest...strategize...and live their lives” (1991: 475-6; see Chapter 2.3) – is that such authority is not ultimate, universal, or static. Some fathers will be more or less stubborn than others, and some wives and daughters will be more or less likely than others to strategically negotiate even as they defer – quite often with expressions of respect and affection – to the final decision of the patriarch. Sometimes this resistance will be mostly rhetorical and symbolic (which is not to say insignificant), but sometimes, as in the case cited above, it can lead to tangible change. Even if Shazia is unrealistically optimistic about the ease with which girls can “convince” their parents, the very possibility of such optimism is itself significant and indicative of the sort of indeterminacy that I take to be characteristic of the conjunctural conditions in which imaginative regimes collide, norm-making occurs, and demand for schooling undergoes qualitative change.

I encountered similar anecdotes with surprising frequency. For example, a female teacher offered the following description (in English) of ‘seeing’ and intra-household negotiation within her own extended family:

My one cousin, she lived in a village, and her parents said to her you should not get education, and she was very upset because she looked me that I am an educated girl, and my attitude is very good, and now she forced her parents to send her younger sister to school, and now her sister is in the seventh standard.

-Ambika, female teacher¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Interview 36. See full transcript in Annex 1.2.

The verb “forced” might be misleading here, but the basic process being described remains significant nonetheless: out-of-school girls see other girls attending school, and this leads them to exercise some degree of strategic household-level advocacy in favor of schooling for themselves and their sisters. At the very least, even if such anecdotes cannot necessarily be proven ‘true,’ it is noteworthy that many respondents find them believable and worth re-telling.

The passage quoted below is from an interview with the student whose father – quoted at the end of Chapter 6.5 – had terminated her schooling after Class 8 because, in his words, his “heart could not bear” the risk that his daughter would become promiscuous and “show everything” if she stayed in school any longer. In the father’s rendering, the financial cost of schooling was a burden throughout his daughter’s schooling experience, but the factor that ultimately led him to withdraw her from school was a concern for propriety. However, his daughter explains the process quite differently, and the nuance and complexity of her recollection makes it worth quoting at length:

WO: So why did your other sisters not go to school?

S: My parents did not allow kids to go to school, but I just resisted. And I promised that any pocket money I receive I can spend on my education. So I got permission after this agreement. [...]

WO: [...] How did you hear about this school, and how did you decide that you wanted to go?

S: I just heard about it, and I intended to have some education from that school. And because no women are getting education in this *basti*, and some men are getting education, I was of the view that at least I should get an education. [...]

WO: And at that time your parents did not support education?

S: Not at all.

WO: So tell us about that conversation – why did they not support it, and why did you support it, and what did you say to them?

S: Just ignorance. People started talking about [the NGO school], saying this is not good, girls are just getting bigger and bigger – she is grown up now, she must sit inside. [But] I just resisted against my parents, and my elder brother agreed. [...] I just tried to convince them that I must get education – that no one is getting education here, so at least I should get education.

WO: And in what ways did you try to tell them that education is important?

S: That education is a very useful thing, and beneficial for girls, and our Prophet – it is the practice of our Prophet that girls should get education with the boys.

WO: So when you first started going to school, did your parents support you?

S: They just continued their resistance. They never allowed it. They tried to stop me again and again. [...]

WO: But you didn't have to listen? Because many people I speak to, they say 'it is not my choice – it is my father's choice' – but this was not the case?

S: No, this practice is not here in this *basti*.

WO: So then why did you stop?

S: It's a matter of affordability. We were not in a position to afford the books.

-Shabana, female student aged 16¹²⁷

Shabana insists that her parents “never allowed” her to attend school, and that her eight years of schooling were achieved only through her own ongoing “resistance” and the support of her elder brother. Shabana references the pressure to “sit inside” in *purdah*, but reports having argued for the religious legitimacy of her desire to attend school, and – perhaps most interesting of all – she suggests that in her neighbourhood, fathers do not claim exclusive authority in decisions regarding their daughters' schooling.¹²⁸ In

¹²⁷ Interview 38.

¹²⁸ Throughout my fieldwork in Mulweer, I occasionally encountered similar assertions that levels of patriarchal authority vary by *basti*. I was unable to explore this reported variance in a systematic way and thus cannot validate it, but the more immediate point is simply that households and individuals varied not only in terms of how they understood the value of girls' schooling, but also in the processes through which this demand for schooling was contested and ultimately translated into enrolment or non-enrolment.

Shabana's analysis, then, patriarchal conservatism and the pressures of *purdah* were indeed constraints upon household-level 'demand' for schooling, but the ultimate authority of these factors was negotiable rather than predetermined. In this rendering, the limits of Shabana's schooling trajectory were defined by financial affordability rather than normative acceptability, for the latter remained ever open to strategic contestation.

Again, there is no way to ascertain the extent to which Shabana's recollection represents what 'really' happened – not only because 'we weren't there,' but also because the chains of causation that underlie these processes of resistance, change, and counter-resistance are often unclear even to the individuals directly involved in them. Shabana's father acknowledges that "in the beginning, we thought that education was good," but he reports diminishing willingness to bear the fees of schooling after observing that educated neighbours remained jobless, and especially after hearing rumours linking girls' schooling to unacceptable promiscuity. Even so, he does not claim to have retained total control over the process, and acknowledges that Shabana's 'resistance' played a significant role in determining the duration of her schooling. The broader point, then, is that in Shabana's household, 'demand' for schooling remained very much uncertain and in flux throughout her schooling experience, and thus that while the role of poverty should not be underestimated as a constraint upon enrolment, the broader processes shaping normative evaluations of girls' schooling are far more complex than what might be assumed from simple statements about the affordability of books.

The dual accounts of Shabana and her father shed light on how demand for girls' schooling can remain contested and indeterminate throughout a child's schooling

experience, along with the normative ideas about marriage, employment, and *pardah* through which evaluations of schooling emerge. By doing so, they reaffirm the importance of seeking more nuanced understandings of household-level evaluations of schooling than are achieved by simple analyses of enrolment data or by crude proclamations that ‘demand is strong.’¹²⁹ Understanding demand for schooling at this level of nuance might indeed provide useful insights to educational policymakers and practitioners – a possibility discussed in further detail in Chapter 9 – but the broader implications of such an understanding extend beyond the realm of schooling per se and offer an immediate contribution towards theoretical considerations of how gender itself is imagined, constructed, negotiated, and experienced in daily life. Indeed, part of the basic rationale for my focus upon evaluations of girls’ schooling is that these evaluations are entwined with larger trends in the social construction of gender, and thus that shifts in the former can perhaps reflect and anticipate parallel shifts in the latter (see Chapter 1.3). In this sense, Shabana’s ‘resistance,’ her father’s temporary acquiescence, and her mother’s relative absence from this process all constitute instances in which family members remake and reimagine the normative value of girls’ schooling as well as broader normative expectations about what girls and women should do, for what reasons, and under whose authority.

An excerpt from a conversation with a different student further elucidates the intra-family negotiations that shape schooling decisions and the gendered designation of authority within the household. At the time of this interview, Soufia was a sixteen-year-old student at the NGO school, and had recently married a thirty-five year old man.

¹²⁹ Recall that recent reports from the World Bank and the Pakistan Education Task Force both used this phrase to argue for the need for more ‘supply-side’ interventions (see Chapter 3).

Soufia was a very strong student, and the female Founder of the NGO had recently promised Soufia that if she completed her matriculation – Class 10 – she could become a teacher of Islamiat at the NGO school. In the excerpt below, Soufia candidly recounts the family dynamics surrounding her recent marriage and her continuation of schooling after marriage. As with all of my conversations with students, this exchange was mediated by one of Soufia’s female teachers, and this mode of ‘access’ created a uniquely intimate and relaxed atmosphere that allowed for the emergence of significant degrees of nuance within Soufia’s retelling. In contrast to conventional assumptions that might render ‘patriarchal norms’ to be relatively static and monolithic in a context like Mulweer, Soufia’s narrative is rife with moments of tension, negotiation, and indeterminacy:

S: I wake at 4 am. I study, I pray, I recite [part of] the Qur’an. I make food and I dust the home, and get ready to come here [to school] at 7:45 AM...And at 5 PM I go home. School ends at 2:30 but after that I study here. Then dishwashing, then prayers, then cooking, then homework. [...]

WO: And how do you feel about your marriage?

S: I am against such marriage, because I want to study more, but my parents send me [to get married]. I do not want my younger sister to get married at this age. The age of a girl should be eighteen years.

WO: And so are you telling your parents not to marry your younger sister?

S: Yes.

WO: And will they listen to you?

S: [laughing] Now [my sister] is also against such marriage.

WO: But who will make the decision?

S: Father.

WO: And do you think he will listen to you?

S: I think so.

WO: [...] Before your marriage, did you protest to your parents?

S: Yes. [...] I was saying I want to study, do not marry me. And I want to go to another city to get higher education in science. But my husband said that if you want to marry [me], then [it must be] now, not after. And they have just one way: that they should follow the husband's wish.

WO: So your father decided that you must get married, and then after your marriage, did your husband's family support you to come to school?

S: My brother-in-law made protest. He said you married her, now she should work at home. We don't have any women at home, so now you should stay at home. He was against it. But my husband said that when her father got her married, I promised that I would complete her matriculation. That's why he sent me here.

WO: And next year you want to teach here? What does your husband think about this?

S: He is very happy, due to job.

WO: And also your mother in law is happy?

S: No. [...] When I come here, she is home alone, so she is saying matriculation is enough, and come home.

WO: So what will happen?

S: I will do what my husband has said.

-Soufia, female student aged 16¹³⁰

At multiple points in this excerpt, Soufia references a backdrop of patriarchal authority: she notes that her father will dictate the timing and conditions of her sister's marriage, that the timing of her own marriage was determined by a collective agreement¹³¹ to "follow the husband's wish," and that she will defer to her husband for future decisions about her own possible employment. Yet the more striking moments within Soufia's story are the ones in which she indicates that this patriarchal authority – along with the particular decision-making processes in which it is exercised – is not predetermined or immutable, but rather produced, debated, and indeed resisted at the household level.

¹³⁰ Interview 36.

¹³¹ It was not clear to whom Soufia was referring with the pronoun 'they' in her statement that "they have just one way: that they should follow the husband's wish." We can presume that the immediate referent was her parents, but this statement can also be read as a commentary on the views of parents in general, or even more broadly as a commentary on established marriage practices in Mulweer.

Soufia acknowledges having objected to her parents' marriage plans for her and her sister, and suggests that her sister has assumed a similar posture of resistance – possibly to the effect of having persuaded her father to delay her sister's marriage. She illustrates further fissures within her husband's family and her new household: her husband's brother and mother resist her husband's intent to allow her to stay in school and eventually pursue employment as a teacher, but her husband is insistent – perhaps because he feels bound by a promise he made to Soufia's father, or perhaps because he is attracted to the possibility of Soufia's future income, or perhaps both or neither. Regardless, the point is that in Soufia's retelling, her husband and father do not fit easily within conventional stereotypes of patriarchy and domination in South Asian households: they have arranged the non-consensual marriage of a teenage girl to a man more than twice her age, but they also resist social and familial expectations of *purdah* and push for her continued schooling and eventual employment.

Seen in this light, Soufia's assent to "do what [her] husband has said" invites further analysis in multiple directions. In one sense, the statement could be seen to constitute her passive reaffirmation of gendered social norms that will result in her continued subordination to patriarchal authority. Perhaps it should be no surprise that Soufia engages in such a reaffirmation of patriarchy at the same time that she participates in a generational change in the rate at which girls pursue schooling and formal employment, but the juxtaposition is still noteworthy insofar as it complicates simplistic assumptions that gender norms 'either' change 'or' stay the same. Indeed, reading Soufia's narrative as one of passive submission to male authority provides a useful rejoinder to analyses that might jump to romanticise Soufia's schooling or future

employment as indisputable drivers and indicators of her ‘empowerment’ or ‘autonomy’ (See Chapter 3).

In another sense, however, the statement is ironic insofar as it masks her own agentic role in contesting questions of marriage and school enrolment with her parents, and also in working and studying long hours so that she can fulfill her aspiration to become a teacher. Seen in this light, Soufia’s stated commitment to obeying her husband appears similar to her earlier assertion that her father will determine the timing of her sister’s marriage, but that he will listen to Soufia in the process. In both cases, Soufia acknowledges and tacitly re-affirms a gendered paradigm of household decision-making processes in which males exercise ultimate authority in important decisions about female schooling, marriage, *purdah*, and employment. At the same time, though, she also acknowledges that other inputs also shape these processes – sometimes quite significantly. In Soufia’s case, these inputs have included her own capacity to voice dissent with her parents, to succeed in school, and to secure a promise of future employment from a school administrator. In other cases, as shown in the next section, female teachers seem to provide significant ‘inputs’ to these decision-making processes. The point here is that the concept of ‘patriarchal authority’ is perhaps too neat and glossy to capture the complexities and tensions that shape decisions about girls’ enrolment in school, and that these instances of indeterminacy are in fact indicative and constitutive of an ongoing process of norm-making through which people reimagine configurations of gender and power in an “asymmetric but mutual fashion” (Halliday and Carruthers 2007: 1138; see Chapter 2.5).

Put more simply, the incremental ways in which daughters ‘resist’ their parents are significant for at least three reasons: first, they seem to influence the likelihood of girls’ enrolment and persistence in school; second, regardless of enrolment, they seem to influence and indicate a more general reconsideration of the evaluations that constitute ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling, and third, such moments of resistance complicate the basic assumption that a backdrop of patriarchal authority necessarily constrains girls and women into a static posture of submission.

6.9: Teachers Making Norms: Explicit Intentions; Uncertain Scope

The previous two sections of this chapter explored how a qualitative shift in demand for girls’ schooling has occurred in Mulweer through processes of ‘seeing’ and the household-level interpersonal negotiations that such ‘seeing’ sometimes induces. The qualitative shift in question has entailed the emergence of a perception that girls’ schooling carries with it a degree of social respectability which is independent from the likelihood of direct economic returns, and the mechanisms of this shift are entwined with processes of norm-making through which some parents exert pressure on others, and children exert pressure on their parents. This final section considers the influence of female teachers within these localised processes of norm-making, and suggests that teachers play an important role by deliberately positioning themselves as examples to be ‘seen’ and by explicitly working to persuade parents of the value of girls’ schooling. As employees of the NGO and as women at the forefront of a generational shift in female school enrolment, these teachers inhabit a unique position within cycles of global norm-making. I show that this position affords them an asymmetrical capacity to influence popular evaluations of girls’ schooling in Mulweer, but also that their influence is

neither totalising nor monolithic, and that some parents in Mulweer appear unaffected by the efforts of teachers to ‘change attitudes’ even as their neighbours report being profoundly inspired by them.

For the most part, the data discussed in this section are drawn from a series of three group interviews that I conducted with the teaching staff of the NGO school during separate visits in 2011 and 2012. Most teachers were from nearby villages and were among the first educated females in their families. Teachers were generally excited to answer questions about the substance and origins of observed changes in norms associated with girls’ schooling, and it is certainly possible that they overestimated the significance of their own roles in driving such change. However, I also draw from my observations of the dynamics that unfolded between teachers and parents during household visits for interviews with parents. On more than one occasion, I observed a female teacher directly urging a father to send his daughter or daughters to school. These confrontations occurred after the ‘formal’ interviews were over, and on multiple occasions the father under scrutiny sheepishly pledged to enrol his daughters in the future. While it was beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the long-term efficacy of such interventions, the point here is that teachers at the NGO school were quite explicit about their intentions to ‘raise awareness’ amongst parents, and that I was able to discuss these intentions with teachers in the relaxed setting of the principal’s office while also occasionally observing their enactment.

Generally speaking, teachers in Mulweer corroborated the widespread observation that the recent uptake of girls’ enrolments was tied to a substantive shift in demand-side ‘attitudes’ rather than only a supply-side increase in the availability of

schooling opportunities. They described the substance of this shift in terms that reinforce the argument put forth earlier in this chapter: namely, that parents in Mulweer recently began to positively evaluate girls' schooling as the source of manners and respectability that accrue independently of whatever economic outcomes may or may not be associated with schooling. Naseer, a female Urdu teacher and the school principal, offered (in English) the following concise summary of this shift:

There are many changes, day by day, because we meet with the parents of the students and talk to them with a different point of view, and they see different changes and attitudes of the teachers and [the NGO Founder] and students.

-Naseer, female teacher and principal (in English)¹³²

This is not to suggest that teachers disregarded the potential persuasiveness of economic arguments for the value of schooling – indeed, when explaining the benefits of girls' schooling to me and to local parents, teachers often cited the possibility of girls' future employment before mentioning any other potential benefits of schooling. Ultimately, though, teachers acknowledged that such outcomes were uncertain and that parents were conscious of such uncertainty, and thus their strategies for encouraging parents tended to rely more heavily upon arguments for the immediate normative value of sending girls to school.

Consider the following excerpt from a discussion with Naseer (in English) about how she and her colleagues work to convince parents to send their daughters to school:

N: We invite the parents [to school] every month. We force them to appreciate the students, and education, and the students' progress, and students' and teachers' attitudes.

¹³² Interview 35.

WO: And how do you do this? How do you force them to appreciate?

N: We tell them they will earn money; they will get a good job. Because the [agricultural] work they do is very hard, but if they study they can get a job and earn money. They can be principals, doctors, engineers...

WO: But what do you think – in Pakistan, in [Mulweer], there are many jobs?

N: Parents think, ‘when our students cannot get a proper job, then why do we send them to school?’ Because there is a lot of unemployment.

WO: And what do you say to that?

N: Behaviour will change better; they will appear better – not only to parents, but also to other people that come to their houses.

-Naseer, female teacher and school principal¹³³

Later in the conversation, Naseer offered further details about what happens when parents visit the school, as well as a more explicit explanation of the channels through which she expects that this practice will induce attitudinal change:

On the end [examination] result day...we invite the parents of the prize students, and they come and just get the prize of their children, and they come and become proud of their children. So, the other parents who have never sent their children to school, they also come here, because they were invited – and they see the other parents whose children got the prize, so then they go back to their house and convince their husbands that education is very good. And they see no absence of the teachers. In the school assembly, we just tell the students good things about education, and we ask them to tell other children...and definitely this will bring proper change.

-Naseer, female teacher and school principal¹³⁴

The first noteworthy point here concerns the reported practice of inviting parents to visit the school in an attempt to ‘force’ a change in perspective. Even while remaining agnostic about the actual efficacy of such efforts, one can at least infer that teachers

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

perceive a need to alter parental perspectives, and that they expect that some degree of change can be achieved by simply enabling parents to ‘see’ what goes on at school. Such an approach is by no means oppositional to more conventional efforts to lower the cost or increase the availability of schooling, but nonetheless it is markedly different than such approaches insofar as it exhibits an assumption that ‘demand’ must be cultivated and cannot be taken for granted as a latent force that is simply ‘pent up’ by barriers or constraints. Perhaps even more significant is Naseer’s implicit assumption that efforts to cultivate ‘demand’ need not explicitly target figures of patriarchal authority: instead, she is confident that women will “convince their husbands” and that children will convince other children, and that eventually some sort of “proper change” will be inevitable.

Second, it is worth noting that although Naseer is quick to cite the possibility of future employment as a motivation for sending children to school, she is equally quick to acknowledge that unemployment is high, and that many parents struggle to believe that schooling could launch their children – least of all their daughters – from the agrarian economy of Mulweer into a high-paying future job as a doctor or an engineer. What is most significant is that in such cases, Naseer simply references the benefits of schooling that she considers to be less speculative and more immediately observable: students will improve in their attitudes, their behaviour, and their general appearance, and this will make them more presentable to their own parents as well as other community members.

The desirability of such traits should not be taken for granted, and indeed, as noted above, some parents in Mulweer seemed to feel that schooling would not be worth the required investment unless some form of future economic ‘return’ were more likely.

However, I argue that such indices of evaluation are themselves in flux, and thus that a ‘change in demand’ can occur not only through a shift in the perceived likelihood that schooling will lead to a particular desirable outcome – employment, for example – but also through a shift in perceptions of what constitutes a desirable outcome in the first place. In the following excerpt, two teachers recount their observation of such a shift, and suggest that for some parents, the decision to send daughters to school runs directly counter to conventional economic reason:

Z: In the very beginning, parents were not willing to send daughters here [to school] – but with the passage of time, slowly there was a change in the minds of the people, and more and more students were here.

WO: And what do you think caused that change?

N: They become more aware. Parents observe that these children who are working with them in the fields, they brought some money, but those students who go to school, they don’t get anything back for their houses. Because they are studying, and parents just expect some money. But after some time, they came to realise that their children are getting better in condition, in manners, and they came to realise that they are better than the children who are working in the fields.

-Zainab and Nasha, female teachers¹³⁵

The pivot point of this retelling is that eventually parents “came to realise” that the benefits of schooling are enough to offset the fact that out-of-school children are presumably more likely to contribute to family earnings, at least in the short-term. Teachers in this case might be oversimplifying or otherwise misrepresenting processes of parental decision-making, but nonetheless such reports of attitudinal change are exciting and intriguing: it is one thing to suggest that demand for girls’ schooling changes in relation to appreciable increases in employment opportunities or other

¹³⁵ Ibid.

tangible benefits such as those provided by various stipend programmes, but quite another to suggest that demand changes in relation to the emergent parental ‘realisation’ of the desirability of particular mannerisms. It seems self-evident that policymakers, social scientists, and anyone else seeking to understand or induce shifts in demand for girls’ schooling would immediately benefit from a better grasp of such instances of ‘realisation’ and the processes through which they emerge.

Similar reports of attitudinal change have appeared elsewhere in this chapter, and the mechanisms of such change have often seemed to be a subtle combination of pressures that exist within and between different households and geographic spaces. However, some teachers self-referentially provide alternative explanations of the drivers of attitudinal change, and the processes they describe are anything but subtle. According to Naseer, teachers from the NGO school go “door to door” amongst village households every October in an attempt to convince more parents to send their daughters to school, and in the following excerpt one teacher recounts (in English) a successful instance of this recruiting practice:

We went at the students’ home; I met with the mothers and their relatives, and they see us – how we are sitting here, how we are drinking water, and they ask us ‘why have you come here?’ And I say to them ‘I just want to tell you that you should send your daughter [to school].’ And she said, we want to send them, but the grandparents are against us. And I met with the grandparents and I said my also [sic] grandparent was against me, but now what I am? [sic] And she sees me and said that okay, I will send my [grand]daughter to school. And I said that you should also tell all villagers that I have come here, and I am requesting you that you should send. What will be my profit? Not my profit. You – that will be your profit, and your child will be educated, and it is not my benefit. And they understand what I was saying, and the next day her daughter comes to school.

-Annika, female teacher¹³⁶

Annika's report echoes multiple themes that this chapter has already emphasised, especially the power of 'seeing' particular mannerisms, the significance of intra-family and inter-generational tensions, and the extent to which 'being educated' is presented as a desirable end in itself. What sets it apart, however, is the degree to which she is explicit (or claims to have been explicit) in her attempt to persuade mothers and grandparents that "you should send your daughter." It is significant, of course, that Annika has said nothing about her interactions with fathers,¹³⁷ but the reported effort to disrupt household decision-making patterns – and especially the reported success of this effort – is important nonetheless, even if only for what it reveals about what Annika imagines to be possible: namely, that simple conversations with mothers and grandmothers offer viable points of intervention for inducing appreciation of the basic value of girls' 'being educated.' This understanding of the channels through which attitudinal change will occur is consistent with Naseer's confidence that "women will convince their husbands," and at the very least it complicates conventional assumptions about the static ultimacy of patriarchal authority.

Three of Annika's female colleagues – one of whom was Kaniz – reported a similar intervention, and their recollection is useful to consider alongside Annika's:

Z: We went to a neighbouring village, and most people of the village, male and female, just gathered around us and they just laughed and made fun of us. So this made us angry, because they were not understanding what we were saying, so we just came back. But now these same – those parents are willing. They are now sending their children to school.

¹³⁶ Interview 36.

¹³⁷ Regrettably, I neglected to inquire about this point.

N: After that time, when people realised what we have done with their children, some of those ladies came here and apologised, and they got embarrassed, and they got admission for their children. That was in 2008. And now many of our students are from there.

WO: And why – why do you think they were laughing at you?

Z: According to them, if they [the daughters] get proper education they will be able to get their share as in property and all other things—so they will not be able to go to school.

WO: Girls, or all children?

K: Mostly girls.

WO: But now their minds have changed?

K: Yes.

WO: That is amazing. So how did the minds change?

N: They saw a lot of change in our polite attitude, of the teachers.

WO: But it is interesting that first they are laughing – then they think oh, school is good.

Z: All the people are not the same in that area. And when the other people who were a little bit aware of education, they just used to send their children – and other parents were laughing – but now their children are in grades 6, 7, 8.

-Zainab, Kaniz, and Naseer, female teachers¹³⁸

The first point to note here is that the reported intervention targeted fathers as well as mothers, and thus that the capacity of female teachers to challenge male parents is not as constrained as one might infer from Annika's report. Secondly, the reported reason for parents' initial reticence is also noteworthy: according to these teachers, parents were worried that educated girls would claim their inheritance from their parents – a right to which they are entitled by *Shariah* (Islamic law) and laws of the state, but which they customarily 'surrender' in rural areas of southern Punjab and elsewhere in Pakistan (see

¹³⁸ Interview 35.

Weiss 2003; World Bank 2005a: 18-23).¹³⁹ Broadly speaking, this concern is indicative of a more basic assumption that girls who attend school will disrespect their parents, disrupt the status quo, and endanger their families' reputations.

The reported prevalence of such an assumption is hardly surprising – indeed, as noted above (see Chapter 3), research about the ‘barriers’ to girls’ schooling in Pakistan and elsewhere has frequently cited patriarchal concerns about the impropriety of educated girls. What is surprising, rather, is the teachers’ report that this assumption has recently undergone dramatic change: by their explanation, the pivotal factor driving increased enrolment is not simply that parents have begun to ‘tolerate’ the impropriety of girls because they are desirous of other benefits of schooling; rather, parents have begun to associate girls’ schooling with the “polite attitude[s]” that they have ‘seen’ in female teachers. In other words, the teachers’ report indicates a shift in how parents evaluate girls’ schooling, and also in how they evaluate female propriety more broadly – and thus how they understand and unconsciously shape a collective experience of gender. This supports other findings reported earlier in this chapter, and adds further nuance to this chapter’s presentation of the ‘change in demand’ that seems to be underway in Mulweer.

Of course, it would be simplistic and misleading to assume that this shift has been perfectly synchronised across different households, and this important point is borne out in Zainab’s subtly insightful observation that “all the people are not the same

¹³⁹ The Qur’an legitimates the female right to inherit familial wealth, albeit at a disproportionate rate to that of men: verse 4:11 states that “a male shall inherit twice as much as a female.” However, recent studies have suggested that fewer than one in four women in southern Punjab exercise any claim to inheritance (World Bank 2005a). Although this pattern is sometimes explained with reference to women’s willful ‘surrender’ of their inheritance to the safekeeping of their brothers, questions of consent in such processes are problematic and unclear (Weiss 2003; World Bank 2005a).

in that area.” This point adds a layer of nuance to this chapter’s argument about the persuasive power of ‘seeing’: different parents ‘see’ the mannerisms of educated girls and women through different evaluative lenses, and the processes through which these lenses shift and shape each other are necessarily complex and contested. By Zainab’s account, some parents are “a little bit [more] aware of education” than others, and thus more likely to respond favorably to the currents of change described throughout this chapter. In the implicit theory of social change, these parents are the ‘early adopters’ whose support of girls’ schooling ultimately lends momentum to the broader shift that other parents will ‘see’ and begin to emulate.

This description, explanation, and implicit prediction of an ongoing ‘change in demand’ is logically coherent and generally consistent with the reports of parents and students as well as some of my own observations. Nonetheless, it is incomplete: as both anecdotal evaluations of teachers’ impact upon parental decision-making as well as broader accounts of changing normative evaluations of girls’ schooling in Mulweer, the teachers’ narratives cited above fail to address why and how some parents are more resistant to change than others. They fail, in other words, to develop the observation that “all the people are not the same” into a more coherent explanation for why and how this is so. In pointing out this failure, my intention is not to criticise the inadequacy of teachers’ explanations of change so much as it is to admit to the inadequacies of my own – that is, to admit that the qualitative shifts in demand observed during fieldwork and recounted in this chapter were far from systematic or predictable, and that my attempt to explain the drivers of such changes are partial at best. My fieldwork was rife with moments during which this partiality became abundantly clear, and some of these are

worth recounting now as a means of adding complexity to an argument that might otherwise appear to be unrealistically neat.

On the same afternoon that I visited Shabana and her father (see above, Chapter 6.8), I visited a neighbouring household and spoke with a group of four fathers. None of these men had completed more than a few years of schooling, and the general consensus of these fathers was that schooling seemed like a good thing but it was beyond the scope of their every day concerns or aspirations. One of these men was father to eight children, and neither he nor either of his two wives nor any of his children had ever attended school. An excerpt from my conversation with this man raises questions about the teachers' outreach efforts and the power of 'seeing':

WO: Has anyone ever come here from the government or an NGO to tell you about school?

F: No one came here. We didn't receive anything; we never received anything. [...] We heard about all the schools, and that schools are good, but we do not have anything. If we were lucky we would have money and we could send our children to school.

WO: Do you know other people in [this neighbourhood] who are sending their children to school?

F: Yes, many people. [...] Those children are much better than our children.

WO: How? What is better about them?

F: Just from education. Knowledge is best. After getting education they can have much better jobs, like a watchman.

WO: Now, do you think education is better for boys, or for girls, or both?

F: Same for both. Girls go to [the NGO] school, and boys go to their own school.

WO: So, [the NGO] school is free—why do you think you cannot afford it?

F: Sometimes books are lost, things like that. [...]

WO: And does it seem like [other children] are getting good benefits [from school]?

F: They are getting education—that's more than enough. It is self-beneficial.

WO: But nobody from [the NGO] school has ever come here and tried to talk to you about this?

F: No.

WO: And not from government school?

F: No.

WO: What about any of your friends—do they ever say to you that you should send your children to school?

F: No one says this. They are busy in their own work.

They cannot spare any time from their labour. We don't even think about education.

-Father, Mulweer¹⁴⁰

As I exited the home of this father, a young girl greeted me in English. I immediately recognised her as a student from the NGO school, and felt a visceral sense of surprise upon realising that this girl lived immediately next door to the father whose description of his children's schooling prospects had implied such a degree of marginalisation from the currents of educational change in Mulweer. This juxtaposition becomes even more striking when the father's narrative is considered in relation to teachers' explanations of attitudinal change amongst parents: not only does the father's narrative highlight the limited scope of the "door to door" outreach that Naseer had proudly described to me; it also underscores the difference between being cognitively persuaded of the value of schooling and being actually willing and able to pursue it for one's children.

There can be little doubt that this father considers schooling to be valuable in many of the same ways articulated by other parents in Mulweer: he states that school-going boys and girls are "better" than his own; he acknowledges the possibility of employment, and he considers education – *talim* – to have some sort of intrinsic or "self-beneficial" value. Yet something is different here. It might indeed be the case that 'seeing' other children attend school has led this father to appreciate schooling in a new

¹⁴⁰ Interview 38.

light, but only the crudest analysis would therefore fully conflate his ‘demand’ with all of the other ideas and behaviours articulated and exhibited by other parents that support schooling in Mulweer. The father states that he and his peers “don’t even think about education.” None of his eight children have ever been enrolled in school, and throughout the interview he showed no serious intent to enrol them in the future, even after Kaniz and I emphasised that there are no tuition fees associated with the NGO school. In short, it seems that the experience of ‘seeing’ school-going neighbours has certainly influenced this father, but not in a way that translates smoothly into action.

At first glance, this anecdote might appear to indicate little more than the significance of economic constraints in determining enrolment: it seems that this father already appreciates the value of schooling, and that the obvious barriers to his children’s enrolment are simply poverty and the direct or indirect costs of schooling. Indeed, the burden of poverty upon parents in Mulweer and elsewhere in Pakistan and beyond can hardly be emphasised enough, and many rigorous studies have shown the deleterious effects of poverty upon school enrolment and attendance, especially for girls (e.g. Andrabi et. al. 2007; Lloyd 2006; Sawada 2001; UNESCO 2003). In that sense, and following the father’s statement that “if we were lucky we would have money and we could send our children to school,” one might be tempted to argue that poverty alone provides a sufficient explanation for this father’s divergence from the general trend of increasing school enrolments in Mulweer. One might be tempted, in other words, to suggest that ‘demand’ is not significant here, and that the core reasons for the non-enrolment of this father’s children are in fact related only to ‘supply-side’ issues concerning the cost of schooling. However, I resist such a reading, and caution against

its implicit suggestion that divergent enrolment patterns between households in Mulweer can be explained by household income alone. It is indeed possible that the father quoted above was considerably more burdened by poverty than, for example, Shabana's father (again, see Chapter 6.8) – though it should be noted that the two men lived in the exact same neighbourhood, that Shabana's father also claimed to be unable to afford the costs of schooling, and that I observed no obvious material differences between their houses – but regardless of such a distinction, Shabana's narrative of 'seeing' and 'resistance' seems to suggest that core determinants of her enrolment involved more than simple questions of cost and affordability. Thus, while it seems necessary to weigh teachers' hopeful explanations of attitudinal change against the real constraints and limitations that shape everyday life for parents in Mulweer, it seems equally important to resist obscuring the insight that "all people are not the same" beneath simplistic arguments that reduce evaluations of schooling to purely economic calculations.

One additional example is enough to illustrate this point. When one of the mothers quoted earlier in this chapter cited school-related expenses as a reason for the non-enrolment of her older daughters, I asked if she would have sent her daughters to school if all expenses were waived. The mother's answer was unequivocal: "Of course we would send them to school if there are no expenses!"¹⁴¹ Typical assessments of 'demand' would likely conclude that indeed, this mother exhibits a clear 'demand' for girls' schooling – and thus would argue for policy responses that would aim to either lower the costs of schooling or offset them with a stipend programme or something similar. Yet without disputing the potential effectiveness of such interventions, it is

¹⁴¹ Interview 16.

important to acknowledge that there are many behaviours that individuals will adopt in the hypothetical land of ‘zero-cost.’ The fact of the matter, though, is that nothing comes for free, and that our understanding of decision-making processes is diminished if our focus on lowering expenses supplants our interest in exploring what might motivate particular individuals to accept the opportunity in question as worthy of its associated costs.

I am not suggesting that this mother or the father quoted earlier could have easily afforded the expenses associated with schooling, and indeed I am wary of the ways that academic analyses of ‘demand’ have been used to justify the neoliberal implementation of ‘user fees’ (see Chapter 3.2.1). Likewise, I do not doubt that an expense-reducing intervention would be an effective mechanism for persuading these parents to send their daughters to school. My point, rather, is simply that a more comprehensive grasp of the qualitative aspects of demand could inform future interventions that go beyond the knee-jerk lowering of costs and work more holistically towards expanding the real and perceived benefits that might offset the costs that all parents will eventually need to confront. The narratives of teachers provide important insights towards what forms such holistic interventions might assume, and this chapter has worked to situate these narratives alongside those of parents and children. Taken together, these voices appear partial and sometimes contradictory, but they depict an important recent shift in the social desirability of girls’ schooling in Mulweer, particularly in relation to marriage, employment, and *purdah*, and they begin to shed light on the particular processes of ‘seeing’ and norm-making through which this shift occurs. The next two chapters

explore parallel processes in Abid and Ghande, and they build upon – and complicate – the analytical tracks that this chapter has worked to establish.

Chapter 7: ‘A Little Criticism is Bearable’: Girls’ Schooling, Marriage, and Social Risk in Abid

7.1: Overview

This chapter presents findings from Abid, a village located roughly 150 kilometres southwest of Mulweer in District Rahim Yar Khan in southern Punjab. Abid loosely resembles Mulweer in its size and its predominantly agrarian history, but is distinct in its closer proximity to an urban centre and associated opportunities for schooling and non-agricultural labour opportunities. Abid is also distinguished by its minority population of Hindu residents, and this chapter works to highlight continuities and differences in the ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling exhibited by Abid’s Muslim and Hindu communities and the multiple castes therein. By exploring how people in Abid think about girls’ schooling in relation to girls’ employment, marriage, and *purdah*, I show that what is perceived as ‘customary’ and desirable diverges between and within Abid’s social and religious sub-communities, and that this divergence reflects the contexts of indeterminacy through which norms are made and social change occurs and is contested.

Patterns of change and continuity in Abid run parallel to many of those found in Mulweer: following a recent intervention led by the NGO that was my host, girls have started attending school at a rate that is unprecedented but inconsistent between families. Neighbours and even family members with apparently similar background characteristics diverge from each other in terms of whether or not they support girls’ schooling in general, what explanations they offer for why this is so, and what kinds of outcomes – desirable or otherwise – they expect will accrue from what aspects and

quantities of girls' schooling. While the previous chapter emphasised the processes through which residents observe and adopt new values and behaviours in conformity with emerging trends, this chapter focuses more closely on how such trends emerge as instances of non-conformity or divergence from custom. The purpose is not to contrast the two locations so much as to highlight complementary aspects of how norms related to girls' schooling emerge and transform through processes that depend in turn upon hegemonic collective expectations and disruptive individual or household-level convictions.

I begin this chapter by introducing Abid and the Lahore-based NGO that has been working in Abid since 2006. I outline my relationship to this NGO and in particular to Farooq, the NGO's male 'social mobiliser' who was my primary interpreter and key informant, and whose strong local relationships became my main pathway of access to families in Abid – as well as one of my primary examples of norm-making in that context. I then describe Abid's recent pattern of enrolment change as recounted by teachers, parents, and NGO employees, and I highlight arguments about the extent to which the driver of this change is a substantive change in local 'awareness' that is often attributed to the effect of 'seeing others.' As in Mulweer, this 'awareness' amounts to an association of girls' schooling with ideals of dignity and respectability, regardless of any immediate economic 'returns.' Likewise, as in Mulweer, the normative value of 'being educated' is entwined with shifting expectations about when girls should get married, whether or under what conditions girls should seek employment, and whether or how it is possible for girls to 'go out' from their homes – both literally and figuratively – without disrupting the expectations of propriety inherent to ideas of *purdah*. By

juxtaposing some parents' descriptions of shifting norms against the insistence of other parents that these 'customs' cannot be changed, I present divergent instances of demand for girls' schooling as illustrative of the dialectics through which norms are made, interpreted, endowed with authority, and embodied in the lived experience of gender.

Norms pertaining to marriage, employment, and *purdah* are contested and divergent in Mulweer as well, but the heightened levels of social diversity in Abid brings this divergence into clearer focus. This chapter explores divergent normative evaluations between and within families and across lines of geography, religion, and caste, and investigates the processes through which certain communities come to view a prospective wife's level of schooling as a social asset rather than a liability. I argue that shifting evaluations of girls' schooling can be attributed in part to the influence of television, the mobility of fathers to and from the nearby city of Sadiqabad, and indeed, the work of the NGO and of Farooq in particular, but also that the persuasive influence of these factors has not been totalising or absolute. Rather, I suggest that cycles of norm-making are always characterised by degrees of indeterminacy, and that this indeterminacy allows and requires the agentive actions of individuals to become drivers of change.

To demonstrate this point, the final section of the chapter focuses specifically on parents who report a willingness to assume a certain level of social risk in exchange for the perceived benefits of sending their daughters to school beyond a level that their neighbours might consider necessary or appropriate. I ask why some parents appear more willing than others to push the limits of propriety, and suggest that such apparent aberrations become intelligible – and indeed expected – if we conceptualise 'demand'

for girls' schooling as a geographically and temporally fluid nexus of contested social norms that are at once collectively produced and individually altered.

7.2: Approaching Abid

Abid sits in the fertile floodplains of the Indus River, and fields of cotton and wheat and sugarcane surround the estimated 190 households that comprise the village. Commercial activity is limited to a few small shops, and while cars occasionally pass through the village's narrow streets, families still transport their goods and plow their fields with donkeys and oxen rather than trucks and tractors. Access to electricity and television is unevenly distributed between neighbourhoods, and unreliable for those who have it. In all of these ways, Abid resembles Mulweer. Unlike Mulweer, however, Abid's agrarian rhythms are framed by the growth of industry and urbanisation: the hulking shape of a large fertilizer factory dominates the skyline beyond the cultivated fields, and the busy sounds of a nearby highway are audible from almost anywhere in the village. The city of Sadiqabad is less than five kilometers away, and in recent years an increasing number of men from Abid have begun to earn wages there, mostly as day laborers at the fertilizer factory. Likewise, an increasing number of parents from Abid have begun to send their sons and daughters to Sadiqabad for post-primary schooling, although the costs and perceived risks of transport remain a significant disincentive for many parents, especially with regard to their daughters' schooling.

Abid is unique among this study's three research sites because of the proximity to urban opportunities as well as its religious, caste, and linguistic diversity. Located only thirty kilometers from the Indian border, Abid is home to a small population of Hindus that stayed in Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Hindu

families represent roughly 35 of the 190 households in the village, and these households are clustered separately from Muslim households. Within Hindu and Muslim neighbourhoods, households tend to be clustered by caste,¹⁴² and caste determines whether residents speak either Punjabi or Saraiki as their first language. It is beyond the scope of this study to give thorough treatment to the question of how the social institution of caste operates differently (if at all) across Pakistan's different regions and populations, but it is worth noting that caste, and thus language, tends to be a strong predictor of families' socioeconomic status and girls' school enrolment rates in Abid.¹⁴³ No such trends appear within the more homogeneous populations of Mulweer and Ghande, and thus Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 do not mention the significance of caste in those locations.

Findings suggest that inter-caste differences in rates of female school participation in Abid are not mere proxies for socioeconomic inequality; they are also linked to different normative evaluations of girls' schooling, as well as differences in norms that constitute the broader construction of gender, such as those pertaining to *pardah* or appropriate female marriage age. In this sense, one might be tempted to argue that lower rates of girls' school participation within some castes is a direct outcome of 'lower demand' in those populations. However, this sort of argument strikes me as reductive for at least two reasons: first, such arguments risk essentialising the differences between castes and obfuscating the differences within them, whereas I work to approach 'demand' as always dynamic and contested, even within the same

¹⁴² Most Hindus are Thori, and a minority are Mangwal; Muslim castes include Araeen, Arana, Jat, Kokar, Jam/Pahar, Loshari, and Panwar. See Chapter 4.5 for further discussion of how and why I use the word 'caste' to describe these social groupings.

¹⁴³ For further discussion of the relation between caste and schooling in Pakistan, see Gazdar 2002; Jacoby and Mansuri 2011; also see Chapter 4.5.

household; second, it is possible that low participation rates for girls from low-caste families is caused by parents' concerns about their needing to cross neighbourhood and caste boundaries or their likelihood of encountering caste-based discrimination at school, rather than their direct opposition to schooling per se (see Jacoby and Mansuri 2011). Thus, even as I point out the significant extent to which attitudes towards girls' schooling tend to vary between caste groups in Abid, I also work to emphasise the indeterminacy of such norms and the extent to which they also tend to vary *within* castes and even within families.

Abid's families from Punjabi-speaking Muslim castes tend to be higher in status and more likely to have daughters enrol and persist in school. These families are also most likely to have at least one male member employed by the government or engaging in some form of business. Daughters from these families reportedly tend to get married around the age of twenty. In contrast, Saraiki-speaking Muslim families tend to marry their daughters earlier, and for this reason as well as others, their daughters tend to attain fewer years of schooling – often dropping out after Class Five. Most men from these families are farmers, and those who find non-agricultural work tend to be laborers. Hindu families in Abid tend to be lowest in socioeconomic status, and are mostly farmers who do not own the fields that they cultivate. These residents of Abid tend to marry their daughters even earlier, reportedly as young as ten years of age in some cases, and tend to enrol daughters in school at significantly lower rates.

My access to Abid was arranged and enabled through a Lahore-based educational NGO that has been working in Abid since 2006. Similar to what I observed in Mulweer, but in stark contrast to the situation in Ghande, the NGO that was my host

in Abid was, to the best of my knowledge, the only educational NGO operating in the area. My relationship with this organisation began in the spacious offices and leafy courtyards of its headquarters in an upmarket area of Lahore, and the juxtaposition between this environment and the dusty streets of Abid is analogous to that between the neatness of the NGO's programme formulation and the complexity of its reception by different residents of Abid. The NGO maintains a research agenda and conducts teacher trainings on its campus in Lahore, but its primary efforts in Abid and throughout the Punjab have been focused upon improving the quality of government schools for girls. Working in partnership with UNICEF and its 'Child Friendly Schools' model,¹⁴⁴ the NGO began supporting 36 government primary schools across six districts in the Punjab in 2004, and has slowly scaled up the scope of its involvement in the years since then. At the time of fieldwork, the NGO was working with 150 government primary schools in the Punjab, roughly eighty percent of which were girls' schools.¹⁴⁵ Forms of support vary from one school to another, but in the typical model, the NGO offers workshops and basic material resources to guide the school's development into an officially recognised 'Child Friendly School' – a designation that is determined with reference to a

¹⁴⁴ For more information about UNICEF's 'Child Friendly Schools' model, see <<http://www.unicef.org/cfs>>. Accessed 14 June 2013. The UNICEF website describes the model as follows: "The Child-Friendly School (CFS) model is a simple one at heart: Schools should operate in the best interests of the child. Educational environments must be safe, healthy and protective, endowed with trained teachers, adequate resources and appropriate physical, emotional and social conditions for learning... The CFS model promotes inclusiveness, gender-sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and personal empowerment."

¹⁴⁵ In this sense, although the overall 'Child Friendly Schools' programme is gender-neutral, the work of this NGO in the Punjab – and especially in Abid – is explicitly oriented towards improving and expanding schooling for girls.

broad set of indicators that includes points such as “take care of child health and living” and “enhance child learning to their full capacity.”¹⁴⁶

Abid is comprised of two adjacent school catchment areas, each with its own girls’ and boys’ government primary school as well as one co-ed private school. It would perhaps be more accurate to describe each catchment area as a separate village, but the pseudonym ‘Abid’ is convenient and accurate insofar as it designates a unitary area of focus for the NGO and its local ‘social mobiliser,’ Farooq. With Farooq as its primary representative and ‘social mobiliser,’ the NGO began working with the girls’ government primary school in one catchment area in 2006, and with the other in 2008. From those dates onward, Farooq and his colleagues worked with each school’s teachers and principal to generate progress towards various ‘Child Friendly School’ indicators, and they also visited households to ‘mobilise’ parents to send their daughters to school.

In tandem with these efforts, girls’ enrolment grew dramatically at both schools, increasing from 60 to 121 at one school over the course of four years. At the other school, 87 girls were enrolled at the time of research, and although teachers could not produce a record of past enrolment figures, one female teacher offered the following impressionistic summary of changes she had observed over the course of her 17 years of teaching at the same school:

Teacher: All [female] students come here now. Parents are happy, students are happy –
WO: And in the past, this was not the same?
T: There were many problems for students. The environment of the school was not good... When we start the Child Friendly School [intervention], none of the older

¹⁴⁶ UNICEF publishes a standardised Child Friendly Schools ‘manual,’ but different national and sub-national partners are entitled to generate their own indicators for measuring and defining ‘child-friendliness.’ This indicators mentioned here were presented to me as being specific to Pakistan.

daughters, like 12 years, 13 years, came to school. And now they do.

-Female teacher, Abid¹⁴⁷

Two aspects of this excerpt set the stage for central themes of this chapter. First, the teacher's statement that "all [female] students come here" relies on a very partial definition of 'all': subsequent household visits revealed that many girls in both catchment areas – particularly girls from low-caste and non-Muslim families – were dropping out after a few years of schooling or were not attending school at all. In this sense, I read the teacher's statement as reflective of the extent to which the expansion of girls' schooling in Abid reproduces the marginalisation of low-caste and non-Muslim residents. This is norm-making in action: when Farooq, the teachers, and the parents of school-going girls congratulate each other and celebrate the 'progress' of the Child Friendly Schools intervention, they are also reinforcing a collective sense of 'being educated' as admirable and respectable, and of non-enrolment as fundamentally 'backwards.' Second, and in keeping with my larger arc of inquiry, this excerpt invites questions about the extent to which the reported shift in enrolment has occurred in tandem with a shift in evaluations of girls' schooling. Are more girls attending school simply because "the environment of the school" has changed, or is a larger shift in norms and values also at play? And if some sort of normative shift has or is occurring, how do different actors explain this occurrence and its apparently uneven distribution throughout the village?

My exploration of these questions was significantly shaped by and through my relationship with Farooq. A well-educated man from the nearby city of Sadiqabad,

¹⁴⁷ Interview 51.

Farooq was my primary interpreter during interviews in Abid, and over the years he had developed strong personal relationships with teachers and many parents from both of the village's catchment areas. He referred to the teachers as colleagues, and mothers in the village often addressed him as "brother" (*bhai*). Among teachers and higher-caste Muslim parents, this closeness manifested as a form of committed collaboration that bordered on self-congratulation: I observed many interactions in which Farooq and his counterparts complimented each other for having increased parents' "awareness" about the value of girls' schooling. In contrast, when interacting with more conservative parents and village leaders, Farooq's record of past efforts often led to a sort of frustrated antagonism. In private conversations with me, Farooq often described such parents as "backward," and when these parents told me that their "customs" prevented them from sending their daughters to school, Farooq often made little effort to mask his disdain and disappointment.

While at first I worried that Farooq's clear biases would invalidate his 'objectivity' as my research assistant, I soon came to appreciate that his relationships and interactions with residents of Abid afforded me a front-row view of norm-making in action (see Chapter 5.3). As the representative of a Lahore-based education NGO, which itself was funded and endorsed by the multinational institution of UNICEF, Farooq's normative and asymmetrically powerful subject location was admired by some residents and either resented or consciously ignored by others. By associating myself with Farooq, I gained a unique degree of access and trust, but also inevitably aligned myself with a 'pro-schooling' stance that likely shaped what participants were willing to share during interviews and informal interactions. I purposively sought to visit the

widest possible range of households,¹⁴⁸ and heard many parents articulate clear opposition to the pro-schooling stance attributed to UNICEF's Child Friendly Schools, but there is no doubt that my alignment with Farooq and the NGO shaped what parents were willing to tell me. Yet regardless of the extent to which I may or may not have achieved a 'balanced' sample, the more important point is what I was able to glean by observing and partially inhabiting (rather than transcending or 'bracketing') the asymmetries Farooq's social location. Farooq's position as an education activist enabled me to glimpse the value-laden interactions through which norm-making unfolds, and these glimpses substantiated my understanding of gender and schooling in Abid.

7.3: 'School Has Changed the Custom of Early Marriage': Emergent Demand for Girls' Schooling

The teacher quoted in the previous section might have overstated her case when she claimed that "all [female] students come here now," but this does not invalidate her basic sense that girls' school participation in Abid had shifted dramatically over the past decade. Indeed, her counterpart at Abid's other government school for girls offered a similar summary (in Urdu) when asked to reflect upon her twelve years of teaching:

In the early years, parents had no sense of education [*talim*], [but] in 2000, this began to change...In 2000 there were 45 students; now there are 123. There was a change in facilities – there was no washroom, no boundary wall – parents came to the school and saw the problem of the school. Now...parents and neighbours look after the school. In the summer holidays, parents water the flowers. At this time, some parents are still against more education for girls – because they are poor. They cannot see the

¹⁴⁸ See Chapters 5.3 and 5.4. To sample from a wide range of households in Abid, I relied upon Farooq, the local teachers, and some students to identify different households as loosely representative of different schooling trends and different caste and religious backgrounds.

importance of education...[But] since 2000, awareness
[*shaoor*] about education is much better.
-Female teacher, Abid¹⁴⁹

This testimony goes beyond the analysis of the teacher quoted earlier and suggests that girls' increased participation rates are linked to a dramatic shift in parents' attitudes towards schooling as well as a change in "the environment of the school." Echoing parents and teachers in Mulweer (see Chapter 6.5 and 6.6), this teacher cites parents' improved "awareness" and their emergent "sense of education" as drivers of increased student enrolment and increased parental involvement. In this narrative, the value of girls' schooling is cast as self-evident; the question is simply whether parents are "aware" of it – and, according to this teacher, they are increasingly so. At the same time, she acknowledges that this enthusiasm is not universal, and that some parents remain "against" girls' schooling – a trend that she attributes to parents' poverty as well as their inability to "see the importance of education." Rendered this way, the trend of lower girls' enrolment among poorer families is not just a matter of whether parents can afford the costs of schooling, but also whether and how they value its benefits. This sort of analysis anticipates broader questions about poverty and 'affordability' that surface later in this chapter and become even more prominent in Chapter 8, but the relevant point for now is that evaluations of girls' schooling seem to have shifted dramatically for some families in Abid, but not for others. To better understand the substance and origins of this divergence, it is useful to begin with a closer examination of parents for whom the value of girls' schooling is as self-evident as the term "awareness" would imply.

¹⁴⁹ Interview 39.

As in Mulweer, many pro-schooling parents in Abid mentioned the possibility of future employment as one of the most attractive potential benefits of girls' schooling, but tended to insist that their daughters' schooling would be valuable regardless of the perceived likelihood or desirability of such an outcome. In keeping with the argument laid out in Chapter 6.5, what seems to be at root of such assessments is an appreciation of schooling as an inherently valuable source of manners, morality, and social status – that is, schooling as a source of *talim*. The emergence of this normative conception of schooling – what the teacher describes as “a sense of education” – seemed as recent and contested in Abid as it did in Mulweer, and also seemed to have occurred at least in part through a similar process of “seeing.”

For example, when asked about the value of his children's schooling, one Muslim father from the Araeen caste in Abid offered a simple answer: “A better life due to the opportunity of a job.” Yet one of this man's daughters had completed ten years of schooling (‘matriculation’) and was now “sitting at home” with no prospects of employment. When I inquired about this daughter in particular, the father was quick to explain that her schooling would be beneficial regardless of if she ever works outside the home. He went on to elaborate:

F: The age has changed. People's thinking has changed.

WO: How?

F: People have the vision more and more that education gives a status.

WO: What has made this change? Is it a programme of the government, or some NGO – what has changed?

F: We see the people in the TV and video and around us, and we people change thinking and make a [new] standard...

WO: And do you think the bigger part of the change is because there are more schools and more availability of education, or do you think people's thinking has changed?

F: It is due to the thinking of people.¹⁵⁰

It is worth noting that this man and his wife had never attended school, but their son and five daughters had each attained at least eight years of schooling. The scale of this generational shift can hardly be overstated, and is all the more interesting when considered in relation to the assertion that its primary cause has been a process of “see[ing] the people in the TV and video and around us” and developing a sense that “education gives a status.” In this sense, even while acknowledging the significance of infrastructural or ‘supply side’ changes, and even while taking seriously the father’s comment that “the [school] environment” has improved in the wake of the Child Friendly Schools intervention, we must also acknowledge that these infrastructural changes are necessarily circumscribed by competing evaluative frameworks through which their meaning is collectively produced and understood. Put differently, improving the “school environment” might indeed be a necessary condition for inducing a generational shift in school participation, but it is far from sufficient: as demonstrated by other residents of Abid for whom girls’ schooling remained undesirable, changes in school infrastructure seem to be of little consequence in the absence of a collective sense that “education gives a status.”

This discussion of shifting norms and new “standard[s]” of social status might strike readers as a bit too abstract and fanciful to provide a substantive description of how demand for girls’ schooling has shifted for some residents of Abid. Indeed, at various points during fieldwork, I wondered how to determine the credibility of claims that “people’s thinking has changed.” It is here that shifting marriage practices can serve

¹⁵⁰ Interview 49.

as a uniquely tangible indicator of recent changes in the ways that some (but certainly not all) residents of Abid evaluate girls' schooling. Respondents from higher-caste Punjabi-speaking Muslim families tended to report that increased 'awareness' of the value of girls' schooling had led families to reshape dowry calculations, postpone early marriage, and reconsider the limits of *pardah* upon whether married women can attend further schooling and seek employment. Excerpts from such respondents illustrate how the reported change in "people's thinking" is instantiated as gendered (and gendering) practice.

For example, the Araeen father quoted above reported that a daughter's level of schooling "controls" the amount of money or goods that her parents will be expected to give as dowry at the time of her marriage. Over just ten years, he had witnessed the emergence of a collective valuation determining that "if a woman is educated, she has to pay less dowry." He went on to explain:

My sister's daughters are educated. And her elder daughter, they gave a big dowry. But the younger daughter, the husband's family demands less, because she is more educated.¹⁵¹

This reported shift in dowry practice is all the more striking when juxtaposed against the fact that for lower-caste and non-Muslim parents in Abid – some of whom I introduce later in this chapter – girls' schooling is an impediment to marriageability rather than an asset.

A mother from a different Araeen family described a similar shift in the significance of female schooling within marriage considerations, explaining that "the entire world has changed" in her lifetime:

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

M: When I was young, [parents seeking a bride for their son] would ask ‘is she well dressed and a good cook?’ But now they do not ask about dressing or cooking; they ask if she is educated.

WO: So what has caused this change?

M: In my time, people did not care for education, but now we mirror the standard of our people. If our people are educated, we make a standard. But if others are not educated, we cannot send our daughters. It is due to the standard.¹⁵²

Similar to the earlier reference to how families “make a [new] standard,” this excerpt hints at the dialectics through which people are constrained by norms of their own continual making. In one sense, the norms and ‘standards’ that shape schooling and marriage practices appear to be entirely determining – yet at the same time, the reported flux of these norms suggests that they are also collectively determined and ‘made.’

A different set of Araeen parents recounted this process of norm-making in similar terms that depict ‘customs’ as both structuring and indeterminate:

F: These days, we will delay a daughter’s marriage rather than stop her education.

WO: When did that begin to change?

F: Fifteen years ago.

M: [interjecting] After the [opening of the girls’ government] school, the custom has changed. Before the school, there was strong custom...School has changed the custom of early marriage.

WO: And is that because the teachers came to tell you this, or the government came – or what made the marriage customs change?

M: No.

F: Awareness [*shaoor*].

WO: Do you want to say more about that?

F: It is from seeing the people.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Interview 48.

¹⁵³ Interview 53.

In the view of these parents, the normative definition of a ‘proper’ marriage age is obviously fluid, but this does not mean it can be arbitrarily imposed, nor that individuals have unlimited agency of interpretation. In this rendering, rather, the physical opening and improvement of a nearby girls’ school clearly marks the beginnings of change, but the actual mechanism of change appears to be a collective shift in ‘awareness’ that emerges through an ongoing process of ‘seeing.’

Other parents also referenced ‘seeing’ as a transformative force: one Araeen mother, for example, explained that marriage customs had changed as a result of “looking around here and there, and due to teachers, and seeing people and the competition of the people.”¹⁵⁴ Similarly, consider this exchange with two mothers (‘M1’ and ‘M2’) from the Pahar caste:

M1: Twenty years ago, we were not conscious about education. But now we are conscious about education for each child... In the past, it was only boys.
WO: And what was the reason for that?
M1: It was due to poverty.
M2: No. It was our custom that girls do not go out.
WO: Ah. And has that custom changed?
M1: Yes.
WO: When did that custom change?
M1: Ten or fifteen years ago.
WO: Why did it change? What made the change happen?
M1: It came by God! [*laughing*]
WO: So at first, no girls would go to school, and then when it began to change – what happened then? Tell me about that.
M1: It was due to the environment... We want to decrease the poverty. And it was because of the competition between people.
WO: Competition for jobs? Or competition for what?
M1: The manner of living, of cleanliness. Not job.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Interview 51. See full transcript in Annex 1.2.

¹⁵⁵ Interview 55.

In this excerpt, the effects of ‘poverty’ and ‘customs’ appear to be interpenetrating: the ‘custom’ of *purdah* is indirectly referenced (“girls do not go out”) as a source of historic bias against girls’ schooling, and emergent ‘customs’ of manners and cleanliness are cited as drivers of change, but this description of shifting norms is dotted with references to the constraints of poverty and the desire to “decrease” poverty and achieve greater economic stability. Although some scholars and popular commentators have attempted to dichotomise poverty and ‘culture’ and discern which causes the other (e.g. Arif et al. 1999; Chaudhry and Rahman 2009), that is not my intention here: rather, the point is that even though the characteristics of basic economic barriers and incentives might transcend contextual specificity, how people encounter and respond to these are necessarily circumscribed by, refracted through, and contingent upon the particularities of social life and the interactional processes of ‘seeing’ and ‘competition.’ In keeping with the larger framework of norm-making and the ‘demonstration effect’ discussed above, I came to understand the terms ‘seeing’ and ‘competition’ as indicative of the dialectics through which people collectively establish, challenge, and interpret the limits of what is acceptable and desirable for themselves and their children. In this sense, the mother’s statement that the observed change in customs “came by God” can be read as a testament to the sense in which such changes seem to appear without linear causation or rational explanation; they emerge not from discrete events or interventions so much as collective processes of norm-making that unfold dialectically over extended periods of time.

Even so, it might still be tempting to read these references to ‘seeing’ and ‘competition’ through the lens of human capital theory. Such a reading would assume

that parental investment in education is directly informed by perceived labour market opportunities, and thus that changes in marriage norms are driven by the perception that more schooling (and delayed marriage) will better prepare girls to compete for future jobs and income. However, this hypothesis seems inadequate for several reasons. First, at the time of fieldwork, very few women in Abid had found any form of paid employment, and parents were acutely aware of this, often pointing with exasperation to examples of boys and girls who had attained high levels of schooling but were subsequently “sitting at home.” Moreover, and in keeping with findings in Mulweir (see Chapter 6.5), many parents in Abid reported that most jobs would be inappropriate and undesirable for their daughters due to the limits of *purdah*: as one father explained, “we cannot get a job for our daughter in a public place. Like if it is eight boys and one girl – that is not good for our daughter.”¹⁵⁶ In this sense, it seems safe to assert that the link between perceived employment opportunities and the upswell of enthusiasm for girls’ schooling among some families in Abid was tenuous at best, and that the reported effect of ‘seeing’ and ‘competition’ cannot easily be explained in simple economic terms.

Indeed, this finding is consistent with broader quantitative studies that have explored the relationship between girls’ school enrolment rates and labour market returns to girls’ schooling in Pakistan. In her analysis of data from the 2002 Pakistan Integrated Household Survey, Aslam (2009a) finds that in the aggregate, women’s economic returns to years of schooling attained are actually *higher* than men’s, and thus that,

if anything, parents should be allocating more resources to girls than to boys. Since we observe the opposite to be the

¹⁵⁶ Interview 53.

case, this suggests that parents may have objectives other than maximizing financial returns to family allocation of resources...It may also be that powerful social and cultural (demand-side) factors – such as conservatism of attitudes toward women’s education and their labor market work – as well as supply-side constraints limit girls’ access to schools and discourage enrolment despite high economic returns to education. (Aslam 2009a: 777)

In the context of the present inquiry, this excerpt from Aslam almost appears ironic: her concluding suggestion that parents’ evaluations of girls’ schooling might be shaped by “social and cultural (demand-side) factors” rather than (or in addition to) a simple desire to “maximize financial returns” is in fact the premise of this entire study (and precisely the reason that I have argued ‘rate of return’ analyses are inadequate). Likewise, her macro-level observation of low enrolment rates alongside high labour market returns is actually the inverse of what I observed in my three research sites, where girls’ enrolment is on the rise in spite of relatively limited employment opportunities. Nonetheless, Aslam’s work is useful and relevant insofar as it quantitatively reinforces (albeit in an inverted form) something that this study has sought to demonstrate qualitatively and ethnographically: namely, that the flux of social norms (and of human behavior more broadly) is not determined or easily predicted by purely economic reasoning, contrary to the assumptions of the neoliberal social imaginary.

To be sure, many parents in Abid were motivated (or discouraged) by their estimation of the likelihood that their daughters’ schooling might someday lead to a boost in income, and, by the same token, for many families the harsh realities of being poor significantly constrained the range of viable schooling opportunities. There is no doubt, in other words, that schooling decisions in Abid and elsewhere are shaped by rational assessments of economic costs and benefits. Yet acknowledging this point need

not obscure the fact that ‘demand’ surely involves other considerations as well, and that economic needs and opportunities do not wholly determine changes or continuities in how schooling is differentially valued and gendered across different communities. The emergent sense among some families in Abid that girls’ schooling ‘gives a status’ regardless of its likelihood to generate future income – and the associated shift in ‘standards’ of schooling and marriage – begins to hint at this quality of indeterminacy in the linkage between evaluations of schooling and the economic landscape within which such evaluations are situated.

Put differently, the narratives of parents cited above demonstrate that gendered schooling norms are anything but static or predetermined by economic constraints and opportunities. Indeed, an optimistic reading of these narratives might tempt one to argue that the Child Friendly Schools intervention managed to induce a significant shift in demand for girls’ schooling simply by making local schools more welcoming and attractive, and thus that similar ‘supply-side’ changes are all that is needed to erode historic biases against girls’ schooling and boost girls’ enrolments. However, the full story is not so simple, and these narratives quickly become more complicated when juxtaposed against the experiences and testimonies of some of Abid’s other residents.

7.4: ‘We Cannot Avoid the Customs’: Moral Authority and Scepticism

The previous section’s descriptions of emergent positive evaluations of girls’ schooling in Abid can be read in parallel with most of Chapter 6, which illustrated a similar shift in Mulweer (see especially Chapter 6.5 through 6.7). However, even though Chapter 6 worked to emphasise that these changes were not absolute, and that “all the

parents are not the same” (see Chapter 6.9),¹⁵⁷ it lent relatively scant attention to the parents who steadfastly refused to even consider sending their daughters to school. Consequently, the study thus far has risked trivialising parents’ opposition to girls’ schooling and caricaturing it as merely a residual traditionalism that will inevitably be swept away by the rising tide of enthusiasm and ‘awareness’ about the implicitly obvious benefits of schooling. Such a caricature is ironically consistent with the norm-making discourses of many progressive Pakistani teachers and parents as well as many policymakers and researchers (see Chapter 3.2), but it is a patronising and insufficient explanation of why and how some parents remain deeply sceptical of girls’ schooling – even in the wake of supply-side interventions like Child Friendly Schools in Abid – and how such scepticism becomes weighted with moral authority. The present section aims to provide a more thoughtful consideration of the normative evaluations that underlie instances of parental resistance to girls’ schooling in Abid, and in so doing to complicate overly optimistic assessments of the persuasiveness of ‘seeing’ and the fluidity of ‘customs.’ A better understanding of how some parents perceive (and thus contribute to) the rigidity of gender norms thickens our sense of the backdrop against which change can and does occur – a phenomenon that I explore in detail in the next section.

In conversations with me about Abid’s recent history, Farooq and the village’s female teachers tended to emphasise the fluidity and indeterminacy of local ‘customs’ pertaining to the acceptability and desirability of sending girls to school. Teachers reported that “parents change their customs” after seeing the cleanliness and good manners of school-going girls, and Farooq often complimented the teachers for

¹⁵⁷ Recall in particular the father cited at the end of Chapter 6.9 who, in contrast to many of his neighbours, insisted that he and his peers “don’t even think about school” for his daughters.

successfully helping to “change the custom of the village” by visiting households and convincing parents of the value of schooling. These depictions of meaning-in-flux are consistent with broader theoretical maxims of cultural anthropology and with this study’s emphasis on cycles of re-interpretation and ‘norm-making,’ but they fail to capture the experience of parents for whom concerns about *purdah* and the impropriety of girls’ schooling are hegemonic norms that cannot be questioned, let alone ‘made.’

These more conservative views were most typical among Abid’s Hindu residents, and were also prevalent within families from Saraiki-speaking Muslim castes. In the narratives of these parents, it often appears that no amount of pressure from teachers would be enough to induce a change in behaviour. Consider, for example, this statement from a Hindu mother from the Thori caste:

It is our custom: we cannot send our daughters. Our sons go to school no problem, but our daughters we cannot send....Teachers give argument about education, but we say never. We cannot avoid the customs...They try to convince us again and again, but we have one answer: we cannot send them, due to the customs...Teachers say, ‘we will provide your uniform, books, shoes, each and every thing – please send your daughters to school.’ And I tell them: ‘it is not our custom to send our daughter to school.’
-Mother of Sarita¹⁵⁸

The statement that “we cannot avoid the customs” begs for further exploration. Taken out of context, this sort of statement could be used to support caricatures of ‘traditional culture’ as static and determining, a rendering that this study – along with the past several decades of cultural anthropology, including some recent ethnographies of rural Pakistan (e.g. Marsden 2005) – has deliberately sought to counter through an emphasis on norms as indeterminate, collectively produced, and differentially interpreted and

¹⁵⁸ Interview 40.

contested. However, it would be equally problematic to brush aside this mother's testimony by arguing that her 'customs' are in fact only proxies for economic deprivation – or arguing, in other words, that the real constraint she cannot 'avoid' is actually poverty, and that these 'customs' can be altered through policy interventions that seek to realign the economic costs and incentives associated with girls' schooling.

This sort of 'false consciousness' argument is embedded in the foundational rationale of studies that seek to demonstrate through analysis of enrolment data that poverty or income are the main factors determining 'demand' for girls' schooling (e.g. Glewwe and Jacoby 2003; Hamid and Siddiqui 2001; see also Chapters 1.3 and 3.2): such studies might conclude that parents like the one quoted above would indeed enrol their daughters if only they were not so poor, and thus that 'customs' are not nearly so determining as this mother suggests. Yet this argument focuses too narrowly upon questions of enrolment, and thus misses the point: even if this mother were persuaded to enrol her daughters in school, it seems likely that 'customs' would continue to shape her ongoing evaluations of for whom, for how long, and for what reasons this schooling is worthy of pursuit. In other words, even as we avoid assuming that 'customs' are static and determining, and even as we maintain an awareness of the extent to which poverty and its alleviation can drive enrolment trends, we must also keep in mind that the effect of different 'customs' (and the imaginative regimes from which they emerge) extends far beyond questions of enrolment and shapes ongoing normative evaluations of girls' schooling and the constructions of gender to which such evaluations contribute.

To achieve this analytical balance, we must situate this mother and her neighbours within the basic structure of social stratification in Abid. As noted above (see

Chapter 7.2), Hindu families in Abid tend to be the village's poorest residents.

Economic activity in these families is generally limited to farming on land that they do not own, and Hindu respondents often complained bitterly about the exploitative practices of their Muslim landlords (*zamindars*). Hindu households are clustered on the geographic periphery of Abid, and these neighbourhoods are visibly different than those closer to the village centre: homes are built of mud and straw rather than concrete, and are separated by muddy paths rather than streets passable by car.

Given this degree of economic marginalisation, it is reasonable to wonder to what extent poverty might contribute to the low rates of female schooling within Abid's Hindu population. It is indeed the case that some respondents explained their determined opposition to girls' schooling by citing the high cost of school-related fees and lost household labour, and by pointing out that these costs were unlikely to be offset by any future income, given that job opportunities for women were considered to be both unlikely and undesirable due to concerns about propriety and *purdah*. However, it would be dangerously simplistic to deduce from such statements that 'customs' pertaining to girls' schooling among this population could be significantly altered by an intervention that aimed only to reduce costs or increase immediate benefits.

To begin with, as referenced in the excerpt above, teachers in Abid had already offered to waive all school-related fees for the village's poorest families, but this effort seemed to have made no appreciable difference in parents' evaluation. Likewise, some parents had heard of conditional cash transfer programmes in nearby villages, but insisted that even a cash stipend would not convince them to send their daughters to

school.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, though, the most striking point of contrast between these poor Hindu parents and the wealthier Muslim parents discussed in the previous section was not their concern with the costs of girls' schooling so much as their scepticism about its benefits. While most higher-caste Muslim parents seemed confident that schooling would be beneficial for their daughters even if it were unlikely to yield any monetary returns, parents in Abid's Hindu neighbourhood did not tend to perceive any such normative benefits: they did not share the sense that girls' schooling 'gives a status,' and in the rare instances that they had observed their neighbours sending a daughter to school, this process of 'seeing' did not seem to elicit admiration or a pressure to 'compete' with new standards of behaviour. On the contrary, the few parents in this neighbourhood who did send their daughters to school tended to be met with disapproval and a general concern that their daughters' marriage prospects would be diminished. The next section will explore the decisions of these parents in further detail, but for now the point is to situate such decisions in relation to the broader trends from which they depart.

Interestingly, this general scepticism about the benefits of girls' schooling did not necessarily translate into categorical opposition to girls' schooling per se. One Hindu father plainly stated that "girls' schooling has no benefit," but still reported to be sending his daughters to school for two or three years each, and his sons for eight or nine years each. His explanation was simply that "two or three years is enough" for a girl to become "a better mother or better wife."¹⁶⁰ In a similar vein, a different father reported sending his young daughters to school simply to get them out of the house from time to

¹⁵⁹ Of course, the validity of such a claim is difficult to ascertain when the stipend in question is only hypothetical, but nonetheless, the point remains that opposition to schooling in this context – and others – seemed rooted in something more than a need for cash.

¹⁶⁰ Interview 45.

time. Examples such as these further substantiate the basic point that changes in enrolment – especially at the primary level – should not be assumed to indicate much about changes in ‘demand’: for these fathers and many others, the Child Friendly Schools intervention may have led to a casual sense that it is acceptable for a girl to attend school for a few years, but it does not seem to have induced any broader shift in how the benefits of such schooling are ‘seen’ and understood. Accordingly, then, for these fathers it did not seem that the perceived benefits of girls’ schooling were nearly enough to motivate a reconsideration of *purdah*, and thus there was little question that girls belong inside the home once they begin to approach puberty.

A similar interpretation of *purdah* was evident among many of Abid’s lower-caste Muslims. In contrast to the Hindu parents referenced above, most of these parents were quick to acknowledge that a few years of schooling might indeed be beneficial for their daughters, but this perception was clearly in tension with their sense of what ‘customs’ require and prohibit. One father from the Saraiki-speaking Loshari caste explained his evaluation of girls’ schooling as follows:

F: It is the custom of our forefathers...It is enough for [our daughters] to pass the five standards [Class 5] and learn the Qur’an. I will not send them for the opportunity of a job. I cannot send them to higher education.

WO: Okay. So if that is the case, then tell me, what is the value of going to Class Five, [beyond] learning the Qur’an?

F: To read and write. And learn to operate a mobile phone...And they can learn embroidery...You see the people, and you see the environment. If a family is educated their environment is very clean, their living is very clean...

WO: Okay – so do you think education is more important for boys, or for girls?

F: I consider education to be important for both girls and boys, but we are helpless about the custom of our family and our traditions.¹⁶¹

This father's testimony helps complicate any imagined dichotomy between parents who are 'for' or 'against' girls' schooling, and illustrates the sense in which changes in demand must be understood not as an oscillation between these two extremes, but rather as an ongoing dialectical negotiation and (re)production of the norms and values that constitute the meaning of schooling and gender. He seems to have been impressed by 'seeing' other families send their daughters to school, and he recognises a range of possible non-economic benefits of schooling. At the same time, though, he reports being 'helpless' in relation to the constraints of 'customs' – a statement that portrays such norms as totalising and impersonal, but that can also be understood as constitutive of his active participation in the processes through which these norms are reproduced and weighted with moral legitimacy.

When I asked why this father's ten-year-old daughter had never been to school, the father answered without hesitation that this daughter needed to stay home to help her mother look after the animals. It is typical for scholars to read such statements as evidence that 'demand is strong,' and that poverty and a lack of household resources are the primary barriers to enrolment (e.g. Anzar 1999; PETF 2011; see also Chapter 3.7), but the case of this father illuminates the narrowness of this sort of argument: while it is indeed true that this father has acknowledged a general appreciation of the benefits of girls' schooling, his reported sense of being 'helpless' reveals the extent to which this appreciation is circumscribed by broader concerns and constraints that he perceives to be

¹⁶¹ Interview 59.

non-negotiable. The point is that while his daughter's non-enrolment may indeed be linked to resource constraints, there are also other factors at play, and alleviating the need for this daughter's household labour would not necessarily alter this father's broader endorsement of 'customs' and the constraints that they include.

Given his reported sense of 'helplessness,' it might be tempting to portray this father as a relatively progressive advocate for girls' schooling who happens to be restricted by conservative norms beyond his control. However, this interpretation would obfuscate the dialectical sense in which this father's particular evaluations of girls' schooling produce the very 'customs' by which they are constrained. Consider, for example, his explanation of why he would not send any of his daughters past Class Five:

It is a fact that if a girl has higher education, she will choose her husband herself. It is not bearable for us... we would kill our daughters if they did anything like this.¹⁶²

While this father's earlier reference to his own 'helplessness' seemed to depict 'customs' as an extrinsic and unfortunate constraint upon his wish to send his daughters to school, this statement about the expected consequences of 'too much' schooling is unmistakably informed by personal vitriol and moral conviction. Taken as a whole, then, this father's testimony is almost paradoxical: he values schooling as a source of knowledge and 'cleanliness,' but is certain that 'too much' of it will lead to disobedience and transgressive behaviour; he feels constrained by 'customs' that dictate the boundaries of propriety, but also endorses these boundaries with conviction. Yet in a different sense, these mixed feelings are not paradoxical or even surprising, for the tensions they manifest only illustrate something this study has argued from the outset:

¹⁶² Ibid.

that the normative evaluations through which gender and schooling become imbued with meaning are neither fixed by impersonal ‘structures’ nor generated *ex nihilo* by individual ‘agency’; they are made, embodied, and enacted through processes that are indeterminate, fluctuating, and resolutely social.

In keeping with this point, it is important to emphasise that although parents’ attitudes towards girls’ schooling were generally clustered by caste background (and thus by language and neighbourhood), these distinctions were far from absolute.

Consider the dramatic contrast between the following two excerpts from conversations with different Muslim fathers from the Loshari caste:

F: We have no custom for sending the daughters to school.

WO: Okay – do you know anyone from this area who is sending their daughters to school?

F: Some people send their daughters, but then in 4th standard or 5 standard, when they are young, we marry them.

WO: Okay. Do you think that for those girls who only go to 4th or 5th standard, there is any benefit?

F: Just for reading and writing. [But] we cannot consider the education of girls. And we also fear for the traffic and bullying while crossing the road.

WO: Okay, let’s talk a little more about that – why can you not consider it?

F: [...] It is useless for education to 2 or 3 standard – when she has grown to 8 or 10 years, people criticise us that we send our daughters, because this is the age of marriage. We fear the criticism of the people. [...] If all people are also going to school, then there is no problem. But if only one person is wanting to send his daughters, then all people criticise him. [...] In my younger age, few people went to school. But in this time, many boys go to school...[but] there is no change in the girls’ education, because that is our custom; it still remains.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Interview 56.

In this first excerpt, the father echoes much of the conservatism of the other Loshari father quoted previously: despite alluding to some potential benefits of girls' schooling, he presents 'customs' as non-negotiable, identifies expected marriage age as a major constraint, and articulates an acute concern with how others will judge his family. Yet one of his neighbours – another Loshari man whose house was no more than a few hundred metres away – tells a very different story:

F: The age has changed. Our forefathers were illiterate. They could not understand the importance of education, so we did not get education. But at this time, we are going to factories and other places, so we understand the importance of education, and we want to send the children for higher education...Our forefathers were doing farming in the fields, but we are going to factories, so we see the educated people, and so I wish that our children get higher education.

WO: Do you think most people think the same as you, or different?

F: Most people have the same thinking as me. [...]

WO: Really? It's interesting, because we've talked to some people around here who have said 'well, maybe education for boys is okay, but education for girls is not our custom.'

F: Basically, we are [Loshari] people. In the past, our custom is do not send our girls to school. But at this time, every person is trying to send both of their children [boys and girls] to school. [...]

WO: So for your daughters, do you think having an education will help them get a job?

F: No. We are villagers. We do not consider it good for our daughters to work in a public place or any place. But education is necessary for them.

WO: [...] And what kind of things do you think they should learn in school?

F: Education [*Talim*]. And livelihood skills, like embroidery.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Interview 57.

The juxtaposition between this excerpt and the one immediately prior highlights two important points. First, one father describes customs in flux while the other describes customs as relatively static. Second, these two men appear almost unconscious of each other's existence: each presumes himself to be in step with "most people" and with the norms that this majority has established. Moreover, the second father does not seem to have been nudged by any obvious economic incentive unavailable to his neighbour: indeed, the second father's concern with *purdah* dissuades him from even hoping for future employment for his daughters, yet the basic concept of *talim* seems to retain a positive normative value powerful enough to legitimate the enrolment of his daughters. The second father does offer one important clue about the origins of his particular evaluation of *talim*: unlike his neighbour, who (like his "forefathers") is a farmer, this man has found employment as a labourer in the nearby fertilizer factories of Sadiqabad, and thus has 'seen' examples of educated others that are most likely invisible to his neighbour. This point of distinction might indeed be enough to explain the significant divergence between how these two men perceive and respond to the constraints of 'customs,' but it is possible that another, simpler factor is also at play: different people exhibit varying levels of willingness to break from old customs, adopt new behaviours, and assume the social risk that such adoption entails. The next and final section of this chapter explores this possibility in further detail.

7.5: 'A Little Criticism is Bearable': Collective Expectations, Individual Convictions, and Social Risk

The previous two sections of this chapter have demonstrated that residents of Abid diverge significantly in their perceptions of what 'customs' dictate with reference

to marriage and girls' schooling, as well as in their reports of how or if these customs have changed over time. To some extent, this divergence seems to align with differences between caste and religious groups, and, accordingly, with differences between economic status and neighbourhoods of residence. Whether enthusiastic, uncertain, or steadfastly opposed to the possibility of sending girls to school, parents tend to cite collective social expectations as a rationale for their position: some parents point to new 'standards' as the drivers of change, while others identify a 'fear of criticism' as the reason for a lack of change. In this sense, even parents with opposite views about the normative value of girls' schooling seem to exhibit a similar orientation towards social conformity, and this finding is consistent with the 'demonstration effect' and the processes of 'seeing' that I have already discussed at length.

Yet social life is rarely so neat and simple, and the explanatory model of 'seeing' does not answer the question of how change begins when there is not yet anyone to 'see' – or at least not anyone in the immediate vicinity. In other words, the concept of the 'demonstration effect' helps explain how norms are collectively produced, but it does not sufficiently account for the paradoxical sense in which they are also individually altered by parents or children who seem to exhibit a unique degree of agency and might be considered 'early adopters' of emergent trends.¹⁶⁵ By briefly considering two such examples, this section attempts a fuller explanation of how people remake and reimagine schooling and gender norms through social interaction.

¹⁶⁵ Recall the observation by a teacher in Chapter 6.9 that "all parents are not the same," and the subsequent discussion of the fact that some parents seem more willing than others to adopt new behaviours.

The first example to be discussed presents a puzzle similar to the one discussed at the end of the previous section: two men with apparently similar background characteristics diverge significantly in their perspectives about marriage and girls' schooling. However, while the men discussed above were neighbours whose differences could perhaps be attributed to different employment experiences and related differences in the extent to which they had 'seen' educated others, the men in this example are in fact members of the same household, and thus it is even more difficult to attribute their differences to background characteristics alone. Moreover, how these men explain and defend their divergent views – not only to me and Farooq, but also to each other – suggests that the root of their divergence is more than a simple difference in exposure to extrinsic influence; rather, it is a difference in personal conviction and a difference in willingness to assume the social risks that such convictions require.

The episode in question began as a simple interview with a Hindu man from the Thori caste, with Farooq interpreting. One of this man's four sons was currently attending school, but none of his five daughters had ever enrolled. Like most other Hindus that I encountered in Abid, this man insisted that "it is not our custom to send our daughters to school." He reported that teachers had visited his home in the past and had "tried to force us," but that "we give the same answer: we cannot send our daughters." Furthermore, he explicitly emphasised to me that "it is a religious problem" rather than poverty that prevents him and his neighbours from supporting girls' schooling.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Interview 41.

While some conventional analyses might insist that the influence of economic constraints upon this father's decision-making is likely more profound than he acknowledges, they would probably not question his emphasis on the extent to which conservative social norms present a 'barrier' to girls' enrolment. Yet the neatness of this explanation was disrupted when this man's uncle suddenly appeared and joined the conversation.¹⁶⁷ In striking contrast to his nephew, the uncle had chosen to send two of his daughters to school, and explained that education would make his daughters "clean" and would help them fend for themselves in the future: "If we go to the city, and she forgets the address [of home], then she will come back. And if there is any problem in the city, she will solve it."¹⁶⁸ As with other parents quoted above, especially the father quoted at the end of the previous section, the uncle's positive evaluation of girls' schooling seems closely linked to his exposure to urban opportunities and related shifts in expectations about feminine respectability: regardless of whether or not his daughters will seek employment in the city, the uncle seems to feel that the very possibility of even *visiting* the city necessitates and legitimates a certain amount of schooling for his daughters. Yet as the uncle described these expected benefits, the nephew interjected harshly:

It [schooling] will become a problem at the time he tries to marry the daughters! Because they are educated, there will not be any place for them!¹⁶⁹

The uncle did not disagree with the prediction that marriage would be "a problem" for his daughters, and he admitted that being on the leading edge of enrolment change

¹⁶⁷ This episode was briefly referenced in Chapter 5.4 as an example of the ways in which unexpected interruptions to interviews often proved to be the source of unique insights.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Interview 41.

would create friction between his daughters and other girls in the village: “The problem is that if a daughter goes to school in a village where there are 100 girls, and one girl goes to school, 99 girls hate her!” He acknowledged the validity of his nephew’s concerns, and recalled hearing about other girls who had attended school and were now “sitting in their homes” unable to find a marriage. However, his resolve was unshaken:

The first benefit is that they are educated. But second, a problem arises with marriage. But the benefit is that they are educated, and have better cleanliness...It is a problem to marry her, but I will find an educated person.¹⁷⁰

The uncle’s testimony reiterates the concerns of his nephew and of other Hindus in Abid – namely, that conservative social norms create an inverse relationship between girls’ schooling and marriageability – yet it also exposes the paradoxical sense in which the persuasive force of such norms is only as real as individuals determine it to be. In other words, this uncle’s willingness to confront the risk of social disapproval (and, more concretely, the risk of not being able to arrange desirable marriages for his daughters) forces a reconsideration of conventional analyses that posit the influence of conservative norms as a sufficient explanation for girls’ low enrolment: while such norms undoubtedly pose a constraint, the example of this uncle forces one to ask whether such constraints are actually as determining as they are often portrayed to be by those who study and experience them.

The uncle reported that teachers had visited his home to try to convince him to send his daughters to school, but he insisted that this was not a determining factor, and rather that “it is my own idea.” This assertion presents an interesting optic through which to think about the expansion of girls’ schooling and broader processes of norm-

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

making in Abid as well as Mulweer. In one sense, it seems clear that for the uncle and many others in Abid, exposure to the nearby city of Sadiqabad has been a powerful factor in reshaping evaluations of girls' schooling. Parents in Mulweer had less exposure to urban opportunities and role models, but still reported the powerful influence of 'seeing' examples of educated women on television and in the form of female teachers and NGO workers – an assertion that was echoed by many parents in Abid. Yet even as we acknowledge this, we must also take seriously the uncle's claim that "it is my own idea": in contrast to what is implied by simplistic narratives of 'raising demand' – recall, for example, the TEP campaign introduced in Chapter 2.2 – the uncle is not merely a passive receptacle waiting to 'become aware' of the benefits of girls' schooling; rather, he is actively evaluating the costs and benefits of schooling and exerting his own agency within broader processes of norm-making.

Lest the case of this uncle be considered a mere aberration from which it is inappropriate to extrapolate further, it is worth mentioning a second example of a Hindu parent in Abid who exhibited a conscious willingness to press against the limitations of 'customs' and accept a calculated measure of social risk in doing so. This mother was from the Mangwal caste, and one of her daughters was one of only two girls in the Mangwal neighbourhood to have attended school for any duration of time. This daughter had recently completed Class 5 at the girls' government school in Abid, and was now "sitting at home" – but the mother suggested that she would send her daughter for further schooling in Sadiqabad if only she could afford it. At the same time, she acknowledged the same "religious problem" as the Thori father cited above, and emphasised that for Thori and Mangwal families alike, girls' schooling makes marriage

more difficult and conflicts with the expectations associated with *purdah*. In other words, this mother was acutely aware of the same ‘customs’ that other parents had cited as an indisputable cause for non-enrolment, yet also expressed an appreciation for what her daughter had achieved through her resistance to these collective expectations:

In five years, she learned writing and reading and calculation. It is a benefit for us. And she has learned the manners, like arranging things of the house, and speaking manners.¹⁷¹

As noted in other cases discussed above, this mother’s willingness to challenge conventional norms seems linked to her appreciation of a different, competing normative framework in which the ‘manners’ associated with being educated are evaluated as positive and desirable traits. The value of such traits appears to exist within the household rather than the labour market, and indeed, this mother expressed no expectation that her daughter’s schooling would lead to future employment – yet while some parents saw this as a disincentive, this mother clearly did not.

Interestingly, this mother credited her daughter’s own aspirations with having been the cause of her enrolment, explaining that “she saw the boys going to school, so she said ‘I want to go’ – and I can’t stop it.” This testament to the potential for children to influence their parents recalls some of the narratives presented in Chapter 6.8, and lends further support to the basic point that even the most stringent ‘customs’ are unlikely to be wholly determinative of the complex processes through which families evaluate schooling opportunities. Indeed, this mother readily acknowledged that other families in the neighbourhood criticised her daughter for attending school, but explained

¹⁷¹ Interview 43.

to me and Farooq that this was not enough to dissuade her, for “a little criticism is bearable.”¹⁷²

This plainly-stated notion that “a little criticism is bearable” captures the key insight towards which much of this chapter has been driving: even as parents’ evaluations of (and decisions about) girls’ schooling are shaped by collective efforts to conform to different interpretations of norms and ‘customs,’ they are also shaped by varying levels of individual willingness to challenge or adapt these norms and assume the social risks associated with non-conformity. The point is firstly that ‘demand’ in Abid is indeterminate and that it manifests differently across lines of religion and caste, and secondly that this indeterminacy enables – and in fact necessitates – the nuanced social interactions through which norms are made, embodied, and contested. Recognising this point means resisting the reductionist tendency to portray ‘norms’ or ‘culture’ or ‘customs’ as wholly determinative of popular evaluations of girls’ schooling in a given context,¹⁷³ for this common explanatory trend only begs the questions of how and why particular people are ‘making’ these particular norms in this particular way. The final empirical chapter of this study explores these questions about norm-making as they apply to my findings from the village of Ghande, and attempts a closer analysis of the interactional processes through which this norm-making takes place and comes to shape perceptions of the affordability of schooling.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ See the literature review in Chapter 3, and especially Chapter 3.2, for examples of this trend among scholars, policymakers, and popular commentators.

Chapter 8: ‘Money Problems’: Affordability and Norm-Making in Ghande

8.1: Overview

This chapter presents findings from Ghande, a small and remote mountain village in the Ghanche district of the Pakistan’s northernmost province of Gilgit-Baltistan. Ghande is significantly different than Mulweer and Abid not only in terms of its geography, remoteness, and distinct social and economic history, but also due to its exposure to the influences of Shia, Ismaili, and Nurbakhshi sects of Islam, ongoing development interventions led by foreign NGOs including the Aga Khan Development Network, and steady flows of foreign tourists who have come over the past several decades to climb in the nearby Karakorum mountains. Even so, the recent history of girls’ schooling in Ghande roughly parallels that in Mulweer and Abid: the past decade has yielded a significant jump in girls’ enrolments and a reported shift in popular attitudes and ‘awareness’ about the value of such schooling. While Chapter 6 attempted a general exploration of the extent to which, the channels through which, and the uneven pattern in which this ‘awareness’ has emerged and spread, and Chapter 7 focused more specifically on how parents’ evaluations of schooling are refracted through the variability of parental willingness to diverge from ‘customs,’ Chapter 8 centres its analysis upon how evaluations of girls’ schooling in Ghande are shaped by different ‘local’ and ‘global’ actors and perspectives that are value-laden and asymmetrical in their influences upon the normative making, adoption, and adaptation of schooling and gender.

The chapter begins in parallel with the previous two: after offering a brief overview of Ghande’s history and contemporary rhythms of everyday life, it describes

the dramatic shift in girls' school enrolments that has occurred over the past ten years, explores the evaluative lenses through which contemporary Ghande residents approach schooling decisions, and asks whether, how, and to what extent these attitudes about the value of girls' schooling have shifted in tandem with the more visible upward trend in girls' enrolments. The description of enrolment change is based upon data from a comprehensive household census that I conducted during March 2012,¹⁷⁴ and the broader exploration of attitudes draws from my interviews and observations accumulated over the course of nine weeks spent in Ghande and nearby areas during the summer of 2011 and the winter of 2012.

Much of what emerges from these interviews and observations echoes the findings of previous chapters. First, residents of Ghande report a new – albeit fractured and partial – appreciation of primary schooling for girls as being worthy of pursuit even if opportunities for secondary schooling or post-schooling employment are uncertain, unlikely, or undesirable. Second, residents also report concerns about the social acceptability of schooling, particularly as girls grow older and conventions of marriage and *purdah* come into play – though it should be noted that in general, parents in Ghande are significantly less concerned about such norms than parents in Mulweer or Abid. Third, residents attribute much of this reported recent shift in attitudes to the effect of 'seeing' well-educated others who visit or return to Ghande.

It is from this third point that the chapter begins its more particular analysis of the power dynamics that penetrate the processes through which residents of Ghande 'see' each other and negotiate divergent evaluations of girls' schooling. In keeping with

¹⁷⁴ With the help of local teachers, I assembled a dataset reflecting the age, gender, and schooling history of each of the village's 976 residents. See Annex 5.1 and 5.2.

the broader effort of the study to conceptualise ‘demand’ for schooling as a dynamic field of contested social norms rather than a static enrolment decision that either does or does not manifest at various price points, this chapter works to understand changes in demand in relation to processes of ‘global’ and ‘local’ norm-making and the hegemonies that structure such processes. This analysis approaches Ghande’s educational actors and institutions as differentially situated nodal points within larger lattices of power and influence that extend beyond the geographic and temporal boundaries of the village and of particular educational programs and interventions. The actors and institutions in question include government offices and NGOs, funding agencies, teachers, local leaders, tourists, and indeed educational researchers as well.

The main argument of the chapter is that the reported ‘changing attitudes’ about the value of girls’ schooling in Ghande must be understood as emerging from dialectics in which global and local norms constrain and shape each other in what Halliday and Carruthers describe as “an asymmetric but mutual fashion” (2007: 1138). This dynamic manifests itself in numerous contexts and instances, and is particularly clear in conversations about the cost of schooling: as parents, teachers, and NGO leaders articulate disparate interpretations of how to address ‘money problems’ in relation to girls’ schooling opportunities, they contest, negotiate, and produce different perceptions of affordability as well as different – and differentially weighted – perceptions of value.

8.2: Approaching Ghande

The village of Ghande is perched among terraced fields of wheat and peas and potatoes at an elevation of over 10,000 feet above sea level, and the inhabitants of its 143 households regularly follow stony footpaths even further up-valley to graze their

animals and collect firewood. The bumpy dirt road from down-valley terminates at the edge of the village, and it takes several hours of driving to reach the nearest hospital, cell phone signal, reliable electricity, or opportunity to attend school beyond Class 8. As noted in Chapter 4.2, Ghande is not connected to any electrical grid (contrary to the promises of many politicians), and thus villagers rely on small solar panels or on a micro-hydroelectric generator built by a foreign NGO several years ago. The generator typically only provides electricity during the evening, but nonetheless, many villagers have televisions and satellite dishes from which they are able to access PTV as well as some channels broadcasted from China. Only one jeep exists in the village, and the periodic arrival of goods or people from ‘downside’ is something of an event. Yet this geographic remoteness notwithstanding, villagers who describe and explain recent changes in popular evaluations of girls’ schooling and parallel changes in girls’ school participation rates position themselves within a lattice of influences that extends far beyond the village limits. Reading these changes through a lens of global norm-making helps us see just how far this lattice of influence extends and how particular threads within it are asymmetrically persuasive but not totalising or absolute. This recognition leads in turn to the study’s concluding discussion of indeterminacy and its ethical implications for researchers and others who work to understand or initiate social and educational change.

Ghande is different from Mulweer and Abid in several important respects. First, its proximity to the Karakorum mountains draws a small but significant number of foreign tourists during the summer months. Ironically, then, despite being more geographically remote than Mulweer or Abid in terms of proximity to other towns or

cities, Ghande is more directly exposed to transnational flows of people, ideas, and resources. Tourists who come to climb and trek in the nearby mountains create seasonal job opportunities for local men who work as porters and guides, and this has a multi-layered effect on girls' schooling opportunities. On the one hand, these employment opportunities for men generate income which families can use to pay for girls' schooling. On the other hand, when men go to work in the mountains, it increases the burden of household labour upon women and girls, thus limiting their available time for schooling – but also, interestingly, creating economic incentives for families to shift expectations of *purdah* and allow their daughters to 'go out' from the household and do work that would historically have been considered 'men's work.' Numerous residents of Ghande told me that girls could not go to school because they needed to help collect firewood, tend to the fields, or take care of livestock while their fathers and brothers were in the mountains.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, though, the movement of foreign tourists through Ghande exposes residents to discourses that celebrate the value of girls' schooling and 'empowerment,' and this manifests most clearly in the work of foreign-led and foreign-funded NGOs.

Unlike Mulweer and Abid, where my host NGOs were the only active NGOs in their respective areas and are both locally-founded (although largely foreign-funded), the NGO sector in Ghande is much more crowded and much more directly influenced by foreigners. In the several years leading up to my fieldwork, at least seven foreign NGOs conducted some sort of health or education work in Ghande: two from Spain, one from

¹⁷⁵ Of course, this is only relevant during a few months per year, but still significant insofar as the summer tourist season sometimes overlaps with school examinations in June or with enrolment periods in late summer or early autumn. This tension between familial obligations and educational opportunities was particularly acute for girls and women considering enrolment in secondary schools or universities 'downside' in Skardu or Islamabad.

Italy, one from England, and two from the United States. In addition, Ghande is also home to a locally-founded ‘welfare and development’ NGO which I describe in further detail below, and this NGO is largely supported by an affiliated American-led NGO and by donations from tourists. Along with many other villages in Gilgit-Baltistan, Ghande has also received support from the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and its Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). The AKDN works in many countries but has a large footprint in Pakistan; AKRSP is a programme specific to northern Pakistan.

The AKDN is technically a non-denominational organisation, but its work is closely linked to the Ismaili sect of Shia Islam, and this leads to another characteristic of Ghande which distinguishes it from Mulweer and Abid: its residents predominantly identify as Shia, Ismaili, and/or Nurbakhshi Muslims, as opposed to the predominantly Sunni Muslim population of Mulweer and Sunni and Hindu populations of Abid. It is beyond the scope of this study to explicate the differences and overlaps between these different sects of Islam, but the point which is most relevant to questions about demand for girls’ schooling is that Ismailis are widely recognised for their relatively high levels of education and social welfare, including for women (see Sokefeld 2014; see also Chapter 4.5), and to some extent this applies to Shias more broadly and to Nurbakhshis as well.¹⁷⁶ Girls and women in Ghande still observe *purdah* in various ways – for

¹⁷⁶ This point became especially clear to me during a conversation with a Shia educational leader in the northern city of Skardu (a half-day’s drive from Ghande) during June 2011. The man explained to me (in English) that Shias “look to Iran” for religious guidance, and that the Ayatollah Khomeini had stressed the importance of sending girls to school, which subsequently inspired Shias in northern Pakistan to promote girls’ schooling. This man also told me an allegorical story which functions as a fascinating explanation of the logic of *purdah*: “One day an Englishman asked a Muslim, ‘Why don’t your women shake hands with the men?’ The Muslim said, ‘Would you shake hands with Queen Elizabeth?’ The Englishman said ‘No, no, not everyone can shake hands with Queen Elizabeth, because there are some particular men who

example, they wear headscarves in public (and often within the home), and will seldom leave the village unaccompanied by a male family member – but they are generally more free to move around the village than girls or women in Abid or Mulweer. However, as I have argued above with reference to Mulweer and Abid, it would be simplistic to assume that this loosening of restrictions amounts to an absence of concern for *purdah*: as Ghande’s *meerwai* (religious leader) told me in an interview, *purdah* is “the most important thing in Islam,” and if *purdah* is not observed, “that is evil.”¹⁷⁷

As with Mulweer and Abid, the village of Ghande has recently been the locus of several gender-targeted schooling interventions and a parallel but not necessarily resultant increase in girls’ rate of participation in basic schooling. The most recent of these interventions entailed the waiving of girls’ tuition fees at the village’s private school and the provision of scholarships for girls wishing to travel down-valley to attend post-primary schooling. These programs had emerged from collaboration between a local ‘welfare and development’ organisation and an American NGO with a multinational focus on the promotion and improvement of girls’ schooling. More specifically, and more consistent with the attention to asymmetry and indeterminacy that a framework of global norm-making requires and enables, one might say that these programs were emerging through ongoing dialectical interactions between differently empowered individuals and the discourses in which they were embedded and through which they were normatively informed: interactions, that is, between corporate

can shake hands with Queen Elizabeth.’ The Muslim said ‘Yes, that is as in Islam – the women of Islam are Queens, and they have to shake hands with [only] a particular person. Not with everyone.’” (Recorded during conversation on 12 June 2011.) At risk of seeming to defend the patriarchal practice of exerting control over women’s mobility and public visibility, I share this anecdote because I think it captures some of the ways in which maintaining *purdah* must be understood as a matter of maintaining respectability and dignity – for women as well as for men – rather than simply maintaining patriarchal domination.

¹⁷⁷ Interview 73.

American donors, the female founder of the American NGO, the male founder of the village ‘welfare and development’ NGO, the particular women and men and children whose lives these programs were meant to enrich, and the academic consensuses, policy reports, NGO fundraising campaigns, and sentimentalised popular media narratives that weave their way through and around these actors and the norms that shape their everyday decisions and evaluations.

For example, it is worth mentioning that the leader of the American NGO had formerly worked for Greg Mortenson, author of the bestselling *Three Cups of Tea* (2006) and *Stones into Schools* (2009), and that Mortenson’s own organisation, the Central Asia Institute, had previously funded the construction of classrooms at Ghande’s government school and was still funding some teacher salaries at the time of fieldwork. Mortenson does not use the language of ‘gender mainstreaming’ (see Chapter 3.7), but his popular books and public speaking tours have undoubtedly contributed to a ‘mainstreaming’ of particular normative views about the value of sending girls to school, especially in regions presumed (often incorrectly) to be potential hotbeds for extremism.¹⁷⁸ A lens of global norm-making draws attention to the fact that apparently simple interventions such as the removal of tuition fees for girls at Ghande’s private school are undoubtedly bound up in a web of values and norms that includes the discourses of Greg Mortenson, the mandates of the Millennium Development Goals, the

¹⁷⁸ The original hardcover title of Mortenson’s first book was *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations...One School at a Time* (see Chapter 4.6 for a discussion of this tendency to conflate girls’ schooling with fighting terrorism). This title was later changed to *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*. Both *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones into Schools* lend extra emphasis gender gaps in school enrolment, and advocate for the importance of supply-side interventions (building schools, for example) to boost girls’ enrolments and achievements.

increasing romantic hopes (or doubts) of foreign donors, and the eagerness or scepticism of village residents who have seen past educational interventions come and go.

A co-ed government primary school had been built in the village over forty years earlier, and was supplemented by the opening of a co-ed private school in 2004, but boys' participation had dramatically outpaced that of girls until only recently. Girls' participation in primary school had spiked in the past decade, and especially in the past few years: between the years of 2010 and 2012 alone, the total number of girls enrolled in Ghande's two primary schools grew from 36 to 90, while the corresponding number of boys enrolled grew from 156 to 185. Official school enrolment and attendance data were not available prior to the year 2000, but my household census allowed for a reconstruction of schooling attainment by gender and age cohort, and revealed that only about 11% of women born before 1992 had attended school at all, whereas the comparable number for men in the same age cohort was 65% – a gender gap of over fifty percentage points. In contrast, among residents aged 11 to 20, this gender gap narrowed to around forty percentage points, and among residents aged 6 to 10, it narrowed to only twenty percentage points: within this youngest cohort of school-aged children, 71% of girls and 92% of boys were currently enrolled in school. Data for attendance, achievement, and dropout rates corroborated the basic point that significant gender gaps were persistent but narrowing.¹⁷⁹

There are numerous possible explanations for these shifting enrolment trends. The first is simply that the number of young children alive in Ghande has been steadily growing: as in many other locations in Pakistan and beyond, increasing access to basic

¹⁷⁹ See Annex 3.1 and 3.2 for more details.

health services has caused a steady decrease in rates of maternal and child mortality, but the uptake of family planning practices has been comparatively slower, and thus a significant ‘youth bulge’ has emerged in recent years: at the time of fieldwork, over 54% of the village population was aged 20 or younger, and over 33% was aged 10 or younger.¹⁸⁰ Considered alongside the fact that many boys and girls aged 11 to 20 were not in school, and that a scarcity of arable land ruled out the possibility of bringing new fields under cultivation, one could infer that parents in Ghande had an oversupply of household labour, and thus could afford to send their younger children to school while their older children worked at home or in the fields.

A second explanation of the recent surge in school participation rates in Ghande would focus on ‘supply-side’ interventions that had made schooling more affordable and desirable. The private school that opened in 2004 was tuition-based, but as noted above, an American NGO had recently partnered with the private school to waive tuition fees for all girls in the village. This effort to reduce the costs of schooling had been accompanied by renewed efforts by teachers to visit village households and urge parents to send their children to school – a trend explored below in further detail. Many teachers and parents explained to me that the recent growth in enrolments was due in part to these outreach efforts, and that the waiving of girls’ tuition fees at the private school had a sort of ‘spillover’ effect whereby the increasing enthusiasm for girls’ schooling led to a growth in girls’ enrolments at the government school as well.

All of these possible explanations might be accurate, but none shed much light on the extent to which Ghande’s recent shifts in enrolment trends have been

¹⁸⁰ See Annex 3.2 for demographic data. Reports on family planning and shifting rates of maternal and child mortality are based on anecdotal accounts from health workers in Ghande.

accompanied or informed by any changes in the normative frameworks through which Ghande residents understand and produce the value of girls' (and boys') schooling. In other words, one could argue that the recent reduction in gender gaps in Ghande's school participation rates has been caused by shifting demographics and 'supply-side' interventions that reduced the cost of girls' schooling, and one could even label this shift a 'change in demand,' but such an analysis would gloss over the subtler processes of norm-making that are central to the more robust understanding of 'demand' suggested by this study. Thus, as in Mulweer and Abid, I sought to understand recent changes in girls' schooling in Ghande by exploring not only what economic or demographic factors might have yielded changes in enrolment rates, but also what subtler attitudes and perspectives may have been entwined, contested, and re-interpreted alongside these more visible shifts in school participation.

Broadly speaking, this general inquiry brought to light narratives suggesting changes as well as continuities in the ways that Ghande residents envision and enact the gendered value of schooling. Parents often spoke of a new 'awareness' of girls' schooling as a source of admirable manners and behaviours, and sometimes reported a willingness to delay their daughters' marriage to allow for further schooling. However, parents tended to be wary of sending girls down-valley for post-primary schooling or possible employment, and thus often argued that schooling was more valuable and 'necessary' for boys than for girls. These divergent perceptions of value have significant implications in the discussion of 'affordability' that occurs later in this chapter.

My access to families in Ghande was mediated through a combination of informal relationships with the local 'welfare and development' organisation, the

American NGO supporting this organisation, and a respected male village elder named Sherbhaz. I befriended Sherbhaz while visiting Ghande and surrounding areas during the summer of 2011, and Sherbhaz invited me to return as his guest during the following winter. I stayed in Sherbhaz's home and came to form strong relationships with him, his two wives,¹⁸¹ and his five daughters and one son. Neither Sherbhaz nor his wives nor any of his daughters had ever attended school, but Sherbhaz was proud to be sending his son to Ghande's private school. My closeness with Sherbhaz afforded me an angle of access to other residents of Ghande that was unavailable during fieldwork in Mulweer and Abid: whereas I was a formal guest of an educational NGO in these other two villages, in Ghande I had no such ties, and thus may have been viewed as more 'approachable' by residents who were sceptical of the NGOs working in Ghande. At the same time, I also managed to build trust with the leaders of these NGOs, and from these relationships gained insights into the factors shaping their work and its outcomes. When conducting interviews and household visits in Ghande, I mostly relied upon Sherbhaz as a 'guide' and interpreter, but at times I also relied upon Munawar, the leader of the local 'welfare and development' organisation, as well as teachers from Ghande's private and government schools. This capacity to align myself with different actors in different settings enabled me to observe and partake in a range of social interactions: a given day of fieldwork might have involved sharing tea in smoky kitchens with Sherbhaz and his friends, attending a meeting with Munawar and his colleagues, and observing classes at one or both of Ghande's schools. These multiple forms of 'access' allowed me to

¹⁸¹ It is not particularly common for men in Ghande to marry multiple wives, but the practice is considered acceptable when there are doubts about a first wife's capacity to bear sons, as was the case in the family of Sherbhaz. Sherbhaz (and thus the author) lived with his second wife, who had borne him his only son, but he often visited the home of his first wife and his daughters who still lived there.

develop a multidimensional sense of how Ghande residents evaluate and experience the village's shifting set of schooling norms and opportunities.

8.3: *'Then I Was Shamed': 'Seeing' as Norm-Making*

As noted above, the household census that I conducted in Ghande revealed a dramatic generational shift in school enrolment that paralleled trends observed in Mulweer and Abid: among residents between the ages of twenty-one and forty, only 17% of females and 57% of males had ever attended school, whereas among residents aged six to ten, these figures jumped to 71% and 92%, respectively. In explaining this absolute growth in enrolment as well as the narrowing of gender gaps that it entailed, many respondents cited the effect of 'seeing' educated others – local men and women who were the first in the village to attend school, Pakistanis from towns and cities down-valley who arrived under the auspices of organisations like the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, and foreigners who came to climb in the nearby Karakorum mountains or work on various 'development' initiatives. Building upon the recurring emphasis on 'seeing' established in previous chapters, this chapter reads such instances of 'seeing' as interactional examples of norm-making. This approach allows for an understanding of particular evaluations of girls' schooling as emergent from such interactions and the asymmetric and indeterminate regimes of value that they dialectically unite.

An encounter between a teacher named Ali and a father named Hassan offers a provocative crystallisation of this point. Like most of Ghande's older residents, Hassan had never attended school, and over the years he had eked out a livelihood by farming his small plots of land, raising yak, dzo, sheep, and goats, and working as a porter for climbing expeditions in the summer. His wife Husna was also unschooled, and she spent

her days working in the fields and in the household to support Hassan and their six children. Their son had attended school until eighth grade – the highest level available within the village – and now worked as a porter in the summer and sought other wage-earning work during the rest of the year, an exercise that he and his parents readily admitted was somewhat futile. When the author arrived in the village, none of Hassan's five daughters had ever attended school. The three elder daughters, aged twelve, fifteen, and nineteen, joined their mother in household and agricultural labor and on a given day could be found grazing animals, collecting firewood, hauling manure out to the fields, or, in wintertime, shoveling snow from their flat rooftop down into the muddy streets. The two younger daughters stayed at home or played with other small children nearby. Yet on an otherwise ordinary day, Hassan instructed his two younger daughters to go to school. Having heard about this from friends in the village who knew I was interested in such things, I went to visit Hassan in his smoky kitchen on that same evening.

In a combination of English and Urdu, and with some help from Sherbhaz as a Balti interpreter, Hassan explained that he had first realised the importance of schooling when he visited Islamabad fifteen years earlier and felt that he “couldn't understand anything.” His sense that “children must be in school” grew stronger during subsequent visits to the closer city of Skardu, particularly one during which he sought medical assistance for his father. He enrolled his son in the free local government school as soon as possible, but found the incidental costs of pens, books, stationery, and uniforms to be too much to bear, and thus never enrolled his daughters. However, on the previous evening, he had encountered Ali, a teacher at the nearby private school, in the narrow

street outside his home. The following excerpt captures Hassan's summary (in English) of what happened during this encounter:

Hassan: Last night, you know teacher's house is very near to me, and he says all other girls are going to school, why don't you send your children?

WO: And what do you say?

H: Then I was shamed, you know? Then I send my daughters to school...

WO: And last night when this teacher spoke to you and made you feel ashamed – what did the teacher say to you, exactly?

H: Just teacher asked to me – yesterday I am looking around in [this village], and other all children in school, and your children are just walking around, you know? And I am very shamed.

WO: And did he talk to you about what is the value of school? Did he give reasons about why school is good?

H: No.

WO: He just said school is good, and did not give reason?

H: Yeah.

WO: And you did not ask why it is good?

H: Yeah.¹⁸²

Hassan reported that he intended to pay for his daughters' school supplies within a few days, and he gratefully acknowledged the teacher's willingness to loan them the necessary materials in the meantime. He reported that he and his wife had never discussed the possibility of sending their daughters to school, and that he had not consulted with her before his recent decision to enrol them. He went on to explain that his teenage daughters were too old for school, but that he hoped his young daughters would continue with their schooling "forever, Inshallah." He stated that it would be up to their future husbands to decide whether or not they would seek employment, but that ultimately he wasn't very hopeful about their prospects, given the general lack of opportunities and the need to pay heavy bribes in order to obtain government jobs. Even

¹⁸² Interview 70.

so, he expressed confidence that schooling would endow his young daughters with a general “understanding” that would be useful to them as future wives and mothers at home or in a range of settings such as cities, hospitals, and offices.

At first glance, Hassan’s reconstruction of this exchange and of his past schooling decisions appears relatively straightforward, and is exactly the sort of narrative that is often cited in support of arguments for more ‘supply-side’ interventions that reduce the cost of schooling through scholarships, stipends, or the suspension of fees: clearly, the argument goes, Hassan is aware of the basic value of schooling; he is simply ‘constrained’ by the incidental cost of school supplies. Yet the core critique of this study is that this sort of analysis takes as a constant that which is actually most contested and in flux: namely, the normative evaluations that comprise Hassan’s ‘demand’ for schooling. Some form of ‘demand’ may have germinated in Hassan during his visit to Islamabad years before, but his reported sense of ‘shame’ and his abrupt decision to shoulder the costs of his daughters’ schooling suggest that his interaction with Ali precipitated a significant shift in the evaluative framework with which he assessed the costs and benefits of sending his daughters to school. To attempt a better understanding of what happened during this encounter, one needs to know more about Ali and his position within the village’s shifting educational landscape.

Ali had recently received his credentials from a college down-valley and returned home to teach English at the village’s private school. He was the first person in his family to have attended primary school, and he frequently recounted the great sacrifices that his impoverished father had made in order to be able to send him ‘downside’ for further schooling. From Ali’s point of view, it was only the backwardness of other

parents in the village that prevented them from making similar sacrifices for their own children:

Many people here are not so poor, but their thinking is bad!
They could sell their lands or sell their animals – if they
think education is good, there would be no problem!¹⁸³

Ali was not shy about sharing this perspective with the parents that it targeted. The American NGO mentioned above had recently sponsored Ali to participate in a teacher-training workshop in the northern city of Gilgit, and he described this experience as having deepened his convictions about the necessity of schooling. Upon his return from Gilgit, Ali reported feeling inspired to go to “every house” to convince parents that sending their children to school “would make them prosperous” – a prognosis that exhibits Ali’s own sense of economic opportunity and upward socioeconomic mobility, a sense that parents such as Hassan clearly did not share. Ali acknowledged that most parents were reluctant to send their daughters down-valley for further schooling or possible employment, but argued that norms constraining female mobility (*purdah*) would not constrain girls’ opportunities if parents had proper “awareness” of the value of schooling. In conversations observed between Ali and parents throughout the village, Ali often argued that Islam mandated equal education for boys and girls, and he narrated his own life story as an example of the transformative power of education. Citing his father as a case in point, he urged parents to simply “work more” if they were unsure how they could afford to send all of their children to school. It is unsurprising, then, that Ali was disdainful of NGO efforts to boost girls’ enrolments by offering cash stipends or free uniforms or school supplies: echoing the concerns of many critics of such

¹⁸³ Interview 88.

“handouts,” Ali argued that such interventions failed to address the core problem of “bad thinking” among the parents they sought to support.

In one sense, we can read this stance as being in tension with the logic of most ‘supply-side’ interventions such as stipends or scholarships: rather than seek to broaden access or decrease the costs of girls’ schooling, Ali seeks to increase parents’ willingness to pay for it. Yet in a different sense, one that more clearly situates these parent-teacher interactions within larger processes of norm-making, we can discern significant overlap between Ali’s argument and the broader themes of the ‘gender mainstreaming’ literature and ‘supply-side’ interventions critiqued above: in all of these discourses, ‘affordability’ is treated primarily as a question of cost rather than a question of value. Ali’s primary goal – much like that of a typical conditional cash transfer programme – is to get more girls in school by convincing parents that they can afford it. Within such an approach, the value of girls’ schooling is taken as self-evident, and little attention is lent towards exploring or addressing how parents understand or construct it. In other words, despite working in a context in which an explicit emphasis on girls’ schooling had been ‘mainstreamed’ by past and current NGOs, Ali’s immediate concern had less to do with the construction of gendered meanings and values than with the promotion of a general “awareness” about the benefits of schooling. What is remarkable, then, is how easily Hassan seems to have been convinced, and that this convincing appears to have occurred not through an institutionalised expansion of schooling opportunities so much as a personalised communication of schooling norms. A lens of global norm-making helps explain how particular actors’ hegemonic articulation and enactment of assumptions about the self-evident value of schooling work to dialectically

produce similar assumptions in others – hence Hassan’s embodied sense of shame, and his apparently unquestioning subscription to Ali’s promotion of the ‘goodness’ of schooling.

The asymmetry between Hassan and Ali in this conversation was shaped firstly by Ali’s status as an educated, upwardly mobile young man, but also by his employment at the village’s private school and thus his alignment with the family of Munawar, the founder and director of the village’s ‘welfare and development’ NGO. Munawar had founded the private school, and he was widely recognised as the first village resident to have gone ‘downside’ for secondary and tertiary schooling. In my frequent conversations with parents about recent changes in popular attitudes about the value of schooling, it was routine to hear reference to the significance of ‘seeing’ the success of Munawar and his family. Munawar’s sister, Fatima, was the first woman in the village to go ‘downside’ for post-primary schooling, and was subsequently employed by the government as a ‘Lady Health Worker’ in the village. Her own words, translated from Urdu, hint at the pace of change in the village and the extent to which she and Munawar are at the centre of it, or at least perceive themselves as such:

Before, in 1997 or 1998, I was the only girl in [the village] going to school...[But] day by day it is changing. Now boys and girls are like the same. Before, many people were illiterate. Now, [Munawar] and me and many others are educated, and we are telling others. Before, every house wanted girls to be shepherds...[but] now, everyone is giving attention to education.¹⁸⁴

My interviews and observations introduce significant complexities and counter-examples to Fatima’s suggestion that “boys and girls [in the village] are like the same”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

and the parallel claim that “everyone is giving attention to education,” but nonetheless, Fatima’s narration of change in these sweeping terms can be understood as part of an ongoing process of norm-making through which people like her and Munawar and Ali are “telling others” that schooling is self-evidently valuable and desirable for girls as well as boys.

The persuasive force of this “telling” – and the “seeing” that accompanies it – is further bolstered by the extent to which Munawar, Fatima, and Ali align themselves with extra-local actors and forces that reach far beyond the cities down-valley where they received their credentials and training. Following his completion of college, Munawar had returned to the village to found the ‘welfare and development’ organisation in 1987, and then the private school in 2003. As such, he seemed to be the de-facto point of contact for all foreigners seeking to support schooling in the village – or at least he seemed to regard himself in this way. He had been previously employed by a Spanish NGO that supported teachers at the government school; he was the primary local collaborator for the American NGO mentioned above, and in the summer season he tried to raise money from tourists to support his ‘welfare and development’ organisation and private school. He proudly told me about having received long-term support from Dutch and Italian donors, and laughingly admitted to occasionally exaggerating or falsifying the scope of his organisations’ work in order to woo one-off donations from summer tourists. Munawar’s status as an admirable village leader was far from uncontested – indeed, behind closed doors some men accused Munawar of corruption and self-interest, of monopolising the attention of the American NGO, and even of improper relations with the wife of one of his employees – but there can be no doubt that his position

within transnational flows of money, ideas, and influence enhanced his status, and thus that Ali's alignment with Munawar lent extra force to his admonishment of Hassan in the chance encounter that prompted Hassan to enrol his young daughters in school.

Of course, this is not to say that Ali's influence was totalising, nor that any of the norms he embodied were directly 'mainstreamed' into the life of the village. Even as Hassan suddenly endorsed the basic idea of sending his daughters to school, he did not seem to regret his earlier decision to have prioritised his son's schooling over his daughters', nor did he hope or expect that his daughters' schooling would 'empower' them to alter structures of patriarchal authority. Indeed, just as he had not consulted his wife before enrolling his daughters in school, Hassan took it for granted that his daughters' future husbands would make important decisions on their behalf. More to the point, the relative ease with which Hassan changed his mind about his daughters' schooling suggests that this basic decision did not require the sort of long-term sacrifice and commitment that Ali celebrated in his reconstruction of his own father's attitude towards schooling. In this sense, Hassan's case captures the extent to which an apparent convergence of global enrolment trends towards the goal of 'Education for All' can belie significant divergence in how particular individuals construct and enact a normative understanding of schooling and its gendered value.

A simple detail from my interaction with Hassan serves to illustrate this point: as Hassan proudly described his daughters' first day in school, the daughters were sitting on the floor playing with one of their new books. I watched as they creased and smudged the pages with their dirty hands, and eventually some sort of disagreement between the two young girls led to pages being crumpled and torn from the book. I was

struck by the extent to which Hassan seemed unperturbed, whereas other parents – or Ali or Fatima or Munawar, for that matter – would probably respond quite differently to this situation, whether by harshly censuring the children or gently showing them how to treat books with more care. Hassan's lack of concern encapsulates the extent to which easily quantifiable changes in school enrolment can obscure important details about how schooling is actually valued within the household. The point here reaches well beyond the treatment of school materials or the cultivation of good study habits, and can easily be applied to broader understandings of the production of gender and patriarchy: the asymmetrical influence of educated others may have led Hassan to enrol his daughters in school, but there is little reason to believe that this shift was tied to any more profound shifts in his thinking about grandiose themes like women's rights, autonomy, or empowerment.

Hassan's case was far from anomalous. A string of parallel cases emerged as an indirect result of the process through which I conducted the household census. After training four local teachers as enumerators of a simple census designed to collect background information and schooling history for each of the village's 973 residents, I learned that, in the process of collecting this data, the teachers had convinced no less than fourteen out-of-school girls to enrol immediately. When recalling how these interactions had transpired, teachers reported that a simple nudge – no complex negotiations, no elaborate explanations – was all it took to convince parents to enrol their daughters. What is interesting here is firstly that parents appeared to be so easily convinced and that I unintentionally contributed to this process, and secondly that the teachers did not seem to ask or wonder how this was so, nor to what extent this reported

shift in behaviour was entwined with a shift in values that reflect and produce the lived experience of gender. In other words, and in keeping with what this study has identified as a wide-reaching trend within research and practice relating to gender-targeted schooling interventions, these teachers seemed far more concerned with getting girls into school than with understanding the normative frameworks through which this schooling would be evaluated, understood, and imbued with meaning. The point is not to blame these teachers for failing to reflexively question the depth and limits of their participation in processes of norm-making, for this study has sought to show that this lack of reflexivity extends far beyond these teachers and their village. The point, rather, is that this snapshot of shifting enrolment captures the asymmetry and indeterminacy that characterise social change through and as norm-making: the hegemony of teachers and ‘official research’ lends extra force to the production of girls’ schooling as generally desirable, but meaning and value at the household level remain contingent and far from uniformly convergent or ‘mainstreamed.’

8.4: ‘People Here Are Not So Poor’: Cost, Value, and Affordability

These divergences in meaning and value are at the heart of the renewed concept of affordability that I aim to suggest in this chapter. In conversations with me and with outspoken teachers like Ali, parents in Ghande often cited ‘money problems’ as the limiting factor upon their children’s enrolment and persistence in school. In one sense, there is good reason to take such statements at face value: Ghande’s subsistence agrarian economy leaves many families with very limited cash, and the cost of schooling in the village is thus significant even after the waiving of tuition fees. Likewise, children seeking to attend secondary school or beyond must travel down-valley and live with

relatives or in student hostels, so these opportunities come at a high cost even for children who receive scholarships to cover their tuition. In light of these factors as well as the enrolment surge that occurred after the private school waived tuition fees for girls, one might reasonably infer that ‘money problems’ are a significant barrier to girls’ participation in school, and that if policymakers could decrease the costs of schooling or increase parents’ access to cash, school participation rates would rise accordingly. Indeed, I have already referenced many evaluations of school stipend programmes that seem to demonstrate exactly such an effect.¹⁸⁵ However, as noted above, it is important to discern between how parents experience the costs of schooling and how they experience (and produce) its value. When considered in relation to an understanding of ‘affordability’ that allows for such discernment, the recurring references to ‘money problems’ appear worthy of further analysis.

To begin with, a more robust notion of affordability allows for consideration of the extent to which ‘money problems’ in Ghande tend to be gendered in their effects. Parents with limited resources tend to prioritise investing in their sons’ schooling over their daughters’, and, likewise, in the event of an exogenous ‘shock’ to household finances – for example, a loss of expected income due to crop failure or a bad tourist season, or an unexpected expenditure due to an illness in the family – poor parents in Ghande tend to sacrifice their daughters’ schooling before that of their sons.¹⁸⁶ In this sense, Ali’s insistence that “people here are not so poor” may have been overstated, but

¹⁸⁵ See especially Chapter 3.2.3; see also Alam, Baez, and Del Carpio 2011; Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Chaudhury and Parajuli 2006; Hasan 2010; Lloyd et al. 2006; Raynor 2005; Raynor and Wesson 2006.

¹⁸⁶ These trends became evident during household interviews and my efforts to reconstruct the schooling histories of different families. When explaining the common cases in which daughters dropped out of school before sons, parents often cited some sort of ‘shock’ to their ability to pay for schooling. Without doubting the historical veracity of such accounts, one can still ask why daughters, not sons, tend to bear the brunt of such shocks. See Lloyd et al. 2006 for evidence of similar trends elsewhere in Pakistan.

nonetheless his broader argument highlights an important point: even the poorest parents are not simply passive victims of circumstance; they actively choose how to allocate their available resources, and in many cases could elect to invest more in girls' schooling if they evaluated it as worthy of such investment. From this perspective, it seems critical to ask whether infusions of cash are likely to change the underlying evaluative framework that privileges boys' schooling over girls', or if in fact they tend to boost girls' enrolments without inducing any more robust 'change in demand.' Recall that at least one recent study of stipend programmes in Pakistan seems to suggest the latter by highlighting that parents who receive cash transfers in exchange for sending their daughters to school still continue to invest more in the schooling of their sons (Alam, Baez, and Del Carpio 2011; see Chapter 3.2.3; recall also Raynor's (2005) depiction of Mostafa and the reproduction of patriarchal authority in the context of the Female Stipend Programme in Bangladesh). This point does not invalidate the potential usefulness of such interventions insofar as they have proven to be effective at boosting girls' enrolments, but it does seem to lend support to Ali's critique that these 'handouts' fail to have a significant impact upon the broader normative frameworks through which parents evaluate what is and is not 'affordable' within a given set of available resources.

In a similar vein, an expanded notion of affordability also allows for closer consideration of the exceptional cases in which parents seem to transcend or mitigate the constraining effects of 'money problems.' When visiting households to urge parents to send their daughters to school, Ali and his teaching colleagues were fond of reciting the story of a boy in Ghande named Hadad. According to the story, Hadad's mother was a poor widow, but she sold all of her land and animals and possessions in order to be able

to send Hadad to school. At the time of fieldwork, Hadad was completing his tertiary schooling in Skardu, and Ali often referenced this story alongside his own autobiography in an attempt to convince parents that they could surely afford to send all of their children to school if only they were willing to make similar sacrifices. It is important to note that it is sons, not daughters, who are the beneficiaries of parental sacrifice in these narratives, and that I seldom heard stories of parents going to similar lengths in support of schooling for their daughters. Yet the larger point here is that these exceptional cases demonstrate the indeterminacy of different notions of what is 'affordable,' and that this indeterminacy allows – or even requires – parents to make normative evaluations alongside whatever financial calculations inform their decisions about their daughters' schooling. Such evaluations necessarily draw upon a wide range of different factors and influences that have been discussed in previous chapters, including expectations associated with *purdah* and marriage, shifting popular conceptions of what it means to be a good wife, mother, and Muslim, and the possibility of attracting criticism or admiration from neighbours and village leaders. As parents form and enact evaluations of schooling within these matrices of different influencing factors, the determinants of affordability appear to encompass not just discrete costs calculated during particular moments of transaction, but also the cycles of norm-making through which the meanings of schooling and gender are continually produced, contested, and experienced.

This notion of the affordability of schooling has important implications for broader discussions of the usefulness of stipend or cash transfer programmes. For instance, in *Poor Economics* (2011), Banerjee and Duflo draw upon research from the

fields of economics and behavioural psychology to offer a number of arguments for why it makes sense for policymakers to use cash transfers to ‘nudge’ people towards some decisions and away from others. Among other points, the authors emphasise that people – and especially poor people – often have imperfect information about the potential outcomes of their decisions, and also that people tend to under-invest in the future, even in cases when the likely outcomes of such investments are well-known (2011: 67-70). The authors also note recent studies suggesting that ‘unconditional’ cash transfers might be just as effective at achieving certain outcomes as ‘conditional’ transfers, implying that poor people often know what they want and need to invest in, but that they simply lack the cash to do so. All of this leads the authors to paint a generally favourable picture of cash transfer programmes, especially those that pertain to public health – for example, stipends to support the vaccinations of children.

Yet without attempting to reject the arguments of Banerjee and Duflo, it is crucial to point out at least one important difference between decisions about schooling and decisions about health issues such as whether or not to vaccinate a child. In the latter case, all that matters is that parents choose to obtain the vaccination: the effectiveness of the vaccine is not dependent upon how and to what extent parents endorse its value. In contrast, parental evaluations of schooling are inevitably entangled with the broader processes through which schools contribute to the normative production or reproduction of gender. In other words, parental evaluations and decisions do not simply ‘obtain’ schooling for their children; they also produce its meaning and structure the contexts in which it is gendered and ‘normed.’ In this sense, cash transfer programmes might boost girls’ enrolments by changing what parents are willing and able to pay, but should not

necessarily be assumed to affect the broader processes of norm-making that shape and are shaped by parents' evaluations of whether or not girls' schooling is 'affordable.'

Excerpts from an interview with Zahid, the male principal of the public school in Ghande, provide fertile ground on which to demonstrate this point. When asked to explain why more girls have started attending school in Ghande in recent years, Zahid cites a process of 'seeing' rather than any change in the cost of schooling:

Z: Some are going to [towns and cities down-valley], and there they saw children going to school, daughter going to school, so then they send daughter to school.¹⁸⁷

However, Zahid also acknowledges that many girls in Ghande never enroll in school, or they drop out in their early adolescence. In his explanation of why this is so, he cites poverty and the cost of schooling, but these questions of economic cost are only one aspect of a larger constellation of norms and values:

Z: They do not have interest in education, the girls' parents. They do not have interest. Maybe they have urgent work in the house, some going to shepherd upside, sheep, cows, or they go there to carry wood – like this. [...] Some are very poor, they cannot afford books and uniform. [...] And other reason, they think my daughter will marry and go to another home – that's why he does not give education to his daughter.

WO: And when do you usually see this happen?

Z: Class 8.

WO: Ever before class 8?

Z: No. At that time, her age is 14, 13, like this. At that time they marry. [...] At other house [of in-laws] they have many work. They go to upside and give water to his fields, like this. And if they have interest, the other house, they give her good education; if they have no interest, they stop.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Interview 69. Conducted in English. See full transcript in Annex 1.2.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

In Zahid's analysis, the cost of schooling is clearly a factor, but what seems most determining is the more basic question of whether or not parents "have interest in education" – a question which itself is contextualised within pressure for marriage and the need for household and agricultural labour, especially when male family members are working in the mountains. In other words, Zahid is not convinced that the cost of schooling is an insurmountable barrier, and this becomes more clear in his description of his periodic efforts (along with other teachers from Ghande's government school and private school) to visit households to try to convince parents to send their daughters to school:

Z: Here you know maybe some people have interest in education, so I reach him and say send your boy or girl, please – education is life, so please you are send your daughter or children to school. I always speak about education.

WO: And do you think people listen to you?

Z: Yes, some people listen. [...] I preach them more and more, and then they send their daughters more and more.

WO: And when you preach to them, do they disagree with you or argue with you?

Z: Yes, some say I am poor, so I cannot send my daughter to school, I am sorry.

WO: And how do you respond to that?

Z: I say, please send! You have fields – please sell one field, and that money you spend on your daughter, like this. They have sheep and cow – some sheep and cow you sell, and your daughter you send to school.¹⁸⁹

Similar to Ali's insistence that "people here are not so poor," and echoing the message of the popular story about Hadad which I referenced above, Zahid is convinced that people could afford to send their daughters to find their daughters to school if they actually wanted to – that is, if they actually "have interest in education," or adopt

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Zahid's perspective that "education is life." The problem, in Zahid's rendering, is not so much that school is 'unaffordable' in an economic sense, but rather that it is undervalued (or improperly valued) in a normative sense. In a hypothetical scenario where the cost of schooling is lowered further – whether by a CCT or any other intervention – it might become easier for Zahid to convince some parents to send their daughters to school for some amount of time, but there is little reason to believe that this would necessarily correspond to any shift in the evaluative lenses through which these parents engage with expectations associated with *purdah*, marriage, and employment, and ultimately develop their own "interest in education."

My interview with Kalsoom, a female teacher at Ghande's government school, serves as one final example of why and how references to 'money problems' must be contextualised within an understanding of broader processes of norm-making. First, consider Kalsoom's explanation of how and why parents in Ghande have begun sending their daughters to school:

K: Here, middle school is easy for the girls. But from here to downside, going alone is a problem – that is why girls are not going here. [...] Now, downside all the male and female, 50% are getting a job. And all people are looking from here. So all people are now thinking, boys and girls should both go. [...] But when girls are studying, age is up, because reading is slow. So they are older and still studying. And then marriage, so she stops.

WO: At what level do you see them stopping?

K: Class five, class six, class 8. [...] Many girls are stopping at 6th class, and then marriage.¹⁹⁰

Kalsoom's statement that "all people are looking from here" conveys the extent to which a collective imagining of 'downside' has a persuasive impact on residents of Ghande

¹⁹⁰ Interview 75.

even if they do not actually leave the village themselves. Yet at the same time that “all people are thinking, boys and girls should both go,” Kalsoom also acknowledges that girls’ mobility is constrained by expectations of *purdah* – “going alone is a problem” – and that for older students, i.e. those for whom “age is up,” there is pressure to leave school in order to get married. In light of these pressures, Kalsoom leverages her own status as an educated woman in an attempt to persuade other women to keep their daughters in school:

WO: So, do you talk to women in Ghande and tell them education is important?

K: Yes.

WO: Tell me about this. You go to people’s houses, or you just casually talk? Tell me.

K: I speak to all the people. Usually friends.

WO: And do you think many people change their mind because of you?

K: Yes.

WO: Can you tell me a story of a time when you spoke to somebody and changed their mind? Do you have any example for when you are making change?

K: My small sister – I sent her to school, and my brother also. [And] my sister’s daughter, she stopped the school, and I was pushing her – why did you stop? You are a strong student. You must go to school.

WO: And why did she stop?

K: I don’t know. Money problem.¹⁹¹

Similar to examples of teachers in Mulweer and Abid, and Ghande, Kalsoom is engaged in the remaking of norms through ongoing social interaction. The normative value of girls’ schooling is indeterminate: on the one hand, people in Ghande are influenced by the persuasive effect of ‘looking downside’ and imagining the possibility of employment and other benefits of ‘being educated,’ but on the other hand, their evaluations of schooling are shaped by expectations of *purdah* and marriage. Within this

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

indeterminacy, Kalsoom's asymmetric positionality enables her to persuade some of her peers and family members to send their daughters to school, but her efforts are in tension with a number of other factors, only one of which appears to be a 'money problem.' Even as we take seriously such constraints, it seems far too coarse to conclude that lowering the cost of schooling would 'increase demand,' for this sort of statement would reveal nothing about the larger regimes of value within which Kalsoom and other residents of Ghande encounter and reimagine divergent ideas about schooling, marriage, *purdah*, employment, 'going downside,' and, ultimately, the possible forms of gendered personhood that these ideas allow.

8.5: Beyond 'Global' and 'Local': Indeterminacy, Asymmetry, and Reflexivity in Education and Education Research

Viewed through a lens that is attentive to cycles of global norm-making, simple interventions to reduce the costs of girls' schooling do not appear to engage with the deeper processes through which the meaning of such schooling is produced and embodied – but they are not insulated from such processes, either. In other words, even if the stated rationale of such programmes is only or primarily to offset the costs of girls' schooling, they still carry with them a subtler message that such schooling is valuable and should be pursued. There is no reason to assume that such messages are (or even could be) adopted unquestioningly by those who 'receive' them, but this does not mean that their effect is negligible. The same could be said of researchers who travel from cities or faraway countries to study the implementation of such programmes in poor, rural settings. It is here, then, that a lens of global norm-making also becomes a mirror: it affords a reading of social change as shaped not by competing institutions that

researchers can impartially observe so much as by competing regimes of value in which researchers inevitably participate, and often from positions asymmetrically endowed with power. Recognising indeterminacy in the construction and transformation of social norms means recognising both the limits and possibilities of the structuring influence of such positions, whether they are inhabited by researchers, policymakers, teachers, or even parents or children who live at the forefront of generational change and whose examples are then 'seen' by others. Such indeterminacy both enables and constrains the contingency of 'local' norms, and allows an understanding of convergent and divergent qualities of 'global' change within hegemonies that are both structuring and contested. Seen this way, Hassan's 'demand' for girls' schooling exhibits neither 'global convergence' nor 'local distinctiveness,' but rather is an instance of contingency within the refraction of hegemonic norms through a web of situated actors that include Ali and the American NGO that sponsored his training. The same can be said for the many residents of Ghande whose enrolment decisions were apparently shaped by the influence of people like Zahid, Kalsoom, and the teachers who helped me conduct my household census.

The first point here is that educational NGOs – and researchers, for that matter – are more or less inextricably engaged in the collective apperception and production of meaning and the shaping of social life. The second point, perhaps less obvious, is that gendered social norms are made and learned through processes that are anything but predetermined, and that this indeterminacy demands serious reflection about how the work of educational researchers reinforces some norms over others. A heightened sense of this influence might in the first instance provide a warning of sorts – a reminder that it

is hard to know what is best for others (or, indeed, what is even going on), and that promoting schooling is not necessarily the same as promoting the expansion of choice and capabilities, despite popular arguments to the contrary,¹⁹² and thus that researchers should seek to tread lightly. Yet even if one does not wish to engage with the relativistic undertones of this sort of argument, this recognition of indeterminacy and asymmetry can still enable a new understanding of how and what people learn through and about schooling. In this sense, a lens of global norm-making offers an expanded analysis of learning: one through which researchers can locate particular instances of schooling within landscapes of meaning that are expansive and uneven, and that circumscribe and absorb the attempts of researchers to understand them.

Applied to a village in northern Pakistan, a lens of global norm-making enables the recognition that personal evaluations of girls' schooling are entangled with prevailing research agendas, international policy initiatives, and localised hegemonies through which different actors work to establish girls' schooling as normative and self-evidently desirable. It thus attunes empirical investigation of these evaluations to how they emerge from a web of influences that include the work of researchers, and how 'gender mainstreaming' is neither determinative of nor insignificant to the lived experience of gender. Whether this recognition is paralysing or exciting depends on our willingness to accept and embrace and fulfill the possibilities of what it means to be educators, researchers, and embodied participants in social worlds of human making.

¹⁹² See brief discussion of the capability approach in the first footnote in Chapter 2.1; see also Oppenheim 2012.

Chapter 9: Concluding Discussion

9.1: *A Renewed Concept of 'Demand'*

The preceding chapters have sought to advance several interlocking arguments. The first revolves around a semantic and methodological point about how researchers, policymakers, and popular commentators use the term ‘demand,’ and it emphasises that the common focus on simply getting more girls into school has distracted from important questions about how girls’ schooling is normatively evaluated and understood. More specifically, ideas about demand have tended to reflect aspects of a neoliberal social imaginary in which the value of schooling is presumed to be self-evident, school-going girls are presumed to be evidence of converging ideals of economically rational individual personhood, and gender is a ‘line to be crossed.’ This critique amounts to a call for an approach that resists the tendency to reduce demand to a simple yes or no decision at the moment of enrolment, and instead asks *why* and *how* parents do or do not value schooling in particular ways for particular children. Such an approach improves upon the vagueness of typical references to ‘cultural barriers’ by highlighting that different evaluations of girls’ schooling (including those articulated by researchers and policymakers) reflect and produce different ways of ‘doing gender,’ and that the uptake of girls’ schooling emerges through divergent and contested re-imaginings of gendered social norms – an insight which is often obfuscated by simplistic assumptions linking girls’ schooling with vague notions of empowerment or autonomy, or, conversely, by equally simplistic assumptions that portray patriarchal hegemony as static and absolute, and schooling merely as an engine of social reproduction. In this sense, the study offers researchers and policymakers a more nuanced lens through which to ask how the

expansion of girls' schooling across different contexts is (and is not) entwined with broader changes in how girls and women are expected to live their lives, and how differently located girls and women challenge and reimagine these expectations in different ways. Asking such questions can help researchers and policymakers identify new opportunities for intervention (described further in Chapter 9.3), but perhaps more importantly, it can also inspire humility and open new avenues of comparative understanding.

The second component of this study's renewed concept of demand is a substantive empirical point – or a series of points, rather – about what demand actually looks like in three rural villages in Pakistan, how it is gendered, and how it varies in context-specific ways but also reflects broader national and transnational asymmetries of power. These empirical points shed light on a wide and shifting range of perspectives, evaluations, and aspirations that inform and emerge from the general increase in girls' enrolment and participation in school. In one sense, findings offer to complicate the popular assumption that rising girls' enrolments necessarily indicate that girls are becoming more empowered and that parents are necessarily adopting new perspectives about what kind of futures their daughters can or should pursue. In Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande, many parents who send their daughters to school articulate expectations that reinforce conservative norms pertaining to *purdah* and the primary role of women as mothers and wives, and many teachers and school administrators seem to share these expectations. Yet at the same time, many parents' evaluations of schooling also reveal significant changes in popular norms regarding what futures are possible and desirable for their daughters. Embedded in this observation is an important point about the

widespread development of an appreciation for the immediate value of girls' schooling as a source of dignity and respectability, often reflected in comments about *talim*, and how this can seem to motivate enrolment – at least up to a certain point – even in cases where female employment is perceived as unlikely or undesirable. Also noteworthy here is the role that Islam can play in such considerations of the immediate social value of 'being educated' (see especially Chapter 6.5), and how this complicates popular assumptions that seek to differentiate between *madrasa* and 'mainstream' schools in Pakistan by using the reductionistic categories of 'religious' and 'secular.'

The third component of the study's expanded analysis of demand is an analytical point about what factors seem to induce changes in how different people imagine and produce the normative value of girls' schooling. Findings underscore the persuasiveness of 'seeing' the behaviour of neighbours, teachers, NGO workers, and other actors – including researchers – whose examples instantiate the meanings and desirability of 'being educated.' Findings also reveal the surprising degree of influence that children and mothers can have within the processes through which schooling decisions are made and enacted. In presenting these findings, I have worked to illustrate the extent to which household-level debates about who should go to school, and for how long and for what reasons, are examples of the interactional processes through which divergent and indeterminate regimes of value are contested and re-made.

This then yields to a fourth point, more theoretical, about how norms converge and diverge across space and time. Fieldwork revealed significant and often surprising degrees of divergence between neighbours with relatively similar background characteristics, and I have argued that this divergence can be considered an expected

outcome of the indeterminate and asymmetrical interactions through which social change occurs. This evidence of divergence constitutes an important rejoinder to the assumption that rising enrolments and the general uptake of formal schooling around the world can be taken to indicate or predict the emergence of a ‘world culture,’ or that the general ‘mainstreaming’ of gender-sensitive analyses within the development agenda can or should lead to the emergence of a single version of something called ‘gender equality’ or ‘women’s empowerment.’ At the same time, though, evidence of ‘seeing’ across localities within broader processes of norm-making prevents the retreat into a fanciful romanticisation of ‘local interpretation,’ and thus highlights the structuring influence of extra-local actors and institutions and the asymmetrical persuasiveness of the particular values they embody.

The broad theoretical backdrop introduced in Chapter 2.1 included analytical questions about what happens at the nexus of schooling, gender, and social change, and methodological questions about how such change can be better measured and understood. This study’s renewed concept of demand offers a significant contribution to these broad framing questions. With respect to the first question, findings shed light on the extent to which and the mechanisms through which the uptake of girls’ schooling is entwined with broader imaginative regimes and currents of gendered social change. With respect to the second question, the entire structure of this inquiry is itself a methodological model for how researchers can gain insight into shifting social norms by looking beyond the simple inputs and outputs of schooling and asking instead about the contested evaluations that underpin them. Taken as a whole, the study suggests that parents, teachers, students, activists, and other key players within a given educational

ecosystem – including researchers and policymakers who might claim for themselves a stance of objective distance – are embedded in ongoing processes of ‘imagining demand’: processes through which the value of schooling is not predetermined by a neat calculation of economic costs and benefits, but rather is indeterminate, contested, contingent, and reflective of broader ideals of what it means to be a (gendered) person engaged in social life.

9.2: Imagining Demand and ‘Doing Gender’ across Contexts: Purdah, Marriage, Employment, and Indeterminate Ideals of Female Personhood

Throughout this study, I have worked to answer Unterhalter’s call to document how different “education agents” are “doing gender” (2014: 121). I have shown that the different evaluative frameworks through which people imagine, experience, and study ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling reflect different ideals of gendered personhood, and that these ideals are contextually contingent but also embedded in transnational processes of norm-making. In the contexts of Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande, demand for girls’ schooling emerges in tension with shifting ideas about *purdah*, marriage, and employment, and is informed by a backdrop of patriarchal authority that remains more or less unquestioned even as girls and women reimagine the meaning of ‘being educated’ and associated norms of respectability and female personhood.

In Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande, the possibility that girls’ schooling will lead to formal employment appears to be undesirable or unrealistic for some, and a distant hope for others, but seldom a determining reason for sending girls to school. This is related at least in part to a broader sense that public institutions have failed, that corruption is rampant, and that economic opportunities emerge through social ‘connections’ rather

than educational merit. However, employment opportunities for men act upon demand for girls' schooling in unexpected ways. In Abid, employment opportunities for men in the nearby fertilizer factory has led to new opportunities for 'seeing' educated others and has led some fathers to adopt a new 'awareness' of the value of sending their daughters to school. In Ghande, employment opportunities for men within the tourist industry has increased the burden of household and agricultural labour borne by women, which has necessitated a loosening of restrictions upon women's mobility and public visibility, but also limits girls' availability to attend school even as it creates more income with which families can pay for schooling.

In all three villages, the impact of girls' schooling upon marriageability remains a prominent concern, but this concern manifests in different ways. Some parents in Mulweer report a willingness to allow their daughters to delay marriage indefinitely in order to stay in school, but many others view schooling primarily as an avenue to a 'better' marriage, and still others worry that schooling will make it harder for their daughters to find a good match. In Abid, parents from some castes report that a girls' level of schooling counts as an asset in negotiations of marriage and dowry, while parents from other castes perceive early marriage to be an unavoidable 'custom' that is mostly incompatible with sending girls to school – although some are willing to take the risk. In Ghande, the influence of foreign NGOs and tourists, along with the influences of Shia, Ismaili, and Nurbakhshi Islam, has contributed to a widespread appreciation for the value of girls' 'being educated,' but nonetheless, many people continue to cite expectations of early marriage as a reason for girls' being out of school.

These shifting ideas about marriage and employment entwined with ever-present concerns about *purdah* and female mobility. Interpretations of how to appropriately observe *purdah* vary between contexts, but what is constant is a conviction that some degree of separation must be maintained. Opportunities for girls to attend school or seek employment after schooling are in tension with the social and physical risks (real or imagined) associated with girls' 'going out,' and this creates a parallel tension between aspirations for female self-sufficiency and concerns about family honour and respectability. I have argued that these tensions are not necessarily a 'barrier' to demand for girls' schooling, but rather that they are constitutive of demand and of the particular ideals of interdependent female personhood that different evaluations of schooling reflect and create. When asked about the most valuable or important things that girls learn in school, parents and students consistently emphasised three points: manners or etiquettes, Islam, and 'household things.' In contrast, when asked about boys' education, respondents consistently mentioned future employment and mobility. Likewise, when asked whether boys and girls should study the same things in school, many respondents said 'no' and exhibited clearly gendered conceptions of the purpose of schooling: boys should learn things to prepare them for work 'outside,' and girls should learn things to prepare them for work in the household.

Many other respondents presented contrasting views and suggested that boys and girls should indeed learn the same things in school. The frequency of these responses was unevenly distributed across different research sites. For example, the majority of interview respondents in Mulweer and Abid answered that boys and girls should not learn the same things, while the majority in Ghande answered the opposite, often citing

the influence of their Shia, Ismaili, or Nurbakhshi religious heritage in informing these views. This point of inter-regional diversity only further emphasises the fact that different people value schooling for different reasons, and that these divergent evaluations constitute different ways of ‘doing gender’ through the promotion of and participation in girls’ schooling.

9.3: Implications for Policy and Further Research

The introduction to this study noted that the primary motivation for its consideration of demand for girls’ schooling was not to help develop new strategies for manipulating or ‘stimulating’ it in the interest of boosting girls’ enrolments in school (see Chapter 1.1). On the contrary, the basic goal of this study has been to better understand the complex perspectives and evaluations that are cause, context, and consequence of enrolment decisions, but are often ignored or obscured in typical discussions about ‘what works’ to get more girls into school. My reluctance to prioritise an emphasis on how to ‘stimulate demand’ is partly due to a concern about the shaky epistemological and ethical justifications for efforts to shape the preferences of others, but also from a pragmatic recognition that simply convincing parents to send their daughters to school is not the same as actually generating their long-term support and investment in girls’ schooling. In other words, and perhaps paradoxically, asking how parents value girls’ schooling is quite different than simply asking what interventions will most effectively boost girls’ enrolments, but the former might in fact be an effective and underappreciated step towards the same goal as the latter: not simply to get more girls across the threshold of the school building, but rather to spark a broader shift in the

ways that families and communities perceive and affirm the benefits of girls' schooling and commit themselves to pursuing it.

Conventional discussions of 'demand-side interventions' often consider the effect of measures such as school stipends, free school lunches, and scholarships upon rates of enrolment and participation (see Chapters 1.3 and 3.2), but I have argued that such interventions seem to have more to do with reducing costs and increasing auxiliary benefits than with changing the ways that parents actually value girls' schooling itself, and thus it is perhaps a misnomer to even consider such programmes to be 'demand-side interventions.' At the very least, it is worth noting that the proven impact of such programmes upon enrolment rates reveals very little about their impact upon the making of gendered social norms, and thus that their capacity to induce a 'change in demand' remains uncertain if demand is defined in the expanded terms proposed by this study. This point signals a need and opportunity for further research similar to the kind undertaken by this study: especially if conducted longitudinally, qualitative studies of populations exposed to interventions such as school stipends could shed valuable light on what normative evaluations are shaping and shaped by the quantifiable changes in enrolment that such interventions are known to induce.

The design of the present study lacked the longitudinal dimension that would make this sort of further research uniquely powerful, but even so, the findings of this study highlight a number of important points about the varying extents to which different interventions seem to have shaped a change in popular evaluations of girls' schooling. Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande were each the site of a recent gender-targeted schooling intervention and a corresponding rise in girls' enrolments, and findings from

each of these villages suggest that this shift in enrolments was accompanied by a wide-reaching shift in popular attitudes or ‘awareness’ about the value of girls’ schooling. Each of the three interventions under investigation involved deliberate attempts to improve the quality and widen the accessibility of available schooling opportunities, as well as attempts by teachers and NGO administrators to encourage enrolments by visiting households and speaking with parents. There is little doubt that these efforts contributed to the growth in enrolments, but it is worth emphasising that parents, teachers, and students in each village tended to argue that the key driver of change was not the recent intervention and its expansion of schooling opportunities, but rather the influence of ‘seeing’ other girls attend school and subsequently exhibit behaviours and mannerisms deemed to be admirable and desirable.

Of course, these different factors are not mutually exclusive, and it is reasonable to infer that reportedly ‘new’ evaluations of schooling emerged from a combination of improved quality, expanded access, decreased costs, and the powerful effect of ‘seeing’ more girls attend school in the wake of these other changes. Yet before jumping to the conclusion that increasing access and quality while decreasing costs will necessarily spark processes of ‘seeing’ and subsequent changes in popular evaluations of schooling, it is important to recall that the effect of these interventions appeared to vary dramatically between families. Some parents remained deeply sceptical of girls’ schooling (or of ‘too much’ of it) even as their neighbours reported to have changed their minds. Likewise, some parents insisted that their daughters’ schooling was not ‘affordable’ even when most costs had been reduced, while others vowed to sacrifice everything in support of their daughters’ schooling, even in cases when costs remained

relatively high. At times, background variables such as poverty, caste, and religion seemed to offer some explanation for these instances of divergence, but at other times there were no such obvious explanations. The simple point is that normative evaluations of girls' schooling are shaped by processes that are more complex than can be addressed by interventions that focus only on cost, accessibility, and quality. Such interventions might indeed be effective at boosting enrolments in the aggregate sense, but it would be simplistic to thus conclude that they constitute a reliable and sufficient strategy for 'stimulating' any sort of wide-reaching and long-lasting popular support for girls' schooling.

In this sense, the recurring references to 'seeing' point to a policy recommendation that seems almost too simple to be taken seriously, yet is perhaps often overlooked for exactly this reason: interventions aiming to 'stimulate demand' for girls' schooling should include significant efforts to facilitate dialogue between community members with different perspectives about the value of girls' schooling. Examples of such efforts within this study's research sites include the practice of inviting all parents in the village to attend 'prize day' events at the girls' school in Mulweer (see Chapter 6.9) and door-to-door household visits by teachers like Ali and committed 'social mobilisers' like Farooq (see Chapters 7.2 and 8.3). The testimonies of girls who claim to have convinced their parents, sisters, and neighbours of the value of girls' schooling (see Chapter 6.8) suggest that further interventions along these lines could seek to give more direct support to such girls and their locally-rooted, dialogue-driven activism. Taken out of context, this recommendation could seem to rely upon the naïve assumption that interventions can 'stimulate demand' simply by telling people what to think. Yet in the

context of this study, the point is more nuanced: indeterminate evaluations of schooling are made and contested through social interactions, and thus interventions aiming to induce changes in these evaluative frameworks will be more effective if they take these interactions into account rather than focus only on the provision of schooling.

The wide-reaching change in ‘awareness’ reported throughout this study demonstrates the extent to which evaluations of girls’ schooling can and do change, and hints at the possibility that policy interventions could play a role in inducing such transformation. Yet in acknowledging this point, it is also important to recall that in Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande, the reported change in ‘awareness’ was far from universal, and that it rarely conformed to what might be the expectations or hopes of mainstream development discourses linking girls’ schooling to broader notions of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Many parents who supported girls’ schooling (and even some teachers and school administrators) still insisted that boys need more schooling than girls, that girls should not seek employment, that boys and girls should pursue different futures, and that no amount of schooling would earn a girl or woman the right to make major life decisions such as whom and when to marry.

In recognising the ways that particular instances of demand for girls’ schooling often lacked the progressive aspirations articulated by many policymakers and popular advocates for girls’ schooling – that is, in recognising what Unterhalter et al. (2011: 11) have identified as “only a partial connection between...global policy aspirations for gender equity...and various sites of enactment” – one might be tempted to argue that interventions aiming to ‘stimulate demand’ can or should attempt to rectify these discrepancies. It is here that we can benefit from recalling the attention to different

notions of personhood articulated throughout this study, and from confronting the possibility that conceptions of how schooling can contribute to human welfare are unnecessarily narrow if their focus upon the promotion of individual choice undermines an appreciation of stability and security within the family. Broadening such conceptions is not merely a useful theoretical exercise; it can also lead to new policy and research initiatives that engage with the challenge of developing schooling interventions in tandem with the needs and values of the families and communities they are meant to serve. This task is unquestionably more difficult than simply enlarging the number of girls that enrol and persist in school, but such a holistic approach seems necessary for sustainable change: while programs such as conditional cash transfers and free school lunches might indeed help boost girls' enrolments, the ultimate scope of their impact will be limited if their focus upon getting individual girls into school treats context-specific norms as mere 'barriers' to be transcended. Instead, I argue that researchers and policymakers must approach such norms – for example, expectations pertaining to marriage, employment, and *purdah*, and the ideals of female personhood that they reflect and produce – as constitutive elements of the webs of meaning within which people encounter and reimagine ideas about the value of schooling.

Two scholars offer further insight towards this point. The first is Bano in her study of the proliferation of female *madrasas* in Pakistan:

The typical response of development agencies and the women's rights NGOs enjoying the support of these agencies is to dismiss female religious movements as examples of 'adaptive preference'...[But in fact] extreme expressions of religious values are often not just a case of religious indoctrination, but rather the result of the genuine appeal of those ideas and/or *the optimal response*

to the choice available in the given context. (2009: 6, emphasis added)

Bano's emphasis on choice *in context* is shared by Abu-Lughod's call for "serious appreciation of differences among women in the world" (2002: 783). Her critical question anticipates the basis for my own interest in understanding context-specific evaluations of girls' schooling:

What does freedom mean if we accept the fundamental premise that humans are social beings, always raised in certain social and historical contexts...that shape their desires and understandings of the world? (2002: 786)

To ask this question rhetorically is agonistic and unproductive, and only recycles a sort of postcolonial guilt that leaves us paralysed by the reality of cultural difference. Yet to ask the question authentically – to genuinely work towards an understanding of choice in relation to particular families and communities, rather than in relation to an abstracted ideal of the meta-cultural individual – can perhaps open the door for new conversations about human welfare and how it might be achieved.

I have worked to ask such a question through my exploration of how different people evaluate and make choices about girls' schooling. I have argued that such choices are more than simple determinants of school enrolment; they also shape the gendered meaning and outcomes of schooling. I have shown that the schooling that many parents in rural Pakistan 'choose' (and thus produce) for their daughters is not the same as what many advocates of girls' schooling have sought to offer and promote. For policymakers, scholars, or citizens wondering how education can contribute towards a better future – regardless of how such a future is imagined – this point raises the difficult question of whether and how it is justifiable to promote some normative evaluations of girls'

schooling as more legitimate than others. Regardless of whatever partial answers I have offered, I have stressed the importance of asking such questions, and of aspiring towards the humility that they allow and require.

Annex 1: Examples of Fieldnotes, Interview Transcripts, and Questionnaire Results

Annex 1.1: Fieldnotes from Mulweer

Below is an excerpt from my fieldnotes from 13-15 February 2012 in Mulweer. I wrote fieldnotes most days with a pen in a hardbound notebook and then consolidated them into typed notes every few days, adding further reflections while typing. The excerpts below reflect multiple themes discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, including: a sense of marginalisation within the NGO; pressure from foreign donors; expectations that I will ‘help’ in some way; patriarchal themes of school curriculum and resistance to these themes by female teachers; and my own recognition that my own interactions with the NGO are a rich source of data.

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[Tahir] at his desk during an afternoon power outage, holding his head in his hands: ‘No power.’ And along with lack of electricity you have lack of management skills, lack of the social capital to be writing an email to a donor agency, lack of secure leadership from [Founder], lack of trust in [Founder]’s honesty, and all kinds of patriarchal or downright misogynistic behavior on the part of the [NGO] leaders. Realizing also I need to write about [Kaniz] at length, and especially what happened with the money for her. Insofar as this is part of the lived experience on the ‘supply’ side, it has to be part of the demand story as well. Or, put differently: if the main drive of the inquiry is two-fold – what does demand look like, and how did it come to be this way? – then what happens behind closed doors at [Mulweer NGO] (or [Abid NGO], or in govt offices, or wherever) is part of the answer to both of those questions: first, in terms of how admins and execs and donors and etc. value schooling; second, in terms of how these different valuations (and each of their own contexts – eg middle-class NGO worker vs poor villager) might influence each other over time...

Then I sat in office and chatted [Tahir] and [Founder]. Discuss ‘permission’ with [Founder] she gives permission for ‘everything.’ I ask how my research can help them here, but this question seems not to register – I try asking several times – [Tahir] says I can publicize [NGO]; I make it clear that everything I write might not be positive, but I am planning to do it anonymously – he says of course, but also asks that I can advocate for [NGO] in other circles – also [Founder] asks if I can help with this petrol pump revenue scheme; I make it clear I can’t help with money directly, but I can help improve the proposal. [Founder] tells me: ‘you are not a guest—you are a friend!’ (*mehman nahin – dost hai!*) I ask about problems at school/NGO – big points are teachers demanding more salary, and general concern re: financial survival. No big funder right now. [Foreign funder] visited yesterday to check out ‘progress’ after they gave over a million RS several years ago; everything looks spiffy in wake of their visit. As we sit, [other foreign funder] calls [Founder]’s cell – asking for bills from last year’s support – [Tahir] explains later that [Executive Director] didn’t provide [before being fired]. I ask if they consider working w govt for any support – [Founder] laughs...

Chatting with [female teacher] about home economics – what are they [female students] learning? On a random page of textbook, in Urdu, are the following questions: What is the importance of food in our body? What are the dangers of an unbalanced diet? What food do you cook in different weather? What is the importance of the decoration of the home? I ask her if home economics is necessary for boys. ‘No – boys do not do this kind of work.’ I ask if it is possible that in the future boys would do this kind of work. ‘No. Because they have self-respect, and they think that if they do this, their feelings will be hurt. They think that such work is only for females.’ I ask what *she* thinks. ‘I think for boys it is essential. Girls learn everything for life work, so boys should also learn. A girl drives an airplane or a car – this work is for male, but all girls learn all things. Similarly, a male should learn all things.’ School as a site of dissent, re-negotiation, even alongside ‘reproduction’ (ie home ec curriculum). Cf. interview with [other teacher]...

Annex 1.2: Interview Transcripts from Mulweer, Abid, and Ghande

In this section I share one interview transcript from each of my three research sites. I have redacted a few sections ([...]) in an effort at concision, but my main intention here is to provide readers with a glimpse of the transcripts which served as my main source of written data. Recall from Chapter 5.5 that in most cases I transcribed audio recordings of interviews within a few days of the interview, often with the consultation of my research assistants for sections where the translation was unclear.

Below is a transcript from an interview with the government school principal in Ghande (Interview #69). I conducted this interview in English, in the principal’s home with no one else present. In the transcript below, ‘N.’ is the principal. The transcript begins with a few notes about N’s background. The transcript reflects several themes discussed in Chapter 8 including: recent growth in girls’ enrolment; the persuasive influence of teachers or school administrators (or their perceptions of such) via ‘household visits’; expectations of early marriage; the influence of the tourist industry; school enrolment as an outcome of ‘competition’ between parents (related to my reading of ‘seeing’), and the overlapping efforts of different NGO’s operating in Ghande.

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2012.3.4 #4

[Z.] started working gov’t school 2002; became principal after 10 yrs tchg – after FA in Khaplu in 1998, came back to Ghande and was ‘volunteer’ tchr for 4 yrs. Interview mostly in English.

Z: Me and [teacher] work with students after school in the afternoon, because already we have a shortage of teachers. So after the school is closed, we open it again for two hours or four hours more. At this time, you know, it is cold, so maybe April or May we will start.

WO: Okay. So tell me about changes you've seen in the number of children coming to school – when did -

Z: Yeah, here you know maybe some people have interest in education, so I reach him and say send your boy or girl, please – education is life, so please you are send your daughter or children to school. I always speak about education.

WO: And do you think people listen to you?

Z: Yes, some people listen.

WO: So why is it then that today there are 89 boys in gov't school, and only 29 girls. Why so many more boys?

Z: I speak you – they do not have interest in education, the girls' parents. They do not have interest. Maybe they have urgent work in the house, some going to shepherd upside, sheep, cows, or they go there to carry wood – like this.

WO: And have you seen a change with this?

Z: Inshallah, I try.

WO: But I'm just wondering if you think back maybe ten or fifteen years – at the time, were any girls coming to school?

Z: At that time, maybe seven or eight only.

WO: So what is making that change?

Z: There, some are going to Skardu, Khaplu, with their parents, and there they saw children going to school, daughter going to school, so then they send daughter to school. And some are very poor, they cannot afford books and uniform.

WO: I thought there was no uniform here?

Z: No, this time it is cold, so I do not make them wear it.

WO: So how much does uniform cost for one year?

Z: 1000.

WO: So what is the reason to have uniform?

Z: It is the government order.

WO: To me it seems like a waste of money.

Z: Yeah, in Pakistan our government says 'you must wear uniform.'

WO: Okay. so in 1998, you said only 6 or 7 girls are going, and now you have about thirty – so what is making this change? Is it that parents want their girls to have a job, or it helps with their marriage, or it helps them be a better mother...?

Z: Um – job. I said before to you – one reason is that they are very poor, and they have a shortage in their house because one is going up, like shepherd, and one is here to give water to the field, so they have a shortage. And one other reason is they have little interest in education, that's why they do not send to school. And other reason, they think my daughter will marry and go to another home—that's why he does not give education to his daughter.

WO: And do you think these attitudes are changing, or not changing?

Z: Inshallah changing.

WO: But what do you actually think?

Z: I preach them more and more, and then they send their daughters more and more.

WO: And when you preach to them, do they disagree with you or argue with you?

Z: Yes, some say I am poor, so I cannot send my daughter to school, I am sorry.

WO: And how do you respond to that?

Z: I say, please send! You have fields—please sell one field, and that money you spend on your daughter, like this. They have sheep and cow—some sheep and cow you sell, and your daughter you send to school.

WO: And what about when parents say there is no reason to send my daughter, because she will marry and go to another house—what do you say to that?

Z: I say to them, if you send your daughter, she can help you in the future—she can take a job, she can give some salary to you.

WO: So do you think it's true – if you get education here, it's easy to get a job?

Z: Yeah yeah – already some government posts are empty, like teacher post, doctor post.

WO: Interesting. And if a girl only goes to class five, then is education still useful for her?

Z: Useful.

WO: How? Can you get a job after class five?

Z: I see many girls go to class five, and then on to another school.

WO: But let's say they go to class 8 at your school, and then they stop -

Z: No, this time, class 8 students do not have a job. They wait first year second year and take exam, and then they get a job.

WO: But even if they do not get matric, they can get a job?

Z: No.

WO: Matric is necessary.

Z: Yes. Matric pass, then they can have a job.

WO: So do you think after finishing class 8 – in 2011, four students were in class 8, now what are they doing?

Z: Two are Skardu, one Machlu, one Khande.

WO: Okay. And they get some support from some scholarship or something?

Z: No, no. Families must pay.

WO: And how do your students do on the exams leaving class 8? Generally passing?

Z: Maybe sometimes one or two is not so success, but every year they are passing.

WO: Okay. And do you think that girls, sometimes they stop school for marriage? Do you see this happening?

Z: Yes, sometimes this happens. At other house they have many work. They go to upside and give water to his fields, like this. And if they have interests, the other house, so they give her good education; if they have no interest, they stop.

WO: And when do you usually see this happen?

Z: Class 8.

WO: Ever before class 8?

Z: No. At that time, her age is 14, 13, like this. At that time they marry.

WO: Okay. So right now, there are zero girls in class 8, one in class 7, zero in class 6, zero in 5. And at MPS....so in the two schools combined, there are only 8 girls in classes 5, 6, 7, 8. So where are the other girls of that age?

Z: Other girls are in the village, not in school.

WO: Okay, so let's talk about these other girls – do you think most of them went to some school, and then stopped? What do you think?

Z: I think the girls whose families are interested in education, they get good education.

WO: So this is what I am interested in – why is it that some families are interested, and some are not interested? How do you explain that? I don't understand.

Z: Many foreigners are coming here. They carry his luggage, and can take 800 Rs. in one day, like this. So they think it is good – one month, we have 80,000, 90,000.

WO: But do girls do that work?

Z: Girls, no. Girls only go to shepherd.

WO: So, why do you think that parents want to send the boys, but not the girls? Why do boys not stay home to take care of animals?

Z: Boys can get good money with tourists, so their parents think it is good, because my boy can take luggage, and he brings good money.

WO: But I mean – if a girl stops school when she is in fifth class, say – then what does she do after that? She is at home working?

Z: Yeah.

WO: So why is it not possible that boys can also be helping at home?

Z: I don't know. Some boys do this, and some do not.

WO: Okay. So, when did the government school start becoming English medium?

Z: Before time, there were two subjects – English 1 and 2. Then in 2000, the government start slowly slowly English subject. Before, two subjects of English, then math in English, then general science, then SST. Now it is three subjects in Urdu – Urdu 1 and 2, and Islamiat – and all else in English.

WO: So all of your teachers are strong in English?

Z: Yes.

WO: So why do you think some parents send children to [private school] instead of [government school]?

Z: Some parents think they send to [government school], because there is fee at [private school].

WO: Do you think the quality of education is the same at the two schools?

Z: Yes, same.

WO: Do you know if your students and the [private school] students, who does better on exams?

Z: Same same.

WO: And is the government school getting any support from [local NGO]?

Z: Sometimes they give us the whiteboard marker; we have a shortage.

WO: And is that the only thing?

Z: Yes.

WO: So do you think it is good to have these two different schools?

Z: Yeah. Because I think my children strong, and he think his children strong – that's why it is good, for raising.

WO: Ah, like competition?

Z: Yeah, competition.

WO: Okay. And what about [other local NGO] – are you getting support from [that NGO]? They say maybe they pay one teacher?

Z: This helps us, only. Only this teacher.

WO: And [Amercian NGO] is also paying one teacher?

Z: Yeah.

WO: And where else do you get support? A little from [American NGO], [local NGO] – anybody else?

Z: No, just them.

WO: What about [Spanish NGO], did they ever help in the past?

Z: Before, they gave us office chair and two or three whiteboards – but other, not support us.

WO: Okay. And there is a new school now, the government is building it?

Z: Yeah yeah. It is finished, already complete, but the constructor not hand over by government – because the floor is not so good. So they finish, then government take, then give us.

WO: So your old building, will that ever be used again as school?

Z: No, that is store.

WO: Okay. So do you have any plan for raising enrolment and getting more children to go to school?

Z: Yes, Inshallah.

WO: What is your plan?

Z: My plan is, Inshallah, first we give them good education, and then I tell him clean around the village, clean around the environment – this is my idea.

WO: But I am asking – like, 2010 there were 77 students, 2011 there were 85, 2012 there were 144 – so more people are coming every year. How are you making this happen? You just talk to the parents?

Z: Yeah yeah. I talk to the parents.

WO: And – um – do you plan to continue doing this?

Z: Inshallah, yeah, I continue the preach.

WO: And how often do you go?

Z: Every year, in January and February – at that time I am going to everybody's house, and ask him please send your children.

WO: And do you go with [NGO school] teachers to do that?

Z: Yeah, we go together.

WO: So tell me a story – last month was February – did you convince anybody?

Z: Yeah.

WO: How?

Z: They think education is good, so some send children to school. Some are new married, so they have no children.

WO: But when you go around to houses, do you ever find a house where there is a young child, maybe ten or twelve years old, who is not going to school?

Z: Yeah.

WO: So when you tell them to send the children, do they say it's too late? Or what do they say?

Z: I say to them, you send your children to school, please. Education is education. If you do not give him education, it is not good. And some say okay, please I will send my children in your school.

WO: But in an example where a child is ten or twelve years old – is it still possible?

Z: It is not possible. When they are so upside in age, it is not possible.

WO: What if they are 8 years old, then is it possible?

Z: Yeah, 4, 5, 6, 7, it is possible.

WO: But 8, 9, 10, not possible?

Z: I think they have work in their house, that is why he does not send to school.

WO: Interesting. Well, it's all very interesting for me. Do you have any questions for me, or anything you would like to tell me? If you could request one thing to make education stronger at your school, what would it be?

Z: First, I request more teachers. Then I request some help for donate. Some poor children, they are short of money, so I bring them books, notebooks, stationery—like this. And other times, we try more teachers to part time teach the students.

WO: What about – in Khaplu, I've seen the District Education Office – do you ever go there and ask them for more teachers?

Z: Yes, my president of VCC, he goes there and says please send me more teachers, and they say every place is like you – asking for more teachers. But there have a shortage.

WO: Shortage of money, or teachers?

Z: Of teachers. This is a very far area, so people do not want to come here. Government pays the teachers, but they do not like coming here. They request to their bosses, please I cannot go to [Ghande]. There is too cold, and I cannot go such a long way. Like this.

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Below is a transcript from an interview with a student (S.) and teacher (A.) in Mulweer (Interview #36). I conducted this interview in the school courtyard in a combination of English and Urdu, with the teacher translating between English and Urdu in cases where the student and I could not understand each other. As with the previous transcript, this transcript begins with a few of my notes about the setting. The transcript reflects several key themes discussed in Chapter 6, including: changing evaluations of girls' schooling, often based upon manners more so than immediate economic returns ('they can eat with a style...'); efforts of female teachers to inspire more positive evaluations of girls' schooling; expectations of early marriage, and the ways in which 'demand' sometimes emerges through a dialectic between patriarchal authority and daughters' 'pushing back' against this authority. The unexpected arrival of the student in the middle of the interview is a good example of how I benefited from a less-structured interview format which allowed me to 'pick things up' as opportunities appeared.

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2012.2.16

This interview began as a casual conversation with A., a tchr who I met last year but was not present here in Meerwala for past few days bc she was receiving an award in Muzzafargarh for high achievement on recent tests. She was happy to see me again and we started chatting casually, sitting in the shade against the wall outside of the classroom as students did their work on the stoop or out in the sun. (The classrooms are too cool at this time of year so 'class' often happens outside.) At some point I asked if I could record and she consented.

WO: So tell me more about your story – how did you come here today?

A: When I start my study I was five years old; I went to a school called [...], it was a private school because at that time there was no government school for girls because it was backwards area, Jatoi. And now the government school which is there is just till matriculation; there is not a college there. So then I went to Alipur for my FSc. education, and in Alipur there was a girls' college, and I studied there for my FSc. [...] and I am doing now an MSc. Mathematics from Muz. College.

WO: And when did you begin working here.

A: 2010.

WO: Tell me more about your family.

A: I have five sisters and one brother. My elder sister completed her B.S.S [...] [all siblings well educated]. And my father is FSc. and my mother is matriculation.

WO: So it seems like your parents probably put a lot of emphasis on your education.

A: Yes, everyone in my family is well educated. My cousins have gone to Punjab University Lahore; my sister is at Islamiat University in Bahawalpur [...]

WO: So tell me, how did you come to work here?

A: Our school madam [principal], she knew my mother, and she said to her your daughters are very genius, and I need science teachers, so then my mother send here, then I started here.

WO: And how has your experience been here so far?

A: Experience is so nice. I will also miss this school, because I am leaving this school after fifteen days.

WO: Why is that?

A: Because I have no a government job on the base of my merit, teaching in nearby areas around Jatoi.

WO: So – I think what I am most interested to hear about is, like, what kind of changes have you seen in your lifetime in the situation of education here or in Jatoi...

A: The change is that the government of Pakistan is now cooperating with the people for education. This is a very big step of the government. They are working just for education, that is why now Jatoi has more high schools...but still not a college. But the students of Jatoi are now in Malaysia, Canada – on their merit! They get scholarships from government of Punjab. In Jatoi they can go to matriculation, then to Alipur for college.

WO: Okay, so you think government has changed in providing more education – do you think people's attitudes have also changed?

A: Yes, people's attitude also changed. Yesterday when I was attending the function I have seen there that people were more educated and following the rules and understanding what the Chief Minister was saying them. The people were very happy because the Chief Minister of Punjab has said he will give three lakhs of laptops more in June, on the base of merit. It was a step to increase students' confidence, and the students study for such gifts. Small gifts, but they study for these gifts.

WO: And this is only at the high levels?

A: No, all levels – after matriculations, BSc, MSc.

WO: So tell me more – how else have attitudes changed? How would you describe general attitudes to girls' education when you were a child?

A: Those years, the people did not send their daughters to school. They were afraid by the behaviors of their family or grandparents, so they did not send their children,

especially daughters, to school. Now the generation is so fast, daughters also said their parents that I want to go to school – then the parents allow them to send to school.

WO: So this is very interesting. When you were young, did some of your friends not go to school?

A: Yes. One was my friend, her name was T., and she was very fond of education, and when she did matriculation she also want to study FSc, and her grandmother was so proudly and – and was against her study, and then she stopped them that you should do the work of home, and I will get you marry with your cousin, why you need to study? Then she was so confused and she also say my father that she request to her grandmother, then my father request to her grandmother, and then she sat with me just for some days, and after that she married her cousin.

WO: And did you know other girls who did not go to school at all?

A: Yes, I know. There is a very big quantity of such girls. They just do matriculation and after that they just do their home.

WO: What about girls who just do not go to school at all?

A: What?

WO: [...]

A: Because they were poor and could not afford the education expenses, and the books, and the copies, and the fees of school – because I have told you that there was no government school; only private school, and fees is there.

WO: And do you think that there were also bad attitudes about education?

A: Yes. People had very bad attitude. They said that daughters, especially daughters, who study very high education, then they will not marry with her cousin – they think that they should marry with some doctor, some engineer, some MBA student, and then they think this is problem – from where we have got relations with such doctors, engineers? Then the student such as in this village, a student which do matriculations then FSc then BSc, then she will not marry with her cousin who is just 8th standard. That is so much problem here! Because of course, girls when they mature then they think that their husband should be educated and job holder, but in village where from boys with job? Because boys just do pesticides, gatekeeper...

WO: Now, tell me more about how you think attitudes have changed. What are some examples of change that you have seen?

A: Now people think that when their daughters will educated, then they should do job, and that will be the source of income. And they should also got scholarships, like me. And other peoples think that their daughters will be a teacher, a nurse, an air hostess, an engineer, a doctor – that is why they are sending their daughters to school. And they also think, and this is not right, that a daughter is a way of income.

WO: Can you give any examples?

A: Here in this school, a student which came from a very far area [...] here in Pakistan, there is no study in government school. Just rough schools. The teachers not go on their duty; just rest in home, and the salary come in their account.

WO: Even despite all this work from the government of Punjab?

A: Yes. Government schools are very bad, except the colleges. Colleges are very good. But primary schools are very bad, especially in the villages. But I think this is the basic education. A student who is well in the primary education can learn more [...] so here, a girl who did her basic education in government school, then she came here, and now she

has completed her matriculation, and now she is doing her FSc in Alipur. [Gesturing to S., a girl who is nearby.]

WO: And you think S.'s parents want her to get a good job?

A: Yes. Some people in this village also think that when they send their kids to here, then she got some money from [NGO Founder] and some gift, and free uniform, and free books. Some students are also here which come for one month and take uniform and books and then go back to their home, and sell these things.

WO: And what do you think about that?

A: Yeah, very bad. Many students come 1st April here, when the education year starts. Then strength of school increases to 800. Then after two months, it decreases to 600.

WO: So, there are still problems today, it sounds like – but even so, you do think that people's attitudes about girls' education have changed?

A: Yes, changed. My also one cousin, she lived in a village, and her parents said to her you should not get education, and she was very upset because she looked me that I am an educated girl, and my attitude is very well, and now she forced her parents for her younger sister to send her to school, and now her sister is in the seventh standard. The people who see the educated people, such as some mother of this school, when they come to school – they see us, and they wish that my child should be like you, teacher – should be like us – then we praise them that you should teach your child at home, or send them at my home – I will give free education in my spare time [in Jatoi] – I come here also Sunday! Sunday is not my duty, but I teach the students to get good marks, and then they can get job. And I also teach here second time – all teachers leave at 3 PM, but I stay until 6 PM – students' parents also want this.

WO: So what do you think has caused this change?

A: They think that they can – what? – their attitude, parents' attitude?

WO: Yeah – I mean, when you think about attitudes when you were a child, and then you think about attitudes today, you see a big change?

A: Yes, that is a very big change. When I was a child, then in from my city, where some students got education who were rich, but who were poor, they say education is a very rough thing, and they do not send. Because they cannot send! Then they said that the girls who get education is very proudy, or this teacher has very bad character, and such students is not go to school – they blame the students, that they should stop get education – but when the government development of education in our cities, now the people think that we were wrong, we were just blaming – there is nothing. Here in this village the people's views are that here in this school, the students not get education. They just dancing, talking, they just E-T-C – now they come here and they think wow, our child can speak Urdu very well, they can speak English very well, they can sit with a style, they can eat with a style, they can shake their hand with a good method, and they wash their hand before eating – all of these attitudes changed just to education, and they feel proud of their children that all change is due to education. And now the views of my city that education is a very good thing, and the people who were blaming us now sending their daughters to university. [...] When I came here two years ago, there was no discipline with students' parents. They said that school is not their standard; their standard is working in fields. Now in three months when the cotton season comes, they take their children back home and send them in fields – but now for two years I am very

happy to see that they said that the teachers are very well, and they just teach the students, and now they do not put them back in the fields, they just send them to school. WO: And you think this is because they have seen that they have seen that the teachers are very good?

A: Yes. The teachers are very good, and the students. When [school principal] came here four years ago, the students do not come here – they just got uniform and then went to work in the field. They think that in the field they can get a very large income, but now they know that when their students complete the matriculation, they can get a job. Because [Founder] offers all the students that who will make matriculation, she will give them job. So that is why the parents are very impressed and they will send them here. I also visited many homes – students' homes. And I also told them what is education, what is the benefit of education, what are the losses to not get education, and they also appreciate us.

WO: So how often is that, and what do you say – tell me more about this.

A: I met with the students – we went at the students' home; I met with the mothers and their relatives, and they see us – how we are sitting here, how we are drinking water, and they ask us 'why have you come here?' And I say to them 'I just want to tell you that you should send your daughter.' And she said, we want to send them, but the grandparents are against us. And I met with the grandparents and I said my also grandparent was against me, but now what I am? And she sees me and said that okay, I will send my [grand]]daughter to school. And I said that you should also tell all villages that I have come here, and I am requesting you that you should send. What will be my profit? Not my profit. You – that will be your profit, and your child will be educated, and it is not my benefit. And they understand what I was saying, and the next day her daughter comes to school.

WO: And you see that many times?

A: [Principal] many times sends the teachers at home. Such as there was a student 8th class, and she was not coming to school. So [Principal] sends us, and she was ill. And we help her and give her money, and her family was so happy that we give them money, that when she was better they send her to school. [...] When we go at their home, they respect us. They invite all the village people, they say 'there, the [Founder's] teachers are coming at our home.' And they give us gifts, small gifts, what they can afford, but we take this very happily. [...] Here, in class 10, there is one girl who is married. And she faced many problems from her parents. She is just 17 years old. When she was 15 years old, she was married.

A: [calls S. – WO does consent...now switch to mostly Urdu; A. translates]

WO: So tell me about your life – how did you come to be here today?

S: When I was three years old, I started school – in Mouza Shehar Sultan – and now I am seventeen years old, and I was sixteen when I married. I have three brothers and six sisters. One studies in 5th, one in 7th, one in 9th...

WO: And your parents?

S: No. No education. My father is a carpenter; my mother is a housewife.

WO: So why do you think your parents, who have no education, decided to send all of their children to school?

S: Because they noted that education is necessary for every person.

WO: Why?

S: They think that they have not get education, and they are in so many problems, and if their children get education they will not have so many problems.

WO: So what do you think is the most valuable thing you have gotten from school?

S: This school is very near to my home, and pick and drop is free, and that's why I come here.

WO: And what year did you come to this school? Which class?

S: Ninth.

WO: So just last year. So first eight years was a different school? Government school?

S: Yes.

WO: And how was the quality?

S: Good.

WO: And in your home village, many girls are going to school?

S: Very less. The villagers do not understand how much the education is necessary.

WO: And in your lifetime have you seen changing attitudes, or same?

S: No, change. [*Tabdil hai.*]

WO: What changes? Why?

S: The students who have got education respect their parents. And the parents think that when their children will get education, then their children will respect them. This is the main thing. And they think that when their children get education, they do very well job.

WO: Can you give an example of children respecting their parents?

S: My uncle is a doctor, and he respects my parents and treatment them, and bring them on Hajj.

WO: Okay, but I mean – you said that when girls go to school, they respect their parents more. Can you give an example of this?

S: I am this example.

WO: How? What do you do? What things do you do for respect your parents?

S: This is a big honor for me that they send me to school. They can also not send me to school; that is why I respect them.

WO: Ok. And tell me more about the change that you have seen in your village. What change?

S: The main thing is job. They get job, and spend a very good life due to job, and not face any problems. When they will be educated they will be at a very great post.

WO: And what kind of jobs are they getting?

S: Teacher, doctor.

WO: And what about you? What do you want to do?

S: I want to be a doctor, but I am now studying the arts and cannot be a doctor, but I will go to Islamic studies.

WO: So you will go to a different school after here?

S: [Founder] has said that after you finish here, you will teach Islamic studies.

WO: You will teach here, next year?

S: Yes.

WO: Congratulations. Now if you don't mind, tell me about your marriage.

S: I was married two years ago. I do the homework, like cooking and dusting, and I cannot study very well as before marriage.

WO: But no children?

S: No.

WO: So home work – what work is it?

S: Cooking, dusting.

WO: So tell me about a day in your life.

S: I wake at 4 am. I study, I pray, I recite [part of] the Qur'an. I make food and I dust, and get ready to come here at 7:45 am.

WO: How do you travel here?

S: Van. Pick and drop. And at 5 PM I go home. School ends at 2:30 but after that I study here. Then dishwashing, then prayers, then cooking, then homework.

WO: And who is in your house?

S: Husband, mother in law. Sisters-in-law are married and not at home. Brothers-in-law live in separate home.

WO: And your husband – tell me about him.

S: He also teaches Quranic study, and gives water to fields.

WO: And does your husband support your education?

S: Yes.

WO: And what is his age?

S: 35.

WO: It's his first marriage?

S: Yes.

WO: And how do you feel about your marriage?

S: I am against such marriage, because I want to study more, but my parents send me here, and my elder sister also get marriage, and I do not want my younger sister to get married at this age. The age of a girl should be eighteen years.

WO: And so are you telling your parents not to marry your younger sister?

S: Yes.

WO: And will they listen to you?

S: (laughing) Now she is also against such marriage.

WO: The sister?

S: Yes.

WO: But who will make the decision?

S: Father.

WO: And do you think he will listen to you?

S: I think so.

WO: Before your marriage, did you protest to your parents?

S: Yes.

WO: Tell me more.

S: I was saying I want to study, do not marry me. And I want to go to another city to get higher education in science. But my husband said that if you want to marry then now, not after. And they have just one way, that they should follow the husband's wish.

WO: So your father decided that you must get married, and then after your marriage, did your husband's family support you to come to school?

S: My brother-in-law made protest. He said you married her, now she should work at home. We don't have any women at home, so now you should stay at home. He was against it. But my husband said that when her father got her married, I promised that I would complete her matriculation. That's why he sent me here.

WO: And next year you want to teach here? What does your husband think about this?
 S: He is very happy, due to job.
 WO: And also your mother in law is happy?
 S: No.
 WO: Tell me more.
 S: When I come here, she is home alone, so she is saying matriculation is enough, and come home.
 WO: So what will happen?
 S: I will do what my husband has said.
 WO: And you think he will say to work?
 S: Yes.
 WO: And you will teach Islamiat here?
 A: Yes – she is *hafiza*; she has memorized entire Qur'an.
 WO: Wow. So how did you learn?
 S: Madrassas. [...]
 WO: You are very intelligent, I think. So my last question: are you satisfied with your situation?
 S: No.
 WO: Tell me more.
 S: Because my husband has no job. There is no way to get income. I am getting education, but there is no business for my husband. [...]

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Below is a transcript from an interview in Abid with two female teachers, two mother's, and one mother's daughter, a former student (Interview #51). I conducted the interview in a school classroom with the help of Farooq translating to/from Urdu and Punjabi. As with the previous two transcripts, this transcript begins with a few of my notes about the setting. The transcript reflects several key themes discussed in Chapter 7, including: changing 'awareness' about girls' schooling in the wake of the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) project; teachers' efforts to change the minds of parents, and changing marriage customs as a result of 'seeing.' The transcript also reflects Farooq's closeness with some of the teachers and parents in Abid, and the ways in which he sometimes interjected his own points of view into the translation / facilitation process.

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2012.2.22

I sit in classroom with [Farooq], two teachers (T1 and T2), and one mother/volunteer (M) at school. Midway through interview, an older mother (M2) arrives with her daughter (D), a graduate of 5th grade at the school and now maybe 20 yrs old, married and with children. Women here refer to [Farooq] as 'bhai' – very comfortable with him. Most women are covering mouths w dupattas as they speak; feels more conservative than [other neighbourhood] in this regard. T1 has been teaching here since founding of

school in 1990. T2 came here in 1992. M. came to this village 13 yrs ago; her daughter is a student here. Her son is studying in SDK.

WO: Am I correct that this is the only school in this village?

T1: Yes, the boys' school is 1.5 km from here in another village.

WO: And what year did CFS start here?

Farooq: Project started July 2005, but not at this school til 2006.

WO: So, you teachers have been here for a very long time. I'm interested to know, have you seen changes in this village since then?

T1: *Bohut*. [Very much.] When we started the school, we were teaching our students' outside. It was a great change when the school was constructed in 1994. It was a bad condition of our sitting place – there were goats and cows.

WO: And you were receiving money from the government then?

T1: People were illiterate, and they couldn't go to any school.

WO: But my question was, was it still a government project in 1990?

T1: Yes, but no building.

WO: Oh okay. So in the time since then, you have this building, you have CFS – what other changes have you seen in this village?

T1: All students come here now. Parents are happy, students are happy –

WO: And in the past, this was not the same?

T1: There were many problems for students. The environment of the school was not good. [Many people talking at once.] When we start the CFS, none of the older daughters, like 12 years, 13 years, came to school. And now they do.

WO: That is interesting. Why is that?

T2: Parents want to send their children, and we motivate the people.

WO: Okay. I want to ask more about that. But first, tell me, in the past, did you have a difficult time convincing parents to send their daughters to school?

T1: We visit door to door and convince the parents, and aware them to the importance of education. And we tell them that if the girls are educated, then all the community is educated.

WO: And when did you begin doing door to door visits?

T1: When the building was here, in 1994. And still we are doing it.

WO: So since 1994, have people's attitudes changed, do you think?

T2: *Bohut* changed.

WO: How?

T2: When students come here, we are washing their mouth, and washing their hands, and combing, and putting the oil, and cutting the nail, and when students become beautiful we call the parents and we say this is your son, this is your daughter, very beautiful, please send your children so they are neat and clean, and education is better than non-education.

WO: So this is your view – but what about the parents? How do the parents respond, and have they changed their view since 1994?

T2: Parents change their customs. We share the happy and sadness of the community.

We go to participate with the people in the small events, like a marriage, and we convey the message of Islam, and the ethics, and people respect us.

WO: Did you notice that parents' attitudes changed immediately, or did they change over a longer time?

T2: A longer time.

WO: Tell me more. What were the challenges in the past, and how did they change?

M: The teachers do first herself – these people are a role model for us.

WO: But what I'm trying to understand is – at first, in 1994, were parents opposed to education? And if so, why?

T2: [...] The rate of absenteeism is increased, because the season of cotton picking, or other crops. So we go to stop the absentee rate. [...]

T1: After the 5 standard passed, girls sit in home. And I go door to door to convince them to go to college and higher education. And now some girls go in SDK, due to my force. But after they pass the 5 standard, the ratio is not equal.

WO: But before 5th it is the same?

T2: Before five or six years ago, girls did not come to colleges. But today most girls do. I tell all of them if you have any problem with traveling, then you contact me.

WO: So when you talk to them and you try to convince them of the value of school, what do you say?

T2: Parents pray for me.

[Now older mother and former student, age 25 and now married with 5 kids, enter and sit.]

WO: So I'd like everyone to think about this – what is the value of a girl going past primary school? Why should she go past primary school?

T1: Awareness, and qualities of education.

WO: Let's go slow. Awareness – why? What are the benefits of awareness?

T1: We convince the parents the awareness of cleanliness, of manners, of Islam. The opportunity to get a job.

WO: What do others think about this question?

T2: We convince the parents that after marriage, she can face any trouble with education. An educated girl can teach the whole community to read and write.

WO: And do you find that when you say this to people, most people agree with you?

T1: Some people do not agree.

WO: Okay, let's talk about those people – why do they not agree?

T1: Some parents fear about the traveling of girls and abusing of boys, and also poverty and the problem of transport.

WO: And madam [M2], what did you say?

M2: My daughter finished class 5.

WO: So you finished class 5?

D: Yes.

WO: So tell me [to teachers] – did you try to convince her mother to send more?

T1: When she passed the primary, they married her – we could not convince them to send her further.

WO: And do you find this happens a lot here?

[many voices]

M2: In the past, it is our custom for early marriage. But we have changed our custom in this time. It is not better for our children's futures.

WO: Okay. When did this custom change?

M2: About ten years ago.

WO: And tell me more – what has made this change?

M2: Looking around here and there, and due to teachers, and seeing people and the competition of the people, then we change our custom.

WO: Competition?

Farooq: Like seeing my neighbor is making an income, etc.

T2: My sister in law is teaching in college.

WO: And what were you saying? [to M.]

M. [in English]: I am a medical technician. Educated I am. I am earning 30 or 40 thousand per month. People see me and they send their daughters for education. I have a vehicle and I drive myself. People see me and it motivates them.

WO: And ten years ago you say this started to change? Is it because more girls from this village were starting to get jobs?

T1: No.

M: Only one – me.

T1: Girls are reading still – are not qualified.

WO: But the thinking has changed?

T1: When they pass their qualification, they will come in this field, because of awareness.

T2: We say to our students, when we leave this job, you can take our seats. [i.e. become teachers]

WO: So what I am most interested in is, what causes the change in customs? Do you have any stories you can tell me? Are there other government programs or NGOs that go to people and say you should change?

D: *Sirif school*. Only school. We get the change from school. Then competition of the environment.

WO: So I am interested for you [D] – at the end of Class 5, did you want more schooling? Or were you happy to finish?

D: [speaking declaratively] I wanted to read more, but I have faced the problem of transport, and the customs of early marriage. I want more education. This is my aim. I came here to the teacher and said please, I want to read more – 6th standard, 7th, 8th, I will take exam here in private – but teachers are very busy, and they cannot give proper attention to me.

WO: And at that point were you already married? Did you try to continue studies after marriage?

D: After marriage it is our custom not to go for any study. We must look after our children, and look after our house, and our husbands – there are many problems.

WO: I am interested, because it seems like some customs changed, but others didn't.

Farooq: The customs changed before marriage, but after marriage – in all Pakistan – they do not go for education.

T2: Hers is the last early marriage from this village. After her, no marriage is early here.

WO: So what do you mean 'early'? What counts as early?

T1: 14 or 16.

WO: And now, what age?

[many voices]: 18 years, 20 years.

WO: Do you think it is possible that other customs would change, and would allow you to go to school even after marriage?

[many voices]

M: Everything is possible in this area. It is the will of the father in law and mother in law. If they want to send their daughter in law to school, it is possible. When I married here, my husband allowed me for further education and a job.

Farooq: If you get my perception in this village, three people are very important to change the custom in this village – these three. [Two teachers and M.] I have worked for 16 years in this village. I know them from before CFS.

WO: In this way, I can tell you I am very honored to meet you all. Tell me, today, do you still go door to door? And what kind of interactions do you have?

T2: We talk directly with them, for 21 years. There is now no problem for interactions. The method of interaction is we visit direct with the parents and convince them. Only if the dog is barking, we won't go. [laughing]

M2: Our teachers are like our family.

T1: And we are like parents to the students.

WO: And do you speak directly with husbands as well, or only the wives?

T1 & T2: Both. And brother in law, and father in law.

WO: So today, do you think there is still an issue of people not being interested in girls' education, or everyone is interested?

M: Before CFS, more people were not interested, but now more people are interested, and they demand the upgrade of the school to middle and higher standard.

WO: Now, when you think people are interested in sending their daughters, it is primarily for a job? Or are there other reasons?

T2: Mostly a job.

WO: And have you seen in this area many people are getting jobs?

T1: The new generation has not completed their education, so they cannot get a job – but they have the idea of a job.

T2: It is changing still, more and more.

M: We are dreaming in the evening and night about the school. [...]

Annex 1.3: Written Questionnaire Responses from Mulweer

Below, I share my compilation of answers to several questions in the questionnaire I provided to female students in Mulweer in 2011. Readers can find the questionnaire itself in Annex 3. Kaniz and Tahir played an instrumental role in helping me design the questionnaire, type the questions in Urdu, and then translate students' written answers from Urdu to English. As noted in Chapter 5.5, I chose not to proceed with written questionnaires after my first visit to Mulweer, because it seemed that interviews provided much more nuanced insights. Nonetheless, the excerpts below reflect several important themes discussed in Chapter 6, including: the perceived link between schooling and manners; the perceived importance of learning about Islam, and the persistence of gendered evaluations of schooling which associate girls' schooling with cooking and 'household things' and boys' schooling with work outside the home.

1. What is the most important thing you have learned in school?

Urdu: Apke khalne (in your opinion) iskul men (in school) sabse eham (most important) chees (thing) apne kya seekhi (what you learned)?

[37 responses; 3 were blank. Of 34 completed responses, 16 mentioned manners, obedience, or respect for elders; 4 mentioned 'household things' including cooking and sewing; 9 mentioned Islam or making prayers. Those that mentioned none of the above tended to be very general, ie 'education,' 'awareness,' or 'knowledge.' Zero mentioned job or earning money.]

1. I think the important thing I learned is that I want to serve the humanity.
2. Yes, the most important thing in school I have learned is education (*taleem*).
3. The most important thing I have learned in school is the education of ethics (*ikhlaquiat*).
4. I think girls and boys should not learn the same things.
5. The most important thing I get in school is education and learn about cooking and we are taught about household things.
6. I have learned so many things in school, like cooking, sewing, etc.
7. I have learned a lot in my school. I have learned to help elders and to respect elders.
8. The most important thing I have learned in school is to adopt clean environment (*mahol*) and to become a good citizen of society after getting education.
9. I got the education from school and I think school is very important because I have learned in school many manners (*adaab*) like eating manners and drinking manners and learned to be a mannered person (*tameez*) and I have learned to serve the teacher.
10. I in your opinion [sic], the most important thing I have learned in school is to cook, and I in your opinion [sic] the important thing is education.
11. To respect elders, to love young ones, and to deal with elders with respect, to care for health, and especially others' health, and to fulfill the needs of others.
12. The most important thing we have learned in school is good habits (*tarbiat*), to respect elders and to love the young ones and to obey the parents.
13. My important thing learned is Islamic education.
14. [no answer]
15. I think what I have learned about knowledge (*ilm*) is that I respect (*izzat*) elders.
16. [no answer]
17. The most important thing I have learned in school is Islamic education.
18. My important thing Islamic education [sic] (*Islamiyat*).
19. My important thing is Islamic education.
20. The most important thing I have learned in school is cooking. The most important thing in school the education itself (*taleem khud*) teaches us. Apart from this I have learned the manners of living in society and to respect parents. Learned to respect the teachers.
21. The most important thing we have learned in school is education. Apart from this the manners and ways of living in society, and learned to deal in a mannered way with parents.
22. The most important thing I have learned in school is the importance of education and to respect the teachers, elders, to obey the parents, and to love the young ones.

23. The important thing I have learned in school is not to tell a lie and to make/establish the prayers (*namaz parna*).
24. [no answer]
25. The most important thing I have learned is education and we become aware (*shaoor*) how should we deal with elders and young ones.
26. I have learned so many important things in my school. Our teacher taught us to respect elders.
27. The most important thing I have learned in school is about education so that I want to be something after getting education.
28. I have learned in school from my Misses that always behave good with our classmates. Should respect our teachers and parents and should study wholeheartedly.
29. We think the most important thing is that it creates awareness (*shaoor*). Respect elders and love the young ones.
30. The most important thing I have learned in school is good learning (*tarbiat*) and to respect parents. To deal in an ethical manner with everyone.
31. The important thing I have learned in school is Islamic education.
32. I think I have learned in school to respect elders and the young ones.
33. I think it is timeliness, prayer punctuality, and to respect the elders.
34. I think the most important thing I have learned is about knowledge (*ilm*), what is knowledge.
35. I have learned many important things in school. The most important of them are punctuality of prayers and to respect elders.
36. I have learned a lot in school. The most important thing is that I have developed awareness in me.
37. I have learned in school the important and Islamic things.

4. Do you think that girls and boys need to learn the same things in school?
 Urdu: Apke khial men (do you think) larkion aur larkon (girls and boys) ko iskul men (in school) ek jesi cheezen (same things) sikni chahien (should learn)?

[37 answers; 16 yes, 18 no, 3 NA.]

1. Blank.
2. No. Girls and boys should not learn the same things.
3. No. If girls get the education the environment/conditions (*mahol ke halaat*) becomes good and it is very important to do job for boys.
4. No. Girls and boys cannot do the same things/work (*kaam*).
5. No. Girls are not being taught after matric and girls should be taught according to household work (*ghareloo kaam kaaj*) and boys should be taught according to their work.
6. Yes. Boys are being learnt according to their education and girls are being learnt according to their education.
7. No. Because girls should learn the things as they themselves are (*apne jesi*) and boys should as they themselves are.
8. Yes. Girls and boys should learn the same things in school and if girl want to learn (*woh sikna chahti hai*) something else, then they can learn it.

9. Not sure. I don't know, but I know this that girls should learn the things of cooking and boys should learn to go outside, to do job, etc.
10. Yes. I think girls and boys should learn the same things in the school.
11. No. Girls should learn the household work too and boys should learn the outside jobs too.
12. No. Girls learn about the cooking and household things and boys learn about the outside things.
13. Yes. Because they get the same kind of education.
14. Yes. They learn the same things so that they do not become dependent to each other.
15. No. Girls and boys should not learn the same things in the school.
16. Yes. Both should be learnt equal things because boys can change their country into better environment and girls should learn for the reason that they can too make the environment better.
17. Yes. I think girls and boys should learn the same things.
18. Yes. Because they get the same education.
19. Yes. Because they get the same education.
20. Yes. Girls and boys should learn the same things in the school so that they could resolve all the problems of their life.
21. No. Girls are taught different things from boys. Girls are taught cooking and other household works etc.
22. No. Sometimes it happens that girls do not get permission for further education so they should/must learn household work (*lazmi sikna ghareloo kaam kaaj*).
23. No. Girls and boys should learn different things in the school.
24. No. Girls and boys should learn different things because boys do business after getting education.
25. Not sure. No. Boys and girls should not learn the same education.
26. Yes. As the boys are in need of education the girls are also in the same need of education. If boys want to be doctor then girls also wish that they become doctor.
27. No. I think girls and boys should not do the same things so they should learn different things from each other.
28. Yes. I think boys and girls should be provided the same education because what the boys want to be girls also want to be the same.
29. No. Girls and boys should not learn the same education.
30. Yes. I think girls and boys should learn the same so that they could help each other.
31. No. Yes, boys and girls should work hard in school.
32. Yes. Girls and boys should learn the same things.
33. No. Because boys keep the different subjects from girls. Boys do electrical work and girls keep home economics subject.
34. Yes. I think girls and boys should learn the same things in the school.
35. No. Girls and boys are not taught the same things because subjects become separated in FA and BA etc. [not true]
36. No. Girls and boys should not learn the same things because girls have to manage home (*larkion ko ghar sambhalna parta hy*) and boys have to run the home expenses (*larkon ko ghar kha kharch chalana hota hy*).
37. Yes. Girls and boys should work hard in the school.

Annex 2: Household Questionnaire and Interview Schedule

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Parent/Guardian Survey and Interview Schedule

Summary of Approach: The intent of this study is to thicken our understanding of the ‘shape’ of demand for schooling—that is, to go beyond asking ‘if’ parents want to send their children to school, and instead to ask *why this is so*, and to explore how this demand (or lack thereof) might vary for sons vs. daughters, or from one household to another. When asking these questions, be especially attentive to **Ideas about the value of sending girls to school**. Do not assume that respondents necessarily think differently about boys’ and girls’ education, but do allow the opportunity for them to articulate such gender distinctions if they exist.

I. Introduction and Consent

I’m very interested to hear your ideas about why sending children to school is or is not a good idea. There are no correct answers, so please don’t worry about saying the ‘right’ thing—I’m just interested in knowing what you think. If you choose to participate, I will ask you some questions and write down your answers. I will also record our conversation on a voice recorder. Your name will not be recorded, so all of your answers will be completely anonymous. You will not receive any immediate reward for participating, but hopefully learning your ideas will help us understand how to improve the situation in the future. If you choose to participate, our conversation will probably last for at least twenty minutes and might last as long as an hour. If at any point you want to stop, you can just tell me, and we will stop. If you do not want to answer a question, you do not have to answer it. Do you wish to participate?

[If yes, turn on recorder.]

II. Background Information

Date: Location: Respondent #:

Please circle or write the answers below.

1. Who is respondent? (mother father both)
2. How much school did mother complete? (none primary secondary higher)
3. How much school did father complete? (none primary secondary higher)
4. Does respondent’s family own land? (yes no)
5. What is mother’s occupation?
6. What is father’s occupation?
7. Respondent(s) have _____ sons and _____ daughters.

8. Please look at the first two rows of the chart below. Following the examples, please describe respondent's children and their level of education. If respondent has more than eight siblings, leave out the youngest.

بچوں کی تعداد پر اسے مہربانی ہوگی وہ لائقوں کو دیکھتے ہوئے درج ذیل جدول مکمل کریں۔
بچوں کی تعداد 8 سے زیادہ ہونے کی صورت میں چھوٹے بچوں کو چھوڑ دیں۔

	Son or Daughter? (Please circle) بیٹا/بیٹی	Age عمر	Never went to school جو کبھی سکول نہیں گئے	Currently in school—select school type and write current Class جرا بھی سکول چا رہے ہیں/ کلاس	Currently not in school—write highest Class completed جرا بھی سکول نہیں رہے ہیں، کتنی تعلیم حاصل کی؟
Example 1	<u>Son /</u> Daughter	16	✓	Government/Private/Madrassa	
Example 2	Son / <u>Daughter</u>	9		<u>Government</u> Private/Madrassa Class 5	
1	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
2	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
3	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
4	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
5	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
6	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
7	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	
8	Son / Daughter			Government/Private/Madrassa	

III. Reasons for sending/not sending children to school?

Using the chart above as a guide, ask questions about children **between the ages of 6 and 16**. It is possible that answers will be the same for all children—eg, 'all of my children are in school to get educated'—but it is important to press for details for each child and explore whether the 'value' of schooling is understood differently for different children.

بچوں کو سکول بھیجنے / نہ بھیجنے کی وجوہات

- For each child who is going to school:

بچوں کو سکول بھیجنے کی وجوہات

- 1. Why did you choose for this child to go to this school?

- Annotate each child with age and gender, eg "9 yr. Female: going to gov't school because..."

- 2. What is the most valuable thing each child has gained from going to school?

- Annotate as above. Ask for details—if the response is 'education' or 'awareness,' try to find out more about why or how this is valuable or important.

آپ کے خیال میں سب سے اہم چیز / بات جو بچے نے سکول سے سیکھی

- 3. How far do you hope *each child* will continue his/her schooling, and why?

- Annotate as above. Be sure to ask *why* parents aspire to this level—what will be the 'value-added'?

آپ اپنے بچوں کو کتنا پڑھنا چاہیں گے۔ کیوں؟

- For each child who is not going to school:

- 1. Why is this child not going to school?

سکول نہ جانے والے بچوں کے لئے۔

آپ کا بچہ سکول کیوں نہیں جاتا؟

- Annotate as above. If the answer is 'poverty,' ask for details—which aspects of school are most expensive? If the answer is that parents don't think school is valuable, ask why not.

2. What do you think is the most valuable thing that this child could gain from going to school?

آپ کے خیال میں سب سے اہم چیز کیا تہ جو بچہ سکول میں سیکھ سکتا ہے؟

- Annotate as above. Press for details—if parent says the value-added would be 'education' or 'awareness,' ask why these things matter. If parent says child could not gain anything valuable from school, ask why not.

IV. Ideas about girls' education

لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے متعلق آپ کے خیالات

*These questions are phrased as closed yes-or-no questions, but each question should lead to further discussion. Ask **why** at every opportunity, and transcribe answers in the space provided. After discussing each question with respondents, circle the response [Yes/No/Unsure] that most accurately represents the views of the respondent.*

1. Do you think that girls and boys need to have the same amount of education?

[Yes No Unsure]

- Why or why not?

کیا لڑکوں اور لڑکیوں کو یکساں تعلیم دی جانی چاہیے۔

2. Do you think that girls and boys need to learn the same things in school?

کیا لڑکوں اور لڑکیوں کو ایک جیسا انصاف پڑھنا چاہیے؟

[Yes No Unsure]

- If yes, why? What subjects are most important? If no—what do boys need to learn, and what do girls need to learn?

3. Would you give permission for your daughter to leave the home for a job?

کیا آپ اپنی بیٹیوں کو گھر سے باہر کام کی اجازت دیں گے؟

[Yes No Unsure]

○ Why or why not?

4. Do you think education will help your daughter earn money in the future?

کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ تعلیم مستقبل میں پیسے کمانے میں مدد کرے گی؟

[Yes No Unsure]

○ Why or why not?

5. If education does not help your daughter earn money, is it still valuable?

کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ تعلیم آپ کی بیٹی کو پیسہ کمانے میں مدد نہ دے مگر بھی دوام ہے؟

[Yes No Unsure]

○ Why or why not?

6. Do you think education will help your daughter's marriage prospects?

کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ تعلیم آپ کی بیٹی کی اچھی شادی میں مدد کرے گی؟

[Yes No Unsure]

- If the answer is no, ask why not. Will education have a negative effect on marriage prospects, or simply no effect? If the answer is yes, ask how or why. What level of education is needed to secure a 'good' marriage?

7. Do you expect that marriage prospects will interfere with daughter's education?

کیا آپ امید رکھتے ہیں کہ تعلیم آپ کی بیٹی کی شادی میں دخل دے گی؟

[Yes No Unsure]

- Why or why not? Would parents remove daughter from school for marriage? Why or why not? Whose decision is it?

8. In recent years, have you noticed changes in most people's attitudes towards girls' education?

کیا آپ نے ان لوگوں کی تعلیم کے حوالے سے لوگوں کے رویوں میں تبدیلی محسوس کی؟

[Yes No Unsure]

- Focus this question as locally as possible—ie, changes in this Tehsil, this village, this family. If yes—what have been the changes? Are these changes related to any broader factors, e.g. labor market, technology, or environmental changes?

9. Have there been any policies or programs by the government or by any NGO that have affected people's attitudes towards education?

کیا لوگوں کے رویوں میں تبدیلی گورنمنٹ یا کسی NGO کے پروگرام یا پالیسی کی وجہ سے ہے؟

[Yes No Unsure]

- If yes—what were the policies or programs, and what was their effect? If no—what, then, has caused people's attitudes to change? [Only ask if responded 'yes' to question 8]

10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the current situation of education in this village? (open question)

گاؤں کی موجودہ تعلیمی صورتحال پر آپ کچھ اور کہنا چاہیں گے؟

Annex 3: Student Questionnaire

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Student Questionnaire

Name _____ Class _____

I. Background Information

Please write the answers below.



برائے مہربانی جوابات نیچے لکھیں۔

1. Are you a boy or a girl?

آپ ایک لڑکی/ لڑکا ہیں؟

2. Where are you from?

آپ کا تعلق کہاں سے ہے؟

3. What is your age?

آپ کی عمر کیا ہے؟

4. What does your father do?

آپ کے والد کیا کام کرتے ہیں؟

5. What does your mother do?

آپ کی والدہ کیا کام کرتی ہیں؟

6. How many brothers do you have?

آپ کے کتنے بھائی ہیں؟

7. How many sisters do you have?

آپ کی کتنی بہنیں ہیں؟

برائے مہربانی جوابات کے گرد دائرہ لگائیں۔

Please circle the answers below.

8. Did your father go to school?

کیا آپ کے والد بھی سکول گئے ہیں؟

(no yes, primary yes, secondary yes, higher)

9. Did your mother go to school?

کیا آپ کی والدہ بھی سکول گئیں؟

(no yes, primary yes, secondary yes, higher)



کیا آپ کی خاندانی زمین ہے؟

10. Does your family own land?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

11. Do you sometimes go to a different school to study the Koran? کیا آپ قرآن پڑھنے کسی اور سکول میں جاتے ہیں؟

Yes

No

12. Who in your family is giving you the most support in your studies? (Please write your answer below)

آپ کے خاندان میں آپ کی تعلیم میں سب سے زیادہ کس نے مدد کی؟

13. Please look at the first two rows of the chart below. Following the examples, please describe your siblings and their level of education. If you have more than ten siblings, leave out the youngest.

نیچے دیے گئے چارٹ کی دو قطاروں کو دیکھیں، نیچے دی گئی مثالوں کے ذریعے ہر بانی کر کے اپنے خاندان کے افراد اور ان کے تعلیمی معیار کے بارے میں لکھیں۔ اگر خاندان کے افراد سے زیادہ ہیں تو سب سے چھوٹے بچوں کے بارے میں نہ لکھیں۔

	Sister or Brother? (Please circle) بھین یا بھائی	Age عمر	Never went to school جو کبھی سکول نہیں گئے	Currently in school—write current Class جو ابھی سکول جا رہے ہیں / کلاس	Currently not in school—write highest Class completed جو ابھی سکول نہیں رہے ہیں، کتنی تعلیم حاصل کی؟
Example 1	Sister <u>Brother</u>	16	√		
Example 2	<u>Sister</u> / Brother	9		Class 5	
1	Sister / Brother				
2	Sister / Brother				
3	Sister / Brother				
4	Sister / Brother				
5	Sister / Brother				

6	Sister / Brother				
7	Sister / Brother				
8	Sister / Brother				
9	Sister / Brother				
10	Sister / Brother				



II. Your Education

1. What is the most valuable thing you have learned in school?

آپ کے خیال میں سکول میں سب سے اہم چیز آپ نے کیا سیکھی؟

2a. What is the highest level of education that you wish to complete? (circle your answer)

آپ کے نزدیک تعلیم کا سب سے اعلیٰ معیار کیا ہے جس کو حاصل کرنے کی آپ کی خواہش ہے۔

(I'm not sure Class 10 Class 12 B.A. Master's)

Other (please write) _____

2b. Why do you wish to reach this level? If you are not sure, you can leave this question blank.

آپ تعلیم کے اس معیار تک کیوں پہنچنا چاہتی ہیں؟

3. What are the biggest challenges that you face in your studies?

اپنی تعلیم کے دوران جو سب سے بڑے چیلنج آپ نے برداشت کئے ہیں وہ کون سے ہیں؟

Annex 4: Coding Protocols

- What aspirations, intentions, and evaluations constitute ‘demand’ for girls’ schooling in selected sites in rural Pakistan?
 - IMP: ‘Most important’ thing to be gained from schooling, or overall value
 - BG: Boys vs girls
 - EMP: Employment (or other sense of econ benefit) (code applies in positive or negative—ie, any mention)
 - MAR: Marriage
 - ISL: Islam – any mention of Islam (pos or neg)
 - MAN: Manners
 - AUT: Autonomy?
- Through what processes have these instances of demand come to be?
 - CHG: change—has demand changed, ie is it ‘new’? (eg have attitudes changed?) (report change in others or in self)
 - JOB: change is due to witnessing others get jobs, or some reported sense that jobs are more possible or necessary than in the past
 - INT: interventions—change is or isn’t due to gov’t or ngo programs—ie, any reference to supply side, or lack thereof
 - TCH: teachers—change is due to influence of teachers, or from visiting school
 - SEE: ‘seeing’—change is due to seeing others
 - MED- media
 - FAM- intra-family dynamics
 - COM- communication between friends, family etc.—either supporting or not supporting ed.
- Barriers/constraints?
 - POV- poverty or other econ constraints, ie direct cost of school or opportunity cost eg need for household or field work
 - DIS- distance
 - PRE- negative pressure from community/family
 - IGN- ‘ignorance’ – ie, statements that propose a sort of attitude issue or cognitive deficit

Annex 5.1: Ghande Household Census Form

House # _____ Total house members currently in village _____ Total house members not in village _____

	Gender		Age (years)					Schooling					Occupation
Currently in	M	F	0-5	6-10	11-20	21-40	40+	No school	In school	Finished school	Class?	School location?	(write job type or 'NA')
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
13													
14													
Currently not in	M	F	0-5	6-10	11-20	21-40	40+	No school	In school	Finished school	Class?	School location?	(write job type or 'NA')
1													
2													
3													
4													

Annex 5.2: Report and Analysis from Household Census in Ghande

Note: I prepared this report in March 2012 for Ghande residents and leaders of foreign NGOs working in Ghande. The pseudonym 'Ghande' was not used in original report; otherwise, this is an exact copy.

Ghande Household Survey: March 2012 Preliminary Data Analysis

Introduction

This report is based on data collected from a survey of all households in Ghande during March, 2012. The survey included 143 households and provided data for 921 residents currently in Ghande and 55 residents currently living elsewhere.

Part 1: What age and gender is the in-Ghande population?

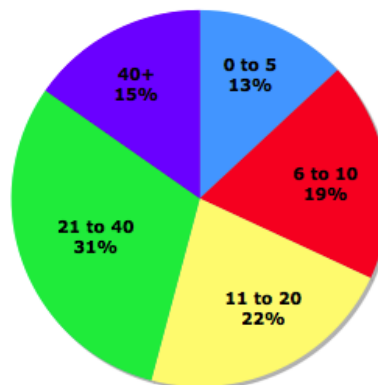
Area (Show All)

Count of Age	Gender		
Age	Female	Male	Grand Total
0 to 5	60	95	155
6 to 10	85	91	176
11 to 20	102	101	203
21 to 40	139	112	251
40+	69	67	136
Grand Total	455	466	921

There is a significant 'youth bulge' in Ghande's population. Of the total population of 921, 58% is aged 20 or younger, and 36% is aged 10 or younger.

What is particularly relevant from an educational perspective is that 17% of the population (155 persons) is aged 5 or under, and will soon be of school-going age. Given that the current total number of students in Ghande's schools is 276, and that most of these students are concentrated at lower levels of schooling (see Part 4), this means that the current carrying capacity of Ghande's schools will need to increase by more than 50% within the next five years if all members of the 0-5 cohort are going to attend school.

Population breakdown by age cohort



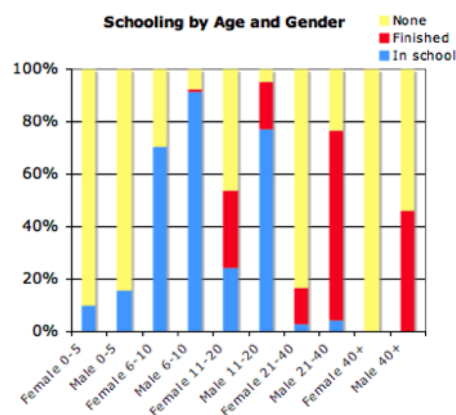
Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis

Part 2: Who has ever been to school?

The graph at right and the table below show what percentage of males and females in each age cohort have been to school. Keep in mind that many people who have 'finished' school have only completed a few years. This is explored further below (Part 3).

Note that the gender gap has decreased in recent generations, but it still persists. Efforts to close this gap could begin by targeting the 25 girls in the 6 to 10 age cohort and the 47 girls in the 11 to 20 cohort that have never been to school.

It is also worth noting that the gender gaps vary by area. In the 6 to 10 age cohort, the total female enrolment rate is almost 71%--about 22 percentage points behind the male enrolment rate. However, in Khatong-Khore, female enrolment is only 50%, and male enrolment is 88%--a gap of 38 points.



Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis

Part 2: Who has ever been to school? (continued)

Area (Show All)							
Count of Gender		Schooling				Percent ever in school (%)	Gender Gap (% points)
Age	Gender	Finished	In school	None	Grand Total		
0 to 5	Female		6	54	60	10	5.7895
	Male		15	80	95	15.78947	
0 to 5 Total			21	134	155		
6 to 10	Female		60	25	85	70.58824	21.719
	Male		1	83	7	92.30769	
6 to 10 Total			1	143	32	176	
11 to 20	Female		30	25	47	102	41.128
	Male		18	78	5	101	
11 to 20 Total			48	103	52	203	
21 to 40	Female		19	4	116	139	60.239
	Male		81	5	26	112	
21 to 40 Total			100	9	142	251	
40+	Female			69	69	0	46.269
	Male		31	36	67	46.26866	
40+ Total			31	105	136		
Grand Total			180	276	465	921	49.5114

This household survey did not attempt to define or measure literacy in Ghande, but it is probably safe to assume that most residents who have never been to school are not literate. It is also likely that many residents who attended to school for just a few years are also illiterate, but this is harder to assume.

In this sense, the 'percent ever in school' column can be taken as a rough estimate of literacy rates per gender and age cohort. For example, in the 11 to 20 cohort, male literacy might be above 90%, but female literacy is not likely to be much higher than 50%.

In total, 31% of females and 67% of males in Hushe have ever been to school.

**Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis**

Part 3: How much schooling have residents attained?

Area	(Show All)
Schooling	(Show All)

Count of Age		Class?																
Age	Gender	(blank)	Prep	Nurs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	BA	FA		
0 to 5	Female	54		4	2													
	Male	80		12	3													
6 to 10	Female	25	7	19	21	7	4	2										
	Male	7	4	13	31	19	13	3	1									
11 to 20	Female	47		2	6	13	12	4	7	1	5	2	2	1				
	Male	5	2		2	9	12	21	17	4	7	14	5	3				
21 to 40	Female	116			2	4	1	2	1	2		1		6	2	2		
	Male	26			4	10	9	7	9	3	6	9	3	14	7	5		
40+	Female	69																
	Male	36		1	3	6	1	5	11	2	1	1						
Grand Total		465	13	51	74	68	52	44	45	13	19	27	10	24	9	7		

This table demonstrates that males outpace females in educational attainment at almost every level in every age cohort. Note that the 'blank' column indicates no schooling.

16 females and 61 males have reached class 8 or higher. (The out-of-Ghande population includes an additional 4 females and 14 males who have reached class 8 or higher.) Females in the 11 to 20 age cohort that have ever been to school have attained an average of 4.71 years of schooling. For males in the same cohort, the average is 6.05 years. In the 21 to 40 age cohort, males and females ever in school are almost even with an average of 7.5 years-- but this group includes 86 males, and only 24 females.

Keep in mind that this table does not distinguish between current and past students, and thus is potentially misleading with regard to the 11-20 age cohort: while females appear to outpace males in Class 1 and 2, these numbers actually reflect the fact that many females dropped out at these levels (see Part 5), while males continued.

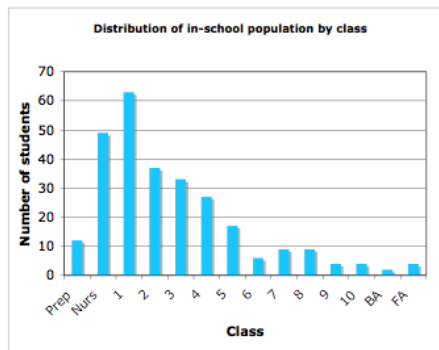
**Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis**

Part 4: At what level are current students?

Assuming minimal dropouts (see Part 5) and consistent pass rates, the graph at right and the table below can help predict the extent to which Ghande's schools will need to expand to accommodate the 166 residents under the age of 10 who are currently not in school. Given that the majority of current students are clustered between nursery and Class 4, relatively few spaces will 'open up' due to school completion within the next few years, and thus new spaces (and teachers and other resources) will be necessary to accommodate incoming students.

These data can also help predict how many males and females will seek schooling beyond Class 8 (the highest available level in Ghande) within the next few years. 34 males and 11 females are currently in Class 5 or above, and an additional 76 males and 22 females are in Classes 2, 3, and 4. This means that as many as 110 males and 33 females might seek Class 9 education within the next seven years.

See next page for more information about the students currently studying beyond Class 8 in Ghande.



**Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis**

Part 5: When are students dropping out?

Schooling

Count of Age	Age	Gender	11 to 20		21 to 40		40+	
Class?	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Prep				1				
Nurs			1					1
1			2		2		4	
2		1	10		4		10	
3			7	1	1		9	
4			3		2		7	
5			4	3	1		9	11
6					2		3	2
7				3			6	1
8			2	5	1		9	1
9			1	2			3	
10				3	4		13	
BA					1		6	
FA					1		2	
Grand Total		1	30	18	19		81	31

This table shows a sharp contrast between the dropout rate in the current 6 to 10 cohort and that in the 11 to 20 cohort. In the 6 to 10 cohort, the dropout rate is virtually zero, whereas 20 females in the 11 to 20 cohort dropped out by the end of Class 3.

There are 144 children in the 6 to 10 cohort that have ever enrolled in school (see above, Part 2), and only one has dropped out. It is too early to tell how long this high retention rate will continue, but it is clear that today's young students are dropping out less frequently than were their counterparts five to fifteen years ago.

**Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis**

Part 4: At what level are current students? (continued)

Area
Schooling

Count of Age	Class?															Grand Total
Age	Gender	Prep	Nurs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	BA	FA	
0 to 5	Female		4	2												6
	Male		12	3												15
6 to 10	Female	7	19	21	7	4	2									60
	Male	4	13	31	18	13	3		1							83
11 to 20	Female		1	4	3	5	1	3	1	5		1	1			25
	Male	1		2	9	11	21	14	4	4	9	3				78
21 to 40	Female												2	1	1	4
	Male												1	1	3	5
Grand Total		12	49	63	37	33	27	17	6	9	9	4	4	2	4	276

Note that 14 Ghande residents are 'currently studying' above Class 8, even though the Ghande school system terminates at Class 8. These individuals are pursuing 'private' education-- that is, they are independently studying for higher-level exams that they will eventually take in Khaplu or Skardu. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the quality of such education is mediocre at best. Providing better support for such students might be an effective way to address the fact that not all students will be willing or able to leave Ghande for further schooling beyond Class 8.

Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis

Part 6: Where do boys and girls go to school in Ghande?

Location?	MPS
Schooling	In school

Count of Gender	Gender		
Class?	Female	Male	Grand Total
Prep	5	4	9
Nurs	7	6	13
1	8	14	22
2		7	7
3	2	7	9
4	1	9	10
5	3	4	7
6	1	3	4
7	4		4
Grand Total	31	54	85

Location?	GSH
Schooling	In school

Count of Gender	Gender		
Class?	Female	Male	Grand Total
Prep	2	1	3
Nurs	17	19	36
1	19	22	41
2	10	20	30
3	7	17	24
4	2	15	17
5		10	10
6		2	2
7	1	4	5
8		9	9
Grand Total	58	119	177

These tables show enrolment by gender and class level at XXX School (MPS) and the two government schools in Ghande (GSH)-- the 'social school' (class Nursery thru 3; total enrolment 21 males and 16 females) and the main government school (Nursery thru 8; total enrolment 97 males and 48 females [this is from enrolment registers; note that the numbers do not exactly match with survey data]).

Note that MPS and GSH are roughly equal in terms of their share of female students: MPS students are 36% female, and GSH students are 33% female. This is interesting in light of the focused efforts of MPS to recruit females by waiving school fees. Qualitative interviews suggest that most parents still perceive MPS to be more expensive than GSH due to other associated costs.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents with limited resources choose to send sons to MPS and daughters to GSH. Further research about school choice could use the data from this survey to test this hypothesis by examining the correlation between school choice and sibling order, number, and gender.

Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis

Part 7: Who is out of Ghande, what are they doing, and where are they?

Count of Gender		Gender		
Age	Schooling	Female	Male	Grand Total
0 to 5	None	2	1	3
6 to 10	In school		1	1
	None	1		1
11 to 20	Finished		3	3
	In school	4	17	21
21 to 40	Finished	1	16	17
	None	2	1	3
40+	Finished		4	4
	None	1	1	2
Grand Total		11	44	55

Schooling	In school

Count of Gender			Gender	
Age	Class?	Location?	Female	Male
6 to 10		2 Skardu		1
11 to 20		5 Khaplu		1
		7 Khaplu		1
		3 Skardu		3
		8 Skardu	2	4
		9 Khaplu		2
		Skardu	1	4
	10 Khande			2
	BSc	1SB	1	
Grand Total			4	18

The first table on this page presents an overview of the Ghande residents currently living elsewhere: 44 males and 11 females, predominantly between the ages of 11 and 40. Almost all males in the 21 to 40 cohort have completed some amount of schooling and are now mostly working in restaurants. In contrast, most of the 11 to 20 cohort is currently in school.

The second table offers more details about the 18 males and 4 females that are currently in school outside of Ghande. A critical question is what these individuals will do when they complete their schooling: will there be incentives for them to return to Hushe, or will they seek work elsewhere and thus create a 'brain drain' effect?

Ghande Household Survey: March 2012
Preliminary Data Analysis

Part 8: Concluding Remarks

This report is intended to stimulate discussion and reflection about Ghande's educational past and future. It is hoped that this report-- as well as the dataset from which it is derived-- will be shared freely among individuals, organizations, and government actors with an interest in education reform in Ghande.

A few points that seem particularly important are summarized below:

-The significant 'youth bulge' in Ghande's population (Part 1) suggests that the carrying capacity of Ghande's school system will need to expand dramatically within the next several years, especially at the early levels. It might also raise questions about the need for more family planning in Ghande.

-Gender gaps in school enrolment and achievement have narrowed over the years, but they still persist (Parts 2 and 3). An effort to address these gaps could begin by immediately targeting the 25 females in the 6 to 10 age cohort and the 47 females in the 11 to 20 cohort that have never been to school (as well as the additional 20 females in this cohort that dropped out at Class 3 or earlier; see Part 5). It is likely that many of the older females would be unwilling to re-enroll in school, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many would be interested in alternative programs such as remedial literacy trainings, especially during the quiet winter season.

-The unprecedented volume of students in the early levels of schooling (Part 4) means that by 2015, as many as 50 students might be seeking to continue their schooling beyond the current limit of Class 8. By 2020, this total could surpass 200. These numbers should be taken into account when attempting to calculate the long-term viability of initiatives such as scholarship programs, housing arrangements for out-of-Ghande students, or the expansion of Ghande's schooling system. In the meantime, it is worth considering providing more support for students pursuing 'private' education beyond Class 8 in Ghande.

-21 individuals in the 11 to 20 age cohort are currently attending school outside of Ghande (Part 7). If they are offered incentives and opportunities to come back to work in Ghande, they could play a leading role in their generation. If not, there is risk of a 'brain drain' effect that would deprive Ghande of its most educated citizens.

-One final point: this dataset focuses mostly on who goes to school and for how long, but reflects nothing about the critical issue of educational *quality* in Ghande. Although it is not mentioned above, there is arguably nothing more important to Ghande's educational future than the provision of well-trained and committed teachers.

This report was prepared by Willy Oppenheim, a doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford. To access the original dataset or to share any other questions or comments, please contact him at willyoppenheim@gmail.com.

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