
Advisory Note on Measures: Women's Economic Empowerment

The logic behind the current approach to measuring women's economic empowerment programs is fraught with gaps and contradictions. This reality became clear as we studied a program designed to work in actual engagement with the world economy, rather than under the restrictions that typify research. After visiting women-owned businesses in Walmart's Empowering Women Together program and reviewing more than 700 sources for appropriate metrics to capture what we were seeing, we concluded that there are major conceptual holes. The community engaged in this work must develop new measures, refine its definitions, and better articulate its theory of change if real empowerment is to be achieved.

Of special concern was the practical trend that assumes ordinary business measures can act as a proxy for women's empowerment. When these measures are not adjusted for gender effects, they reproduce bias in analysis. Further, though many claims are made for the human benefits of working to empower women economically, the propensity to look exclusively at business growth or income indicators is symptomatic of unclear goals and disagreement about the intended beneficiaries.

We believe better measures of women's empowerment are also needed, especially to provide comparability across nations, including the developed and developing countries. In particular, we believe a focus on women's subjective experience of the empowerment process would help refine the international community's understanding of the nature of this change, as well as provide more explanation for impact as measured.

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Executive Summary

- Existing knowledge of the relationship between women’s empowerment and economic prosperity relies on correlational analysis of large datasets, small research sites with controlled interventions, or qualitative narratives. None of these provided a foundation for measuring a global program that actually had to engage with market forces, such as consumer preferences, seasonal trends, production standards, and logistical demands.
- The implicit theory of change driving the women’s economic empowerment effort includes dual, sometimes conflicting, goals. Overreliance on growth or income indicators at the expense of measures of well-being and empowerment could result in negative outcomes if not corrected.
- The most commonly used definitions of “women’s empowerment” focus on the “ability” and “capacity” to express views and make choices. These are latent qualities, thus seldom clearly observable. As a practical consequence, researchers and donors assume that their preferred visible behaviors are proxies for “empowerment” and do not attend to whether the outcomes are *in fact* the women’s own choices. If the choices of husbands and elders are simply supplanted by the preferences of global agencies, the goal of “women’s empowerment” will not be achieved.
- “Women’s empowerment” definitions also often include language that points, implicitly or explicitly, to persons or institutions controlling the women, thus “disempowering” them. Yet measurement systems do not acknowledge the likelihood of resistance from those parties by including metrics that would capture it, an omission that could lead to incorrect judgments about the effectiveness of programs.
- The questionnaires used thus far to measure women’s empowerment have been tested exclusively in the developing world, within a handful of countries. The measures do not travel to the developed world, nor even to all developing countries, and so were inadequate for tracking a program that spanned four continents. Yet the gender gap is a global phenomenon with a strong cross-national pattern. Measures must be developed that can capture progress in all nations.
- Standard business measures codify gender bias, imply inappropriate reference points, cannot accommodate the variation in organizations, and cannot be applied at all to many programs. Thus, a different set of comparable indicators needs to be created and used.
- The failure to engage with the issue of care work is a problem for study design, implementation, measurement, and outcomes.
- History teaches that the process of women’s empowerment is one of struggle and heartbreak as much as inspiration and achievement, a narrative of starts and stops. Much more attention should be paid to capturing “empowerment” as it unfolds in time and researchers should not assume that the journey is always experienced as an uptick in confidence and well-being.
- The subjective experience of empowerment is often measured currently by using ad hoc questions (“Are you more confident now than you were before this program began?”). Tested measures from psychology, available for a range of states, should be used instead.

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- A positive “ripple effect” for children and communities is expected as the benefit of women’s empowerment. Attempts to document a ripple effect confront data collection problems that probably cannot be solved by any one institution, especially on a global scale.
- Some variables thought important to progress actually do not have stipulated scales in the literature. The lack of an agreed measure for “networks” is especially notable.

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The Back Story

In late 2013, we were tasked, through an academic grant to the University of Oxford, with designing a system of measures that would be used to assess Walmart's Empowering Women Together (EWT) program. This program intends to give small, women-owned businesses access to Walmart's vast consumer base by selling their products online. At the time we began this project, the system had 30 businesses in 12 countries on four continents and intended to expand rapidly. Our plan was to make field visits to all the businesses in North America and East Africa in order to ground the measures in the broadest range of actual practice. We were to write two case studies as illustrations, one in the United States and one in Africa.

Over the course of a year, we did indeed visit all the businesses in those two locations that remained active in the system. However, there was considerable churn in the list of participating businesses because of problems encountered when trying to knit small enterprises, especially those in developing countries, into the Walmart system. Unexpectedly, our role began to include relaying back to Walmart problems we had observed in the field. The EWT team did listen to what we said and often took steps to solve those problems, sometimes with small tweaks, but in some cases with dramatic innovations. However, this iterative process created a lot of additional change in the system as we were trying to study it. Further, the two case studies led to unexpected questions about the capacity of existing measurements to capture what was happening in the system. Indeed, we became increasingly aware that the EWT project itself presented complexity of an entirely different order from what research thus far had envisioned.

After more than a year, it still seemed premature—and potentially unfair—to enforce a measurement system amidst all this change. So, the Oxford research team and the EWT team jointly decided to suspend the development of assessment measures until the system itself stabilized. Instead, we decided we would share our learning from the experience. This sharing would point out the ambiguities and contradictions that came out of our attempts to adapt measures in common use. We developed a third case to illustrate the cultural complexity we had encountered, thus making a suite of three: Katchy Kollections (Nairobi), Women's Bean Project (Denver), and Maasai Women Development Organization (Arusha). We also agreed to write a document that reviewed existing measures in light of the EWT experience. This "Advisory Note on Measures" is that document.

Introduction

The movement to empower women economically using a market-based approach that works across public and private sectors is less than ten years old. Promising twin goals of growth and improved well-being, especially among the very poor, this effort represents an important and hopeful strategy. However, the research supporting it needs further thought and development, particularly in the area of metrics, and this Advisory Note is intended to foreground the gaps.

The theory implicit in this global initiative was originally based on strong correlational patterns linking gender equality to prosperity and stability among large datasets collected by international institutions. This data analysis is relatively new and the dynamic properties among the measures still insufficiently understood, however. Thus, studies designed to measure the impact of interventions on behalf of women's economic participation have been implemented. But these studies are still comparatively few, focused on a limited range of intervention types, and executed in a handful of developing countries. Behind these two quantitative data sources are many qualitative studies and reports. These provide useful context for design and evaluation, but, as many are produced for the sake of public relations, some are too narrow or biased to be used for actual assessment.

Evaluations of programs intended to empower women economically are further complicated, from a measurements perspective, because the necessary thinking brings together disparate disciplinary roots (i.e. business and women's studies) that have not previously "talked to each other." Further, programs often ask institutions to take on responsibilities not previously thought to be in their domain (i.e. businesses developing social programs or governments training entrepreneurs). Thus, there are many levels of innovation in progress. The challenge is to thoughtfully integrate multidisciplinary thinking, while also allowing for the fact that the programs themselves are completely new in the world—and thus are bound to have a steep learning curve. In short, this path-breaking effort to empower women is still pioneering its metrics, alongside its methods. We should allow that new fields take some time to produce appropriate measurements.

Overall, there is enough evidence being amassed to suggest strongly that the movement is headed in the right direction. However, notions of "best practice" need to be kept fluid until theories of change can be more cogently articulated and measures can be confirmed such that assessments do indeed match goals. Currently, there is no "right answer" for measuring women's economic empowerment—which, again, reflects just how radically innovative this work truly is.

This Advisory Note results from our work to bring existing measurement practices to bear on a women's economic empowerment program in the actual global retail space. Since the ultimate goal of the movement is surely for women to be fully equal and functioning in the global economy—and not just successfully completing randomized controlled trials—the measurement problems we encountered should be of interest to the whole community.

Scope of Review

We began with a review of the published material that documents interventions in women’s economic empowerment and the measures used in those interventions. We soon found that the broad expectations for women’s empowerment programs made an exhaustive literature review impractical. Because of the very expansive remit, we might need to be measuring everything from increased sales and improved skills to higher confidence and better mastery. Or we might be looking to document evidence of: a reduction in domestic violence; improved nutrition; greater equality in household decision-making; and the ability to send more children to school. All these topics are rooted in different literatures, often in more than one discipline. All of them have both academic and “grey literature” (e.g. think tank reports, World Bank publications) documentation, both of which vary widely in method and quality. Further, Walmart wanted to know the effect of the program not just on the entrepreneurs, but also on the employees, which implied coverage of both the entrepreneurship literature and the considerable number of publications about women and work.

In the end, we strategically reviewed 775 articles, reports, and books, all of which are listed in the bibliography at the back of this document. We purposely cast our net wider than is typical for systematic reviews. We did not focus exclusively on studies that met predetermined criteria, but rather tried to look at the flow of thought across the entire discourse. That way, we could offer a synthesis and critique of the implicit hypotheses and tacit agendas driving the movement, rather than limit ourselves to pronouncements of “what works” (a judgment we feel is premature, in any case). We feel the list we have provided is broad enough to form the basis for an informed commentary on the state of thought in this area, while being focused enough on recent work under the umbrella of women’s economic empowerment to be directly relevant.

Nevertheless, we will discuss and wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to three other reviews, two of them systematic: one from ExxonMobil and the UN Foundation; one from the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs; and one from the Overseas Development Institute. We have also included a systematic review of the academic literature measuring the “women’s empowerment” impact of employment in global companies that are focused on export, as close as we could get to a description of EWT. This review, with an annotated bibliography, is attached as Appendix 1.

Our hope is that this “Advisory Note on Measures” will stimulate dialog and further thinking about the assumptions, goals, and theories of change that are propelling the movement to empower women economically. In so doing, we also hope to raise questions about the way the women’s economy really works and to provide some illumination about how future studies might approach the issue of meaningful measurement. If nothing else, we hope this document will discourage those who believe interventions such as EWT can or should be assessed through the superficial application of conventional business measures.

We use EWT as a conceptual springboard to interrogate the references at the end of this report. Others may disagree with our findings. However, since our intention here is to open a critical dialog, we will welcome that engagement.

Toward the purpose of encouraging the widest possible conversation, we have not used an “academic” style in this document. There are no parenthetical references or footnotes. Rather, think of this as the beginning of a conversation with a strong evidentiary backdrop—with room for further refinement and investigation of that evidence and the programs that rely on it.

An Opening Sketch of the Global Change Theory

In recent years, many major institutions have issued reports analyzing women’s economic inequality and exhorting the global community to close the gender gap in education, work, enterprise, and financial access.

These reports often couch their argument as a promise for economic growth, to follow from better inclusion of women in the workplace or in enterprise. The “growth case” seems logically straightforward. If women who don’t work (or work part time) can be more productively employed, it will increase the labor supply and make better use of resources (e.g. a country’s investment in female education). If more entrepreneurs of either gender can create growing firms, more people can be employed and incremental growth generated. Indeed, the connections seem so obvious, one can only wonder why it took the world so long to make them.

There is very often an important added argument, however, in which women’s empowerment is offered as an effective means for combating poverty in developing nations. Poverty alleviation would be expected to come from two phenomena. First, women are thought more likely to spend any money they have on their children, which improves human capital. Second, empowering women may counter costly drags on national economies, such as domestic violence, adolescent fertility, or disease transmission. What emerges from this is a vision of women’s empowerment having a ripple effect that goes out to improve human capital through better education and health, as well as to protect resources through reduced disease and conflict.

Underpinning both these arguments is the dawning recognition that excluding women from economic participation is not only inefficient, but profoundly harmful. Women’s subordination has a negative impact that is believed to radiate outward into disease, conflict, and environmental degradation, in addition to fueling poverty’s continuation. Thus, the goal of empowering women *as such* is now known to be of broad economic and social value. Consequently, variables that get at the degree to which a woman is autonomous, free of violence, and able to engage with her community as an equal are essential parts of the overall metrics requirement.

The evidence to support some aspects of the overall case for women’s economic empowerment is quite clear. On other aspects, the evidence is still thin. Here, however, we simply want to call attention to several logical and practical problems in the measurements used to assess the expected impact.

Confusion between the goals of growth and poverty reduction produces competing measures. This conflation has the potential to thwart intentions.

The argument for including women to achieve growth would lead to one set of objectives and measures, such as increases in GDP at the national level or higher sales at the firm level. However, if the intention is to include women to better fight poverty, one would need to measure human well-being (as well as improvements in health, education, and the like), not just growth rates or even higher household incomes. And, importantly, if the mechanism of change is theorized to run through a different decision-making priority on the part of women,

then it must be determined that any increases in income remained under female control, rather than, as is much more typical in developing country settings, revert to the male head of household. Thus, measures of the women's economic autonomy are essential.

Further, there is the chance for the growth priority to displace the other goals, in part because growth is easier to measure. But, when the push to grow overrides every other consideration, the steps taken to adjust business models and working arrangements can easily result in exploitative employment and higher business risks. On the other hand, structuring a business that balances the needs of an impoverished workforce, especially when composed of women, against profitability usually means a more subdued expectation for growth. Unfortunately, the measures for well-being and empowerment are harder to make and the theory of change that connects such matters to business success often remain unarticulated in study designs. As a result, the business metrics often stand alone, with poverty alleviation and empowerment blindly assumed to follow naturally from private profit or basic employment.

Assumptions about what is “productive” work leave the primary constraint on women’s participation unaddressed.

The argument that women must be brought into the formal economy in order to be productively employed implicitly asserts that the activities in which women are currently engaged are economically unimportant. Further, the common practice of breaking slices of the economy apart for analysis—formal employment, part-time employment, enterprise, informal employment—tends to mask the pervasiveness of the “burden of care” that women, as a class, carry in their economic activity. In every single domain, women choose differently and earn less for overwhelmingly the same reason: the burden of care that gender places on them, whether chosen or not.

Yet, in contradiction to these known facts, the women's empowerment discourse places heavy weight on the promise that women's increased economic participation will pay back many times over in the improvement of human capital. This fundamental contradiction suggests we should invest in women, on the one hand, because they take better care of children, but, on the other hand, women must spend less time taking care of children in order to adequately return investment. Building yet more workplace structures with rules that interfere with care, without offering alternatives, merely replicates the exclusions that already keep women from participating fully in the formal economy. Evaluating new programs in a way that does not account for the burden of care will simply repeat the codified advantage of investing in males.

An investment focus on formal, high growth firms is unrealistic and unreflective.

Some authors in the references reviewed take a dismissive view of informal employment and enterprise, which are the means of livelihood most prominent in the world, especially for women. This, too, produces prejudices that cause analytical and practical problems. In the end, what we often see is an emphasis on certain types of enterprise and particular definitions of “productivity” that promise growth that will benefit investors (as returns) and governments (as tax revenue), but do not necessarily prove beneficial to women or families. An unreflective reliance on these kinds of measures and policies is emerging (e.g. supporting only “transformational” entrepreneurs,

and so forth), and it not only solidly contradicts many of the poverty alleviation objectives, but also may jeopardize the well-being of some of the women thus “empowered.”

Standard business indicators, when used alone, are wholly inadequate and often misleading.

We are concerned that the easy answer—the one that asserts a hard-nosed, no nonsense attitude—is to advocate the use of standard business measures as the sole means of evaluation. The use of business measures limits comparability of programs because, even though many programs focus on entrepreneurship, others are concerned with facilitating savings, training for employment, diffusing agricultural methods, and so forth. Thus, not all programs can be measured with the same business indicators. Further, as we found in the EWT system, business forms can vary such that indicators don't apply the same way across units: we found that several of the women-owned “businesses” were actually operating as charities and thus had a very different structure of resources, as well as limitations. Even ordinary profit-oriented businesses can be hard to compare across industries: getting one new customer in a business that sells heavy equipment to commercial users may have a significant bottom-line impact; getting one new customer in a hairdressing salon usually does not.

Our main concern, however, is that using business measures merely codifies the gender biases that produce lower growth rates among women-owned businesses around the world.

Research has firmly established that women-owned businesses are smaller and grow more slowly than men's. Whether women simply prefer smaller businesses or slower growth is not known. However, it is clear that there are systematic forces that constrain the growth of women-owned businesses. Not being able to spend enough time in the business because of care obligations is the main factor, but a lack of fair access to capital and the fact that women are often unwelcome in “growth” industries are also important considerations. We must better understand both the attitudes of women toward entrepreneurship and the factors that may constrain their success. Otherwise, growth-oriented assessment systems will be biased toward men and will suggest impractical business models for women.

Researchers designing measures need to be more mindful about intended beneficiaries.

The question really needs to be asked whether women are truly the intended beneficiaries of this movement or whether it is investors and governments. Evidence thus far indicates that gender equality contributes to economic growth, but economic growth does not necessarily mean gender equality. Policies and measurement systems that focus on growth indicators and do not measure life satisfaction or other personal outcomes for females reflect this confusion over who the final beneficiaries should be.

There is a crippling lack of differentiation and refinement among key concepts.

“Employment,” “inclusion,” “empowerment,” and “equality” are used almost interchangeably in this discourse.

Of particular concern is the frequent assumption, especially in practice, that employment of a woman automatically counts as her “empowerment,” an idea easily falsified. “Empowerment” is often defined as “voice” or in terms of potential (i.e. the “capacity” to make choices), yet measured by a presumed proxy of observable behaviors (e.g. increased savings). Further, in the developing world, reports speak of “empowerment,” but in the developed world, they monitor “equality.” Is there a difference? These terms and their causal relationships need to be better understood.

The process of empowerment is unexplored, yet might provide better explanation for program outcomes.

The theory of change is inadequately developed at the global level, as well as at the workbench. In particular, we note that the stop-and-start process so typical of a woman finding her voice is not reflected. The world community needs to recognize that certain predictable stumbling blocks can cause an intervention or investment on behalf of women to miss the mark—not because of failure on the woman’s part or poor intervention design, but because of persistent, patterned interference from third parties. For instance, working women are very often forced to give over their earnings, whether from jobs or enterprise, to husbands or fathers or even a mother-in-law. A woman may have a bank account and thus be “financially included,” but be bullied into turning over the ATM card. Thus, we cannot assume that the earnings from either employment or enterprise will simply flow through, unobstructed, towards paying a child’s tuition or investing in a business. Nor can we assume that because we have trained a woman to run a business that her circumstances will allow her to act on what she has learned. We must add some mediating and moderating variables to reflect process and common obstacles. Otherwise, we may read “failure” for a woman or program when in fact the failure is our own skill in anticipating the path leading to impact.

The difficulty of capturing the “ripple effect” may be insurmountable.

Walmart, like many corporations now engaged in women’s empowerment programs, wants to capture the positive effects of its investment by measuring the improved well-being of families and communities that is presumed to come from economically empowering women. Corporations have also been reproached for measuring their impact in terms of their own deliverables (e.g. bottles of water provided or vaccines given, rather than deaths avoided or workdays increased) and so are keen to be able to demonstrate external impact.

But the problems in this area are several. Interventions may be projected to have an impact on a myriad of factors from school attendance to the prevalence of head colds, from the incidence of violence to the vitamins consumed. Without better evidence outlining the pathways and processes, it is difficult to discern how any business intervention affects each of these factors, why that particular effect, and to what degree. It is currently a pretty capricious exercise to design measures that capture such effects.

A great deal of otherwise private data—school attendance and health records, for instance—would have to be made available or else interviews or surveys conducted from scratch. The types of questions that must be asked are intrusive and offensive to most people (“How many times did you have diarrhea last month?”; “Why did your son miss school last week?”; “How often does your husband hit you now compared to last year?”; “How much

money are you making?”). Simply assuming that people owe a response to such inquiries is disrespectful.

In most cases where this ripple effect is expected to occur, the population is very poor, usually rural, and often remote. The terrain presents a diffuse network of small villages, often hidden and several hours off road. The people seldom have access to the Internet and cannot afford smartphones. Thus, the expense and logistical challenges of collecting responses are daunting. Being able to execute a global program, such as EWT was meant to be, and then to reliably measure the responses to periodic questions, many of them intrusive, from a vast sample of such populations, over an indefinite period of time, is a very tall order indeed. This is not a system that can—or should—be built by a single private company.

Finally, there is insufficient attention to how the ripple effect would be measured in a developed economy. In those nations, school is usually free and compulsory, so “children in school” is not a meaningful comparison to what effects might be expected, say, in Africa, where parents often have to pay for school and there is little enforcement against truancy. In the developed nations, the greater concern is that children turn to drugs or gangs, falling into addiction and violence. Trying to measure the *absence* of such behaviors, as opposed to the positive *presence* of children in school, is asking a great deal. Imagine further what the global measurement system would look like—and how much it would cost—that could compare the absence of drugs in United States high schools versus the presence of children in rural Ugandan primary schools, and then directly connect that number to a specified group of women-owned business start-ups.

A false dichotomy is too often drawn between rights and economics.

Women use knowledge of rights to support their activities in business, and they often must use their earnings when exercising their rights. “Social justice” as a reason for women’s empowerment, so often set aside in the first few paragraphs of reports on economic programs, is inseparable from the factors that lead to success or failure in business. And, in the end, a world society that wants women to work harder so that nations can enjoy the fruits of growth, but will not focus with the same fervor on guaranteeing them equal rights, is engaged in exploitation.

Interventions into the economic realm therefore should attend to the local legal restrictions on women and adjust measures accordingly. Rights violations should be anticipated as possible interference into the design and impact of a program. Legal or human rights should not be dismissed as irrelevant to business.

Theories of change are based on an analogy built from a limited view of women’s history.

Most treatises in this domain implicitly or explicitly assume that interventions to empower women in developing countries will lead to or be accompanied by conditions that are typical in the developed nations, inferring causality between women’s relatively greater freedoms and those conditions. These questions of causality need to be untangled. Further, the economic history of women in the developed nations was (and is) complex—and the desired transformation took place over two centuries rather than two decades. That history includes a long struggle against labor abuse, as well as an overhaul of the care economy that is as yet poorly

understood and insufficiently attended. These same issues are relevant in the developing world today and more focus should be placed on fully understanding the correlations between the two narratives.

The issues outlined above rose to the surface when we tried to use existing measures and studies as the raw materials for building EWT’s measurement system. As we visited supplier after supplier, we saw variations and contradictions to the global change theory, which ultimately led us to question many basic assumptions and expectations. Indeed, overall, EWT was simply a broader concept, more engaged with the realities of global transactions, and this difference was at the root of our puzzlement.

Why EWT Is Different

Many of the major reports on the value of women’s empowerment are analyses that correlate data collected for other purposes. These data are so high level that more work is needed to understand the mechanisms that produce the patterns. The real efforts to determine “what works” to empower women, rest on a handful of intervention studies. It is important to understand first what the requirements are for such studies, as these would be the first source to mine for evaluating any other women’s economic empowerment initiative, such as EWT.

A compelling intervention study must have clarity and control, which demands discrete and uniformly delivered actions with an articulated process toward defined outcomes. The sites for intervention are selected to ensure that activities can be contained in order that the people or the transactions that cross the program “boundaries” do not contaminate the treatments. There should be, if at all possible, a control group wholly untouched by any part of the intervention. In most cases of published research, the intended impact is all one-way, from the intervening party to targeted research subjects. Subject groups are always selected in a manner that ensures their comparability on relevant dimensions at the baseline of the project. These respondents, in turn, are expected to behave according to instructions and to answer questions in a prescribed manner. The research party provides and controls the intervention, while collecting the data, but the intervention does not produce impact going in their direction.

EWT did not conform to these circumstances and therefore could not be assessed in the same way. In this section, we will quickly outline those differences in EWT we felt were important.

EWT was not a one-way intervention, but, as an exchange, had effects running both directions.

In essence, the “intervention” in this case was Walmart purchasing goods from a female supplier to resell to their consumer base. It sounds simple. However, making an exchange viable and sustainable, rather than constructing an artificially controlled intervention, is in many ways more complex precisely *because* exchange must work for both parties. Walmart would purchase, but suppliers had to provide goods that were saleable, in terms of design, pricing, sizing, and use, as well as deliver them on time, unbroken, bagged, and tagged.

The program could not be sustained if the goods were unacceptable, for any reason, in the eyes of consumers. Existing studies do not have to account for effects going backward to those initiating the intervention.

Existing studies do not address differentiated goods, but are controlled in part by focusing on commodities, and generally ignore the competitive trends that distinguish most markets.

All the goods circulating through EWT were finished goods, not cash or crops, and most were very style-sensitive things like apparel and housewares. In North America, EWT suppliers were all engaged in positioning their products, most of them novelties of some sort, through packaging and advertising, as well as design innovation. This was much harder for the developing country participants to do, as they often did not have as much (or any) experience in the destination market, nor the skills or resources to produce packages or messages. A key challenge that surfaced was the need for the makers of traditional handicrafts to change their offerings to appeal to trends and seasons in America. Without such updates, traditional handicrafts would not sell any faster on Walmart’s online portal than they do on African roadsides or in Asian bazaars. The global market for such things is simply saturated.

In contrast, existing research focuses on objects and services that are either commodities or near commodities: money services (e.g. cash transfers, microloans), training, agricultural commodities, or infrastructural interventions (e.g. child care or rural electrification). The interventions are set up with the specific intention of avoiding the “contamination” that might occur if a similar service or practice appeared in the same location. Thus, the importance of market trends, the drive to differentiate, and competitive issues so central to the EWT experience (and core to the operation of real markets everywhere) are not examined in existing research on this topic.

EWT had a global reach that spanned both a market development and a gender equality divide.

At the time we began our work, more than half of the businesses in the EWT system were in North America, but there were several operating in very poor, rural environments in the developing world. The EWT team planned to expand rapidly in all regions. Our remit was to develop a system that could be used to fairly assess this range of circumstances.

However, the differences in market development between the North American suppliers and the East African businesses were stark and daunting. Beyond this market divide, however, we were further concerned that women’s rights and economic participation—and the institutional support for them—was vastly different across this system, as indicated by the several global indexing schemes. Yet, as we found, the studies and programs to which we would turn for standards had been conducted in only a few regions—almost never in developed societies—and had been contained in a way that a program based on international exchange could not replicate.

We concluded that the circumstances from region to region varied enough that some discounting feature should be used to make the performance indicators comparable.

Identical treatment for all respondents, as well as attribution of impact to a single action, were not practicable.

Every EWT supplier had more than one customer, something that is essential to business stability, as we have discussed in the case studies. Further, the Walmart purchases were comparatively small, even as a percentage of sales in the smallest businesses. This was true in part because the program was just getting started and in part because working out the exchanges proved more difficult than expected. Nevertheless, we would not have been able to legitimately attribute major changes in either business or empowerment outcomes to Walmart's involvement. Further, because some suppliers were at more advanced business stages, had fewer market constraints, and were able to build volume more quickly, it would have been difficult to argue that all the businesses were starting from an equal footing and received identical treatments.

Contamination controls and counterfactuals were not practicable in an “intervention” based on exchange.

A market is, at its most foundational level, a network of exchange processes among humans. It would have been impossible to cordon off one supplier or a group of consumers to act as a control—the global market is simply too complex, dynamic, and fluid. And, interfering in these processes or blocking the networks would have, in effect, put an obstacle in the very pathway through which the intervention was meant to proceed.

Further, it was not at all clear what the counterfactual for this program would have been and whether it could ethically be enforced. For instance, we might have compared an EWT supplier with another company not selling to Walmart. But does that mean we would enact an embargo on the “control” company, thus implicitly forcing a negative effect on that business? Would a male-owned business have been the appropriate control? We didn't think so: men do not operate with the same disadvantages that women do.

The existing measurements for women's empowerment were unsuitable for the range of roles and circumstances, even within country.

“Women's empowerment,” as the term is currently used and measured in international development, originates in studies of the extreme poor and still reflects that focus. The measures, though “universal” or “international” applicability is claimed for them, have actually been tested in only a handful of developing countries, mostly among the very poor. We found that the majority of questions used were inapplicable in a developed country. (We have attached a spreadsheet of the questions that have been asked as Appendix 2.) Yet one cannot argue that women's empowerment is not a relevant and pressing need in developed countries.

Further, existing tests have been done among women who, having been selected for their comparability, also are all in broadly the same position with regard to the intervention. In the case of EWT, some groups of women had competing economic interests in relation to the “intervention” (e.g. the interests of the entrepreneur versus her suppliers or her employees), and it was hard to know how to account for the fact that “empowering” one woman sometimes worked to the detriment of another.

Even within country, extreme differences in the level of disadvantage exist. Within the United States, for instance, some businesses employed former felons, recovering addicts, refugees, immigrants, and poor elderly women. Yet there were also businesses owned by recent graduates from Stanford's engineering program and by wealthy housewives. One business owner was a self-made millionaire, and another was a movie star. We were surprised how many of these businesses were actually outsourcing production to China or Latin America. We wondered whether these factories were staffed with women and whether they too should be within the scope of our work. In Africa, some of the businesses are owned by elite, well-connected women, and one is collectively owned by the disenfranchised and desperate women of the Maasai. In some cases, it was hard to delineate, even within the same business, between suppliers and workers, all of whom could be female.

What is needed is a tested and confirmed battery of measures that can be used in any country and for any role. We reject the facile argument that gender norms are different everywhere: there is a strong global pattern and the underlying forces appear to be quite similar. One measure might be the incidence of domestic violence, a means and measure of gender inequality relevant everywhere and in every class. We also suggest that the international community should pay more attention to sophisticated psychometrics that could reflect the core aspect of empowerment, which is usually said to be “agency” or “self-efficacy” or “confidence.”

Existing women's empowerment questions have not been verified as “tapping into” uniquely gendered phenomena.

Since we were trying to test questions across employees in a sample of businesses owned by women—not a sample of women, as in other studies—it happened that we interviewed some men. Their answers to some of the questions designed to elicit symptoms of women's disempowerment sometimes surprised us. As we turned to the literature, we found that some questions, notably on household decision making, have been asked of men, but that many women's empowerment questions have not been tested against men to determine whether they do, in fact, differentiate gender status as intended.

The discourse treats formalization as one-dimensional and simply assumes the effects are positive.

The international development discourse tends to assume that bringing women into the formal economy is an unambiguously positive objective. As our case studies document, the EWT suppliers, like any other Walmart supplier, must pass an ethical sourcing audit. This audit constitutes a concerted effort to formalize in a very specific way. The business cannot be operating out of a home; workers must put in specified hours and be paid at least minimum wage; and the business must comply with a host of safety regulations, including especially that there can be no children present. In North America, these requirements were easily met because they were all part of the normal course of any business. In the developing world, however, these requirements changed the nature of the business, sometimes introducing real business risk and often causing culturally inappropriate and insensitive demands.

The normal practice is simply to tick a box positively if the business is formally registered. We do not feel

this practice captures the actual ambiguities involved. Further research is needed into the burdens that can accompany formal status, and, especially, studies must understand better why it is that women often resist registration, rather than simply dismiss them as lacking in the confidence, knowledge, or skill required to take that step.

“Women in business” has many definitions and manifestations.

While we were working in the field, the EWT team struggled with definitions and criteria for the types of businesses they wanted to include in the system. A confounding issue was whether the business must be owned by a woman (as in the Katchy Kollections case) or led by a woman (as in Woman’s Bean Project) or set up to benefit women (as in both Woman’s Bean Project and the Maasai Women Economic Development Organization).

Importantly, it was becoming very clear that, as these businesses grew, the risk increased that a woman owner would lose control because of the need to get external investors, who would likely be male. At that point, the business would no longer qualify as “woman owned.” The business would then be lost to the EWT system and could no longer be counted among its successes—thus producing a further negative bias against the program’s performance. We also saw several businesses in the field where a woman ostensibly owned the business, but it was in fact being run by her husband or a group of male investors, who exerted control by the power of gender, not the power of ownership.

The nature of the exchange relationship made data collection difficult.

Most of the women we interviewed were welcoming, open, and helpful—and positive about the intentions of the EWT program—but there was occasional pushback. We had unexpected difficulties getting responses from some suppliers. For instance, a few felt that they had not gained enough from the EWT interaction to be wasting time answering questions that implied some “empowerment program” was going on. Sometimes there were negative feelings about a transaction that had failed. Some suppliers were resentful about the ethical sourcing audit and, seeing the research team as just another unwelcome intrusion, did not want to talk to us. Some simply thought the questions we were asking were none of our business.

A frequent assumption in research is that respondents, especially the very poor, will answer even intrusive and insulting questions. It is the power differential that allows research teams working among the poor to come in asking impertinent questions and expecting compliance with elaborate protocols. In this case, we could see that, going forward, expecting respondents anywhere in this system (which potentially included not only entrepreneurs but their employees and family members) to submit to periodic, repeated questioning in order to allow tracking of impact might be unrealistic. Noncompliance was bound to be a problem.

A persistent issue with the developing country suppliers to EWT is their failure to communicate (discussed in the case studies). This radio silence occurs frequently and is sometimes the result of infrastructural breakdown or bad weather. We could see, however, that the silence sometimes signaled a desire on the part of the supplier to reduce, or even stop, the communication. To deliver an ongoing data collection project that required

the frequent participation of many people, some far removed from the intervention and some with very limited technological access, could prove impossible.

There were powerful influences on the suppliers besides the “intervention” from Walmart.

Especially in the developing countries, Walmart involvement occurred within the context of other interventions by different institutions. We have documented in the case studies the way that two “aggregator” partners brought different approaches to the task of helping small businesses to engage with Walmart. Still other organizations—Vital Voices, the African Development Fund, United StatesAID, even Macy’s—had also been instrumental in helping the women-owned businesses become viable. Our question was, first, how large must Walmart’s role be, as compared to other players, before any increases in positive measures can be attributed to their involvement? Beyond that, it seemed that we should also adjust outcome measures somehow to account for the assistance from other organizations enjoyed by some suppliers but not others (for instance, some businesses had enjoyed grants from foundations but most had not).

There were multiple avenues of potential impact, most probably unanticipated by the world community.

Most observers would expect that the impact of EWT would occur through huge orders that would allow small suppliers to “scale” quickly. There are many risks to the supplier associated with such assumptions and we have detailed these in our case studies.

When we thought through the attribution of impact, we became concerned that the orders EWT was placing were small and that relationships with the suppliers were often failing after only one or two transactions. Yet we also could see that if Walmart did come to dominate a woman’s business to the degree that we would be comfortable attributing to them any increase in childhood education or subjective well-being among the employees, it would be a very unbalanced business situation. In truth, such dominance by a single customer would put the employees and their families at too much risk, as well as the entrepreneur. So, we began to look for other ways that a relationship with Walmart might benefit a woman entrepreneur. It felt like a strained argument at first, but actually, in the end, it seemed to us there were several benefits: expanding networks, learning to plan and schedule, and becoming certified as an ethical source, for instance. None of these avenues for impact would necessarily immediately increase sales or hiring, but they might positively affect multiple dimensions of the business, such as efficiency, profitability, and risk reduction.

EWT suppliers often had charitable and social missions, as well as business objectives.

Several of the enterprises—including both of the aggregators—in the EWT system were organized as charities or as social enterprises. In these instances, it was necessary to balance the business focus with a social or charitable focus.

Frequently, the social/charitable focus was a program aimed at helping disadvantaged women.

Three problems emerged from this situation. First, the difference in organization type, such as between a for-profit company and a 501(c)(3), worked against comparability in terms of profit expectations, sources of funds, costs of goods and labor, available resources, avenues for marketing, and many other factors directly related to conducting business and assessing success. Second, because social aims had to be balanced with business aims, there were identifiable constraints on growth as related to mission, but not necessarily as related to the availability of capital, the skill of the entrepreneur, the desire for growth, industry, or the other factors typically seen to hinder growth. Third, the intention to achieve a social purpose, especially “to help other women,” normally signalled an entrepreneur or leader who was herself “empowered” and even privileged. Since most “interventions” on behalf of women entrepreneurs intend to help them achieve confidence, skills, and other personal capital, it seemed inadvisable to include these women in the same measurement exercise with other entrepreneurs who were less accomplished and who were struggling to succeed for themselves.

Other efforts to synthesize across studies have also raised questions about methods and measures. We will turn now to three other reviews to highlight some similarities between their findings and the problems we confronted with EWT.

The Landscape of Measurement

We turn first to the [Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs’ \(ANDE\) 2014 review](#) of reporting practices within the social impact investing community, “[The State of Measurement Practice in the SGB \[Small and Growing Business\] Sector.](#)” Because EWT is a social impact investment as much as it is an intervention, this comparison is relevant.

The first and most important thing to note is that social investment groups rarely plan for or measure gender effects, whether as participation, process, or outcomes. The report recounts that Technoserve had, as of 2012, overhauled their measurement approach to include gender disaggregation. But it is clear that no effort was being reported that dealt with the distinctive potential and challenge of gender-impact investing.

The most common purposes for measurement were to report to funders, to attract more funders, and to provide content for marketing materials. Whether these purposes produce bias in the results is a question that should be addressed.

As the ANDE report makes clear, the measures themselves are in need of development, but the burden of reporting on the small, struggling social enterprises that form the investment base is also a constraint. Like EWT, these funds saw that too much change occurred in the enterprises as they developed to make measurement reliable or fair.

As the practice stood when reported, only 20 percent of those responding mapped a theory of change so that the process of impact could be monitored. More than 60 percent measured outputs (e.g. services delivered or clients reached), not outcomes (e.g. reduced mortality or increased school attendance). The majority of funds tracked metrics related to scale, such as the number of units sold. About 40 percent also measured “depth of impact,” but these too were business measures, such as agent churn and payments to producers. Even the “capacity development providers” (such as NGOs) were measuring mostly firm-level outcomes, such as financial performance and job creation. About half of these providers were also conducting surveys to determine whether entrepreneurs were satisfied. Two major NGOs in the sample were the only ones doing household surveys to determine outcomes for employees, as well as suppliers and clients, of the firms receiving investment. However, the study did not report what measures were used or what the outcomes were.

Though some funders and firms were measuring social impact, there was an overarching emphasis on financial performance, especially the return to investors. We were particularly concerned to see that the managers of social impact funds are compensated based on return to investors, as opposed to program outcomes, which must surely have an impact on their selections for investment. It was clear that decisions were being made, pervasively, on the basis of financial return and, especially, rate of growth. Because women’s firms are known to grow more slowly and because the reasons for that slower growth are, at least in part, attributable to the conditions of gender, a measurement system that selects and rewards primarily on the basis of growth will be inherently biased against females unless some conscious effort is made to balance the effect.

The most common methodology was qualitative case studies. There were also stakeholder surveys. The least common method was randomized controlled trials (RCT), as these are expensive and usually require both an academic partner and a subcontractor. (We were shocked at the low figure given for the average cost of an RCT—\$100,000—as our experience has been of much higher costs.)

We noted two items of concern expressed in this report that resonated directly with the EWT experience. One was the problem of attribution we have already mentioned:

A few organizations that we spoke with brought up the challenge of attribution, especially in the context of field building. Often, more than one fund manager co-invests in a single firm; in reporting back to investors and the public, the fund managers “are essentially double counting” their reach. As the field grows, some see the need for a transparent methodology to account for each investment’s appropriate share of the impact (p. 24).

A solution proposed for this problem is an ecosystem approach measured via some aggregated effort. We agree that it is time to investigate such a plan, as we have heard similar discussions even outside EWT, but fear that the intention may prove difficult to execute.

We expect that, eventually, the kinds of aggregate assessments called for by the ANDE report and now in increasing demand among donors, will require the development of at least a few measures that can be used to compare across regions, targets, and intervention type. These are not likely to be business measures, as such figures vary too much by industry and business size, and also carry gender bias. We suggest that some measure of subjective “empowerment” or “agency” or well-being, possibly supplemented by an observable measure that applies to all sites, even if to different degrees, might be used.

A second point of resonance was the conflict of financial and social performance, as specifically manifest in pricing:

Tensions arose even in cases where the business model aligns financial and social performance. For example, in cases where revenues are closely linked to the number of beneficiaries (customers or suppliers), the question of pricing still creates challenges. A company that sells seed at a reduced price, for example, might be reducing its margin to optimize its social performance. Similarly, a company that buys product from suppliers at the base of the pyramid may reduce its purchase price, increasing its margin at the expense of performance (p. 24).

Because of the exchange nature of the EWT “intervention,” the question of price came up frequently. The program could work only if products were offered at a price that Walmart shoppers would pay. These shoppers, often disadvantaged women themselves, have a low price threshold and thus exerted a downward pressure on prices at every point in the transaction. What frequently happened was that the aggregator would accept a smaller margin to make the transaction go or EWT would absorb the loss on an order that was priced too high to move. Usually, the margins of the supplier were purposely protected in order to help her continue in her business. Looking ahead, these pressures may make the program unsustainable.

The United Nations Foundation/ExxonMobil Foundation “Roadmap for Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment” aimed to distill what is known about “what works” in women’s economic empowerment interventions. It is important to note first that the definition of “what works” was taken to be an that increased earnings or productivity, though the report does discuss other outcomes and the relationships among factors in the field.

This report is notable for its division of the results according to sectors or target groups—an acknowledgement that interventions have different effects under different conditions and with different groups of women. We have already noted the variation in our own sample and concur with the judgment that regional variations, whether cultural or infrastructural, would affect the impact of interventions, as would the characteristics of the recipient audience.

However, our own remit was to design a system that would be fairly applied to all circumstances.

A study by Woodruffe and MacKenzie, commissioned by The United Nations Foundation/ExxonMobil Foundation and included in the “Roadmap” report, noted that sample size has been insufficient across interventions involving training to have enough power to discern even large changes. In particular, it was observed that participant attrition contributed a great deal to this problem. Going forward, we believe it is crucial to gain better understanding of the reticence of respondents and the hesitation to participate. Women are often restricted in both time and mobility to a degree that they cannot participate in such programs. We feel that women who are particularly subject to control at home may be more likely to drop out or fail to respond. Or, it may be that many drop out because they do not feel the program is of benefit, leaving only those who do. Any of these explanations would ultimately bias the report of “what works.”

A 2014 Overseas Development Institute (ODI) systematic review focused on describing methodologies. The initial search produced 382 references, of which 254 were empirical studies of economic empowerment of women and girls. Of these, 117 were financial services interventions. Other areas of intervention were training and development services, social protection (usually cash transfers of some sort), and some trade/market access intervention (these were mostly related to agricultural commodities).

After applying quality filters, only 70 studies were left. It is worth noting that the quality filters were biased against qualitative studies, which may have contributed to the criticisms cited in the report. Qualitative studies seldom have the kinds of methods protocols that quantitative studies do. This is not a failing, but a function of the epistemological difference. Yet, as here, the qualitative works are often rejected in systematic reviews because they do not have these protocols. In comparison, quantitative approaches very often are light on context and theory. In our experience, multimethod research often has to be split into two articles, one qualitative and one quantitative, because of publication biases—so these outputs should be treated as pairs. In sum, there was a certain inevitability in the criticisms reported by ODI, given their filters, but we still feel those complaints are worth noting here.

ODI observed that there was little attention paid to the holistic nature of female subordination. Fewer than 25 percent of the 70 studies started their work with an analysis of the gender conditions at the site. As a result, many of the studies were marred by the use of stereotypes as underlying assumptions, as well as insufficient comprehension of the multiple gender inequalities affecting the intervention outcome. Only about 30 percent of the studies had measures that acknowledged the gender conditions at play; all the rest focused exclusively on business measures. Those that did measure gender outcomes used household decision-making measures only. Overall, evaluators focused on “output” measures, and these were pre-agreed. As a result, there was no process, either hypothetical or descriptive, that could be used to explain results.

This problem probably grows directly out of the fact that only 44 percent of the 70 studies had what ODI considered a “high quality” theory of change that “enabled the evaluators to demonstrate where and how change would happen as a result of the intervention—and thereby to frame their evaluation around that change process. The best theories of change showed dynamic and multifaceted change processes that reflected transformational changes in women’s agency and economic advancement, and the relationship between them” (there were no page numbers).

ODI notes that “hardly any” of the reviewed documents published the evaluation tools used. We have been

especially frustrated by this fact in our work on EWT. Repeatedly, a complex problem, such as measurement of networks, led us to search the literature—only to find that many studies claimed to measure the item, but none revealed the questions or scales by which the phenomenon was made operational and the measure taken.

A key finding of the ODI review was that “bundled interventions” work best. Our fieldwork for EWT led us to the same conclusion. Very often, problems we found on our site visits were external to the transaction itself and required another institution, such as a bank or the customs agency, to resolve. We also observed that some suppliers we visited had made it to the point of engaging with Walmart only because of the previous assistance of one or more institutions. Finally, a key difference we observed between the North American and East African sites was the way that different organizations in the supply chain worked together in North America to avoid, for instance, supply shortages or shipping disruptions, but counterparts in Africa did not. We also observed that interventions not usually thought to be “economic” in nature, such as education on rights, could be seen to have an effect on the economic outcomes but are treated as different animals in this literature. Thus, we observe again the need to move toward an “ecosystem” approach that acknowledges the collaborative approach that exists (and actually needs to expand), as well as the shared measurement system that will be required to track progress.

ODI called for more attention to context, theory about change, and measures for multiple indicators of gender equality, as well as stipulations about the relationships between these indicators and the outputs, such as business measures. ODI also specifically calls for more multimethod studies, so that quantitative findings can be designed and explained better.

We cannot underscore enough our agreement with the ODI recommendations. Our experience with EWT, as well as with previous projects, has taught us that factors observable only on the ground have a massive effect and should be accommodated in study design, measures, and interpretation. Researchers need to take the time to do qualitative work both before and after the quantitative study. As we will detail throughout this document, many things we observed in our field visits flatly contradicted the expectations implicit in current research practices and, as we outlined in the case studies, we were often struck by how misleading and potentially dangerous it would be merely to report simple business measures. We are dismayed to realize that most companies in Walmart’s position would have hired a management consultancy to come up with a measurement system from behind a desk, thereby blocking consideration of many important and basic matters.

Critiques like the one made by ODI and, we hope, the voice we will add with this “Advisory Note” must change the assumptions that drive practice. Possibly the most crucial next step is to develop more universally applicable measures of “women’s economic empowerment,” with a clear operational theory and standard measures to capture the processes of change as well as outcomes.

Measuring Women’s Empowerment

No country in the world is free of gender inequality, particularly in the domain of economics. This observation is documented year after year by the compilation of data produced by the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, but is also the refrain of many other global assessments. The seemingly archaic exclusions observable in the developing world, such as lack of inheritance rights or access to financial services, were typical of the developed world in recent history. Thus, while we may see differences of degree between the developed and developing countries, there is scant difference of kind when it comes to gender. Consequently, it is not only possible, but also necessary, that standard measures be developed that can track the effects of women’s empowerment interventions anywhere they occur. The absence of such agreed measures applicable in both North America and East Africa was the single most daunting obstacle we encountered in designing a measurement system for EWT.

Definitions of women’s empowerment currently in use often point to latent phenomena that cannot be observed or measured directly. We reviewed many empirical studies, surveys, and theoretical works that attempt to codify measures for “women’s empowerment,” a phrase that is often used interchangeably with “agency.” Currently, the definition is often simplified as “Women’s ability to make choices they value and to act on those choices.” This definition incorporates Ibrahim and Alkire’s 2007 observation that “empowerment” must incorporate a woman’s own values and not someone else’s. These authors also added a schema that has since become popular, which is to break down “power” into: power to, power over, power with, and power within. This conceit creates tidy bullet points but actually does not add much analytical traction, in our opinion.

“Empowerment” is also often expanded, following Naila Kabeer’s 1999 essay on measuring women’s empowerment, to note a tripartite situation, in which it must be established that women have resources (as a precondition) and agency (the process), leading to achievements (the outcome). A problem arises when the assets available as resources will vary in time and by country and when the outward manifestations of empowerment will also vary. For instance, it is common to ask whether a woman can leave her home to, for instance, go to the market or visit relatives without her husband’s permission. This is a perfectly reasonable question to ask in South Asia and even some parts of sub-Saharan Africa and, in those places, is a good proxy for level of empowerment. As we found, if you ask a woman a question like that in San Francisco, you have effectively asked her if she is abused by her husband. As offensive as the question may be in that instance, the connection is made precisely because the underlying issue of control and the potential use of violence to enforce it is present in all societies. The key is finding a way to measure the reality of control and violence that is shared between two very different sites.

We think it is worthwhile to look more closely at some of the components that have appeared in the empowerment definitions. The synthesis offered by Ibrahim and Alkire includes a table of definitions. Some of these still show the poverty studies influence very strongly, often exhibiting a tendency to:

- Carry over ideas about the centrality of institutional resistance, while overlooking the private, household-level aspect of gender oppression,

- Cast the state or corporations as the adversary (rather than the patriarchy that exists at local levels, including village and households),
- Emphasize collective action at the expense of individual resolve,
- Valorize “decentralization,” despite the very decentralized, but nevertheless devastating, power wielded within families or small communities, and
- Characterize, on a class analogy, the struggle as one occurring among those “from below” as against “those above,” thus turning a blind eye toward the struggle of gender that must occur *within* communities, rich or poor, powerful or powerless.

In sum, there is the unmistakable mark of a lens that was created to measure a different kind of disempowerment—poverty, measured at the household or community level, with a blind eye to gender.

We do wish to flag, however, that institutional constraints on women’s empowerment are getting short shrift in the current formulation of approaches. There are many ways in which institutional practices interfere with the economic viability of women. Government corruption, for instance, is believed to fall more heavily on women—and we saw evidence suggesting that might be true. These kinds of issues need to be considered in research and addressed more forcefully in practice. An alarming tendency in the programs and interventions implemented under the banner of women’s economic empowerment is to focus exclusively on the women themselves as the site for change.

There is still a tendency in measurement to emphasize observable actions and groups (especially political ones), rather than the internal states that may lead to behaviors (or not). This is where the need to articulate process is most evident. Note that the direction of travel has been toward other definitions in Ibrahim and Alkire’s chart, containing language such as:

- Effective empowerment must occur at each of three levels: micro (attitude, feelings and skills), interface (participation and action immediately around the individual) and macro (beliefs, action and effects).
- Empowerment is defined as a group’s or individual’s capacity to make effective choices; that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.
- Empowerment consists of two components: information and influence, which together allow individuals to identify and to express their own preferences, and provides them with the bargaining power to make informed decisions (pp.380–382).

These definitions are closer to what might be envisioned by most current interventions inasmuch as there is a focus on individual choice and action, mostly manifested in behaviors or achievements. Notice also, however, the subjective preconditions *implicit* in phrases about the capacity to make choices, to process information, to have preferences and to express them, and to make informed decisions, and then made *explicit* in words like “attitude” and “belief.” For measurement practice, such definitions would seem to call for psychological tests of internal states in addition to observance of behavior.

A third subset of definitions raises another important issue. Several statements point to a gender reality not recognized in measurement often enough: the presence of opposition.

- Empowering people to make their own decisions, rather than be passive objects of *choices made on their behalf*.
- Empowerment. . . refers to the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was *previously denied to them*.
- Empowerment is about “the extent to which some categories of people are able to control their own destinies, *even when their interests are opposed by those of other people* with whom they interact” (pp. 380–382).

We have added the emphases in these quotes to underscore the allusions to other parties who currently control the women and, predictably, may oppose efforts to empower them. The theory of change, as we imagine it unfolding, must anticipate the manifestation of opposition, as well as the answering reaction of the woman, who may decide to push through and realize her own choices, but who may instead take the easier (and safer) path to retreat. A measure of the subjective state that accompanies empowerment thus should also include something akin to “courage,” but also “apprehension” or “anxiety.”

The World Bank report, *Voice and Agency*, suggests that agency, at the most basic level, is the simple ability (and willingness) to speak up for oneself. However, many females cannot speak because they live under threat of retaliation, perhaps beatings from a jealous husband or censure from village elders (or disapproval from an employer who has been asked for a pay increase). Female reticence is often a self-protective and realistic response to a hostile environment. The “lack of confidence” engendered by this environment is not just a failure of character that females need training to “get over,” but a psychological and practical outgrowth of the very conditions we are trying to correct.

The outcome of a “woman’s empowerment” intervention is always vulnerable to interference by someone who is threatened by the emerging assertion of agency. If the woman retreats, is that a failure? Perhaps not. It may well be that the first attempt will embolden her for another, that the opposition may eventually be worn down. Thus, some credit should be given for the first glimmer of “agency” in the woman, even if the outcome desired by donors or investors or researchers does not manifest on the timeline expected. In our view, all measurement schemes should include some way of capturing this process of agency, interference, and reaction, and should allow for a process of two-steps-forward, one-step-back.

By definition, then, the core intention behind any “women’s empowerment” intervention must be to make it possible for a woman to exercise her own choices, even if they are not the choices that would seem reasonable to her husband (or to investors, donors, economists, and research teams). So, any true study of “women’s economic empowerment” must measure more than the desired outcomes, such as increases in savings or school fees paid. If we are to argue that such outcomes are the result of “empowerment,” then the measures must establish that the woman *actually made her own choices*. The criteria for “success” or “failure” might then change.

To the degree that women now lack agency, we cannot expect unproblematic progression from inputs to outputs. The freedom to take action on decisions—also the current definition of “empowerment” or “agency”—is a necessary prerequisite for successful entrepreneurship. If she has no agency, a woman will be limited in her success as a business owner. From this core truth radiate many other ways in which the mistreatment and inequality of women impedes their ability to succeed in business or even to hold employment. Fears for safety, lack of mobility, all these things have economic import. We feel the persistent tendency to compartmentalize the social justice argument from the economic argument for women’s empowerment ignores the connection between a woman’s agency and *all* the promised paths to economic growth in a way that is unrealistic and illogical.

Ironically, the opposite also occurs: analysts attribute “choice” where the true cause may be lack of agency. One specific example is the frequent observation that women are paid less or experience less growth in enterprise because they “choose” female-friendly industries, such as health or education. Or that women earn less because they “choose” to spend more time on home care than men do. Very often, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that free choices are being made, along with good reason to believe that the “choice” in fact results from lack of agency. For instance, the fact that women do not often choose to go into shipping or venture capital may have everything to do with anticipating hostility and harassment from customers, suppliers, co-workers, or employers in those industries. Does the clustering of women into industries where they are likely to be safer constitute an ill-advised free choice, deserving of lower returns, or is it an expression of vulnerability? In sum, impact measures and, especially, comparisons to investments made in enterprises owned by males, must be adjusted to account for those constraints that do not apply to men.

Women’s Entrepreneurship

The academic literature on entrepreneurship is massively skewed toward the United States, toward the formal sector, and toward male entrepreneurs. A sophisticated stream on gender and entrepreneurship has emerged only recently; most previous work focused on statistically demonstrating the “masculinity” of entrepreneurship as a construct and, similarly, the relative inferiority of female capability and performance—but with very little notice given to the practical constraints and social norms that affect women’s ability to build businesses. The entrepreneurship literature does not at all address the effects of women’s entrepreneurial activity on their own “empowerment,” or on their employees or communities.

The academic literature, therefore, had little to offer us in terms of guidance for measuring the impact of a global investment in female entrepreneurs at the small business level. Nevertheless, there are a handful of important topics, some of which engage in interesting ways with the EWT program, and we wish to sketch those here.

Gender effects on growth

Many reports, academic and otherwise, have observed that female-owned enterprises grow less than those owned by males. It was important for us to grasp the factors involved in business growth because some measure

of growth seemed likely to be the main assessment measure for EWT. If women persistently grew their firms less than men, the EWT program could potentially suffer from unfavorable comparisons to market expectations. If, however, there were factors detrimental to growth that could be mitigated somehow by the way the system was designed or by additions to services offered, it was important to identify those opportunities.

The controversy over women’s “underperformance” as entrepreneurs has simmered in the academic literature for decades. The last word appears to be the 2012 Robb and Watson study that tracked 4,928 American start-ups over five years, comparing the closure rate, the return on assets, and a risk adjustment measure (Sharpe ratio). It is important to note that this was the first study ever to compare businesses of the same age, which is important given the typical gender bias in growth and size. The authors found that all differences in gender performance disappear when one applies the following controls:

- Hours worked per week
- Owner preparation
- Formal registration
- The industry in which the business operates
- The size of the firm.

The authors of this study concluded, on judgement, that the five items above are expressions of women’s preferences, and so there was no evidence of either discrimination or incompetence.

We believe all five of these factors are symptomatic of gender norms, burdens, and restrictions, so they cannot fairly be set aside as choices freely made. The hours worked per week is a function of the unpaid care burden, the most pervasive and salient manifestation of women’s economic disadvantage everywhere in the world. The “owner preparation” stands for experience leading businesses, not education. Since there is a distinct gender bias in America as everywhere else in representation at leadership levels of business, we think owner preparation is also a gendered variable.

The last three variables warrant more research. The international community knows that women are reluctant to formalize their businesses, but we don’t know why. As mentioned, women do seem to own smaller firms, but we do not know whether this is because they actually choose slower growth or whether growth is typically accompanied by a loss of control to males, thus making women-owned businesses suddenly “counted” as businesses owned by males after conversion of ownership. Our experience observing EWT suppliers suggested that the latter explanation might be the right one.

OECD’s 2012 *Closing the Gender Gap* report observes that women-owned businesses in the countries it studies earn only 30 to 40 percent of what their male-owned counterparts earn and attributes this difference to women having less experience in business, spending less time on the enterprise, getting less bank credit at higher rates, and pledging less collateral. In the first few years, female-owned firms in OECD countries have similar survival rates and create the same number of jobs as those owned by men. However, the women-owned businesses grow more slowly and, as the firms become larger, the proportion owned by females drops, indicating *either* (1) that the women-owned businesses peak earlier *or* (2) that, beyond a certain size, women lose control to male investors. OECD attributes the phenomenon to a female preference for limited or slow

growth, remarking that growth and profitability are not the top priorities for women. However, we think there is still an open question about the underlying causes.

OECD data also show that neither men nor women use credit for start-ups—and that these early-stage firms survive and grow at equal rates. It is only at the point where owners seek outside capital that the gender change in growth and size occurs. Again, we think the direction of causality should be questioned: Are women’s businesses smaller because that is what women choose?; or Is the capital barrier causing them to stop growing or cede ownership?

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor issues a biennial report on women’s entrepreneurship on nation-level basis. The report consistently shows that women around the world are less likely to be entrepreneurs than men, are more “reluctant” to scale, are more fearful of failure, and have less confidence in their ability to be successful business owners.

We can see, then, that the observation that women prefer “controlled” growth appears frequently in reports on female entrepreneurship. However, the attribution of “preference” is mainly an inference from growth patterns rather than having a basis in research on women’s motivations. To the degree that evidence is available, it appears that women may opt for slower growth because of family obligations, but it also seems that the fear of losing control through rapid growth—a concern that we can see is not without basis in fact—is also an issue. Further, access issues, such as the openness of certain industries to females and the willingness of financial institutions to work with women also need further investigation as drags on “female entrepreneurial under-performance.”

Gender roots of industry choice and capital access

The matter of industry choice is important to unpack. We have seen many authors and analysts justify the unequal treatment of women, especially in the capital markets, based on their apparent inability to choose the “right” industry. When one digs down into which industries are “right” and which are “wrong,” however, a more ambiguous and very gendered picture appears.

It is often observed that women cluster in industries that require less capital, for instance. The implication seems to be that they are, for no apparent reason other than foolishness, choosing to stay away from capital-intensive industries. Yet there is every reason to believe that the capital markets treat women unfairly. A United States Senate subcommittee recently observed that women own about a third of small businesses, but get less than 5 percent of small business loans. The venture capital industry employs about 95 percent males—and delivers 95 percent of their money to males. Goldman Sachs and IFC have published a study showing that there is a \$285 billion gender credit gap. Study after study shows that even when women get capital, they are made to provide more documentation and collateral, often required to get guarantors, given less money, and charged higher interest rates.

We question whether women are “choosing” to go into less capital-intensive fields or whether the prejudices of the financial sector keep them from being able to raise enough money to survive in industries where the capital requirements are higher. Either cause could be the explanation for these data.

We observed this dynamic several times in our fieldwork for EWT. In Kenya, we worked with a widow who needed a working capital loan in order to grow her business. Banks in Kenya will not lend except against a pledge of titled land. Women own less than 1 percent of the titled land in Kenya, an outcome of millennia in which inheritance laws guaranteed that land would pass only from male to male. To then say it was this woman’s “fault” (or “choice” or “preference”) that she did not have a working capital loan is a case of misplaced blame. The financial structure in Kenya is clearly soldered together in a way that keeps women out.

In Canada, our team interviewed a woman who had started her second successful business—so she had the required “owner preparation.” Though all involved told us that she had been an equal partner in the first business and had been the one to lead the move to sell, the bank that the couple had dealt with for years in their previous business would not lend our supplier money to grow her new enterprise. They deemed the track record to belong to her husband. So, the woman was financing her new business using the earnings from the sale of the first one—and the new enterprise was growing very quickly, but not as quickly as it would have grown had she had access to credit. We need to learn to ask, Was this her “preference”?

The Canadian bank’s excuse might have been made because of the industry this EWT supplier chose: it was a food business, not a favorite of banks. However, the first business had also been food. Nevertheless, we must confront the frequently expressed idea that there are certain industries that just “don’t grow” and therefore do not deserve bank credit. Importantly, these “slow growth” industries just happen to be the ones where women are clustered. So, we are left again with the question of cause: Are women too silly to choose the right industry?; or Are these industries growing more slowly because they are starved for capital, due in part to the gender prejudices of banks?

Looking more closely at exactly which industries are “high growth” versus “slow growth,” a more worrisome picture emerges. Women are clustered in retail, men in construction. Women are in gifts, men in automotive. Women are in fashion, men are in technology. The theme emerges fairly clearly: men are from Mars, women from Venus; girls like pink, boys like blue. It is very difficult to accept that there is no gender phenomenon at work here: the divisions follow stereotypes so closely, it is almost laughable.

Especially given the well-documented hostility to women in the tech industry, we think it is a fair question to ask whether the reason women are not “choosing” these sectors is fear of bullying, harassment, and unfair treatment as these “men’s industries” strive to remain exclusively male. Are the women really choosing not to go into these growth industries or is their entry blocked by “locker room” culture? Again: Do these industries grow *because* they get more capital?; and Do they get more capital *because* they are male-dominated?

When we reported back to EWT the problems we were seeing in the arena of capital access, we were pleased that the leader of the team at that time, MiKaela Wardlaw-Lemmon, was keen to put alternative arrangements in place. She led an important initiative to use Walmart’s leverage on behalf of its women suppliers. This was a courageous innovation. We also saw one aggregator, Full Circle Exchange, struggling to get support for their financial partners, and, in the end, extending their own personal credit to help those businesses grow. Those examples were both inspiring. Yet we could not help but feel that it should not fall to the retail sector to step in and fill this particular gap. The banks need reform.

From a measurement perspective, this situation presented several puzzles. EWT was ordering products that fit the “female industry” profile—apparel, jewelry, food, house wares—which meant that the growth rate,

should it become the primary measure by which the program was assessed, would likely not match market expectations, which would reflect “male” growth rates and “high growth” sectors.

Further, as we saw women in the system struggling with capital issues, we observed them improvising whatever arrangement they could, including looking to a bigger contract through Walmart as a way to get more cash into the business. These choices sometimes seemed to introduce a different kind of risk, one that was not captured by typical measures. A big order from Walmart could boost the business to a new level, but could also bring the business down by creating new capital and production requirements that could not be efficiently filled or even safely met. Thus, there was a certain ambiguity even to the benefit of a big order.

Finally, the need to get more capital often introduced the specter of lost control—so the impact of a big Walmart order could very easily be that the business would no longer be woman owned. As this outcome was exactly opposite to the intention of the program, these considerations augured against pushing too rapidly to scale up, which in turn reinforced a pattern of slower growth that might make the program look like it was under-performing.

Ownership

Emergent questions about the definition of “women-owned” for businesses should be addressed here.

Particularly in the developing world, where economic development programs now often make credit and other services available for businesses owned by women, it has become common for men to put their wives out to front for the business in order to take advantage of these new offerings. Thus, a need has arisen for a standard and a certification system. EWT eventually chose to use the WBENC and WEConnect system to certify that a business was 51 percent owned by a woman. However, on the ground, we could see that the reality was often ambiguous despite the certification.

When a company is owned by a couple, the face of ownership can be little more than a mask. We visited two American businesses, for instance, that were certified as women-owned businesses but were run by a husband-and-wife team. In one case, the wife was very clearly in charge. In the other, the leader was unquestionably the husband. In both cases, however, the male was managing the interface with the financial institutions. Indeed, the husband of the Canadian food company owner mentioned above was working with his wife in the new business, and he said he felt sure that if he went in to the bank, the business would get a loan. He would not do that, out of principle. Still, it raises the question of the degree to which “ownership” is manipulated for certain audiences and purposes.

The female owner of one company we visited had finally taken on an investment group, all males, in order to continue growing. She had successfully held on to 52 percent of the company. Nevertheless, the investors were trying to take over the business, insisting on product and staffing changes the female owner did not particularly want to make. They were bullying her, even though they were minority owners. It’s a reminder that, in the end, the power of gender may trump the best-laid plans.

Networks

The importance of networks came through clearly in our field visits to EWT suppliers. So, we dug into the entrepreneurship literature to determine how best to measure the network effects we were seeing.

We were disappointed. While many studies claim to have found an effect for bigger networks, and some even claim to discern a gender difference in size of network, virtually none revealed how they had actually measured the network. Those that did often had used what we felt were quite idiosyncratic questions (e.g. how often the entrepreneur went to church and whether they were married). It was common for researchers to use easily observed, simple things like messages on LinkedIn or fans on Facebook as a proxy for a business network when there was really no way of knowing whether these were carrying business benefits or mere gossip. And, of course, these measures cannot capture what may be more meaningful exchanges happening in real time. A meta-analysis that found networks to be a major influence on profitability listed no fewer than 85 different definitions for “network” used in the studies it analyzed.

The theoretical literature on networks raised still other ways of thinking about measurement, some of which were quite useful. Consider, for instance, that scholars have argued, on the one hand, that women have smaller networks. There is really no reason women should know fewer people, except in cultures where their mobility is constrained (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh). Most of these studies were done in the United States, however, where women are culturally seen to be more sociable than men. A counterargument is that women have the same size networks, but just different types of network (e.g. all church people, no business people). With this distinction in mind, it would be wrong to simply ask suppliers how many are in their network or how many new contacts they have added because people may be counted who are not important from a business standpoint.

Yet the theoretical literature points out that the network effect is not so much about who is in your network, but whether you can mobilize them for business purposes. For instance, your church acquaintance might also be a good accountant. With this perspective, we can see that women may know the same people as men, but just not take the steps to “convert” them into a network resource. We can anticipate that the same reticence may apply here that has been demonstrated in women’s business negotiations: women may fear that approaching acquaintances in another domain about matters pertaining to money will lead to social backlash.

Networks also function differently, depending on the organization. For instance, a distinction is made between organizations that reach out to bring in social capital versus those where social capital is an internal resource. The Woman’s Bean Project, one of our case studies, benefits from an internal network of individuals who act as donors and consumers, but who also sell the product and even step in to help smooth production gaps. The Maasai Women’s Development Organization, another of our case studies, was initially able to “get off the ground” because one of the principals reached out to a network she had established working with the United Nations. Another network role was that played by those who bridge between groups who otherwise don’t have access to each other. In EWT, there were two social enterprises, Full Circle Exchange and Global Goods Partners, who acted as the bridge between the EWT team and many small women-owned businesses around the world.

Again, from a practical perspective, the most important network effect we observed was that better-connected US entrepreneurs were able find out about service companies who provided human resources, fulfilment, and retail information management. Engaging these other companies to provide them with such

services allowed these well-networked enterprises to sail smoothly through challenges that nearly stopped other businesses in their tracks. Trying to stipulate something like that for measurement would entail an inventory of key services to be filled by a network, rather the number of people, the frequency of messages, or the types of content or governance. And, indeed, the literature suggests that networks are not only contributors to enterprise growth, but also improve other core business functions in a way that would be important to any size company. We also felt that by looking at functions, rather than connections or people, we could deal with some of the difficulties of accounting for different parties playing different roles.

Family matters

The treatment of family in the entrepreneurship literature is in keeping with the convention of compartmentalizing home from economics, but it is remarkably at odds with the expectations of positive impact so prominent in the woman empowerment discourse. In fact, the entrepreneurship literature consistently treats family as a variable retarding growth, as an interference with business to be minimized and controlled. And yet, in fact, a major motivator for women starting businesses, at least in the developed world, is to get a better balance of work and life than formal employment allows.

Most of the concern about the influence of family is loaded onto the reduced time spent in the business that is produced by the greater care responsibilities. There are hints of other family influences (e.g. women are very much more likely to capitalize with family assets than with external capital, and women tend to have more family-based networks, which are said to rise up to counter the disadvantage of not having outside networks). However, there is also evidence to suggest that some of the presumed “risk aversion” that women have is related to a fear of losing family capital, thus endangering the future of children. Further, the potential for having a second chance, to learn from failure, is less likely if one has used up the family assets.

It is important to note again here that there is a huge bias in this literature toward the United States and toward the formal sector. Informal businesses in the developing world are often run by women, out of the home, in a kind of opportunistic dance with the formal employment opportunities available to the males. Business, family, time, and wages are probably not seen as being separable in quite the same way. These are issues that deserve more research.

Women’s Employment

According to the World Bank *Gender at Work* report, women are disadvantaged in every aspect of work measurable on a global scale, be it earnings, quality of employment, employment status, or participation. Greater and more effective inclusion of women in the labor force would have large growth benefits at the national level, according to the International Monetary Fund and others. Research also shows that jobs have positive effects on the women themselves, as well as their families and communities, including career and

psychological development, saving and asset accumulation, reduced domestic violence, greater say over household decisions, delayed marriage and childbirth, and greater community investment in children’s nutrition and education (especially as regards girls).

When looking to measure the relationship between employment and “women’s economic empowerment,” however, one quickly comes to the knowledge gap we mentioned previously. The studies measuring the impact of employment on the range of effects falling under this umbrella—from greater mobility to increased voice in household decision making—have been done exclusively in the developing world. Further, more than half of these studies were conducted in Bangladesh, and the large majority of these were sited in the garment industry. Nearly all the rest were done in Latin America, also in the garment industry. Most employed qualitative methods, which, while they provide the context and nuance often disastrously missing from quantitative studies, do not provide a model from which to design a measurement system. Further, the quantitative work is all from surveys; no experimental or quasi-experimental work appeared.

We have conducted an intensive review of the 20 studies available that investigate micro-level impact (i.e. impact on persons and households, rather than aggregated data on populations) of employment in global manufacturing destined for export—the most relevant segment for EWT. Catherine Dolan’s review, which includes an annotated bibliography and explanation of search strategy, is included in this report as Appendix 1. In general, these studies do seem to point to positive “women empowerment” outcomes, though there remain a number of gaps, as well as mixed results on some topics (e.g. two studies on health impact came to opposite conclusions).

These 20 studies, however, point also to the differences in outcome that are due to various events, beliefs, strategies, and structures that occur at the family level. In other words, as we have mentioned in the section on “Women’s Empowerment,” the expected outcomes are often frustrated or changed by the opposition the woman might encounter at home and the way she is able or unable to deal with that opposition. Once again, we emphasize that all measurement systems for projects anticipating gender impact should have some means of capturing this potential glitch in the process. If not, results may be misinterpreted.

As a point of contrast, we have also included Daria Luchinskaya’s in-depth treatment of women’s employment in the United Kingdom as Appendix 4 (with extensive footnotes). We ask readers to note first that the work on women’s employment in the UK, as well as other developed countries, focuses on determining “equality”—in participation, pay, promotion—rather than “empowerment.” There simply are no studies from developed countries that address the impact of employment on the range of outcomes or perception of agency that have been studied in the developing world (or, more specifically, Bangladesh). However, please also notice that, beyond the macro-level studies that report government data on employment, the bulk of the literature around women and work, especially the difficulties they encounter, has been conducted in the United States. Thus, the developed world literature also has a regional bias—and the employment literature has the same bias as the entrepreneurship work.

We find this gap particularly disconcerting because the argument for closing the gender gap is often based on the tacit assumption that the developing world would follow the pattern of women’s history in the developed nations. Given that expectation, it would seem that some research should be undertaken to close the gap in measurement of “empowerment.”

The measures of empowerment currently in use are based primarily on the strictures placed on women in South Asia. These do not “travel” to the developed nations or even to some developing contexts. While many reports and analyses dismiss this problem by saying that what constitutes empowerment will vary by context and over time (and we agree that it will), we nevertheless feel strongly that an intensive effort should be made to find measures that will register the presence or absence of empowerment anywhere in the world—and that the inarguably patterned nature of gender inequality should make this possible.

It is notable, for instance, that the two biggest barriers to women’s employment, everywhere, are discriminatory attitudes and the care burden. Study after study shows that the most daunting obstacle for women workers to overcome is care and that providing childcare increases women’s labor force participation. Furthermore, the content and rationale for the discriminatory attitudes is nearly always some version of “men should work, and women should stay at home with children.” Thus, these two obstacles are, essentially, one. Women’s employment tracks closely with attitudes that still maintain jobs belong, first, to men. Other research echoes that the pervasive belief holding that men are meant to work and that women are meant to stay at home is the major block for women in jobs. Further, there seems to be relationship between the attitudes and challenges surrounding care and the move from employment to entrepreneurship. Both macro- and micro-level data have shown that women are often propelled into self-employment by discrimination in the formal workplace. And the main reason women give for starting a business is to provide themselves better “work-life balance,” thus escaping the strain that formal workplace practices put on maintaining care. Women in the informal sector and in part-time work are often there because of care constraints. Much of this work occurs in the home, so that care can continue. Women comprise the majority of the world population that is not employed or looking for work—most of them work at unpaid domestic labor.

We emphasize the interaction between childcare and employment because of what we observed in the developing country sites for EWT. A persistent problem for suppliers trying to pass the ethical sourcing audit was that children could not be present in the workplace. These requirements were often unintelligible locally and went against both need and normal practice. The very people that the global community most seeks to “empower” were excluded from earning the income allegedly destined to develop their children.

We can understand the safety and child labor concerns. Nevertheless, it was disturbing to actually witness the moment in history where the woman’s ability to work becomes separated from her ability to care for children. This happens because the modern conception of “a place to work” excludes children and families as a tenet of common wisdom. It is left to families to figure out their problem, rather than to employers to accommodate the social good of having children. Ironically, in our visits to North American field sites, we saw women choosing to work for the entrepreneur suppliers specifically because the work rules were flexible enough to accommodate childcare. One woman we visited even kept a mini-playground in her office so that her toddler, who apparently visited often, would have something to do. There is a clear double standard, one related to class as much as gender, at work here.

In the developing world, informal employment is by far the largest sector, with estimates ranging from half to three-quarters of workers employed by companies that are not registered. Women are even more likely than men to work in the informal sector, sometimes by preference and sometimes by exclusion. Informal work, often in small family businesses run from home, allows flexibility for care in a way that the formal sector does

not countenance. However, gender attitudes about formal work “belonging” to men, as well as systematic inequities in qualifications also push women into informal jobs.

The informal sector is often the place where people who do not fit the mold of the formal sector’s expectations, whether for gender or education or other reasons. We feel it is important to note that such people do need employment and that an important social service is performed by businesses who give them jobs, whether formal or not. Several businesses we visited in the EWT system were employing population groups that are usually “unemployable” in the formal sector, such as former felons, recovering addicts, refugees, and even retirees. For these and other reasons, we feel the propensity of the discourse to focus so doggedly on valorizing formal employment may be ill-advised—a majority of the people we are interested in are more likely to be found in the informal sector. Even if policy demands efforts to pull such people into the formal sector, research should not be blinkered to exclude them.

From a measurement perspective, it is much easier to focus on formal wage work. Records are kept, reports are made, payments are consistent. It would have been easy to drop wages into this system as an outcome measure, though these would have had to be adjusted for the buying power of currency. However, women in self-employment, as well as women in informal labor, often do not have consistent work streams or reliable records. As we have outlined in the case studies, we saw that the process of forcing formality could be damaging to both the business and its employees. Further, accounting for sporadic income streams, smoothing them out as if they were regular wage payments, produced a misleading picture.

Measuring the Internal Experience of Empowerment

As we have argued, an obvious need to be filled is the articulation of the process of empowerment in a way that allows measurement across groups of women. In addition to allowing for planning that anticipates resistance and detours, such measures would allow the comparison of outcomes across entrepreneurs and employees, as well as across types of interventions.

Measures of “confidence” or “self-efficacy” are most often used for this purpose. Sometimes tested scales are employed, but more often there is just a casual question: “Do you feel more confident since having this training program?” or some such. We feel that, since tested, relevant scales are available, it would be worthwhile to try using them.

However, it would be important to begin testing the same scales across as many interventions as possible, which would call for the kind of coordinated effort that we have remarked is very much needed at this point. The reason is that, without appropriate reference points to compare, it can be difficult to assess the meaning of psychometric measures. Many of them have been tested in different countries and this is used to suggest that they are broadly generalizable. However, we believe there is a question of special populations that may require additional testing.

For illustration, we tested two well-known and respected scales for “confidence” and “self-esteem” among a new intake of workers at Women’s Bean Project. These women are drawn from extremely disadvantaged populations, mostly recently released felons who are also recovering drug addicts. As we detail in the case, they have a very high attrition rate in the first few weeks of the program, with the biggest risks being falling back into drug use, violating parole and being sent back to prison, or suffering a mental break. Since we did the testing at the front end of the program, the most at-risk individuals were still in place. When the results came back, we were astonished: these women scored very highly on both measures. We could not help but wonder whether their high levels of confidence and self-esteem were actually risk factors—that perhaps they felt they would not get caught, and so forth.

As a research experience, this test made us wonder about the reference points for tested psychographics. We still think using tested metrics for subjective states is a good idea as (1) a replacement for informal, ad hoc questions, (2) an agreed set of measures that can be used across interventions, and (3) a method of tracking the experience of empowerment. However, we believe focused attention should be put on assembling a database that can act as a valid set of reference points for the special populations that are often the focus of this particular movement.

We have investigated several sets of psychometric measures that might be amenable to such usage, depending on the purpose and the intervention. For example:

“Grit” is a measure that has shown remarkable ability to predict future success across a range of circumstances and populations. It is said to address perseverance and passion for long-term goals. This scale measures the degree to which a person, once they have set a goal, will stick to it, regardless of pitfalls that may be encountered.

“Resilience” is the ability to be flexible under duress, but remain optimistic and keep trying.

“Mastery” is “the belief you can and do shape your own life,” a statement that echoes nicely with the definition of empowerment as the ability to act according to your own values and toward your own goals. This scale has the important advantage of having been proven to reflect changes in women when they acquire the means to earn an income.

There are both personal and interpersonal empowerment scales, one of which, the Personal Progress Scale, has been demonstrated to pick up the difference between battered women who have suffered sexual abuse and those who have been battered but not sexually abused.

There are “structure of coping” mechanisms that might be adapted to the process of empowerment. The aims of this work are to capture thinking and behavior that protect people from psychological harms in problematic social experiences. This seems suited to the process of agency.

“Sense of control” is a term given to a bundle of concepts, including “mastery” and “self-efficacy” that measure not only one’s confidence about one’s own ability to act but also one’s relationship to the environment.

“Self-efficacy” has been articulated into several sub-types, including financial self-efficacy, occupational self-efficacy, and parental self-efficacy.

In sum, the psychology literature offers a wealth of potential measures that could be aligned with the objective of unpacking the process of “empowerment” and that seem to promise cross-cultural applicability. We have attached, as Appendix 5 to this Advisory Note, a starting set of references that can be explored as potential test measures.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings outlined in this Advisory Note have much broader implications than the assessment of a single program. The issues suggest that this new and promising field has reached a stage of maturity in which special efforts to produce appropriate measures should be made. The field has worked to establish good practices for study design and data collection, but no rigor of procedure will make up for theories and measures that inadequately address the phenomenon at hand. Finding better means of capturing the way that women’s economic participation unfolds is a necessity if the best decisions are to be made and long-term goals achieved.

So far, the women’s economic empowerment community has built a body of evidence that, along with data from international agencies, suggests strongly that better including females in the economy will:

- Lead to growth by increasing the labor supply and the number of businesses
- Reduce the costs associated with conflict and disease
- Improve efficiency by recovering the return on educational investment
- Increase innovation
- Fight poverty
- Produce a strong investment in future human capital
- Strengthen families and communities.

Including women is no longer only a desirable social *end*, but is believed to be an effective and direct *means* to improve prosperity and well-being for everyone. Importantly, however, lessons from practice also show that social programs, whether they are antipoverty efforts or entrepreneurship training courses or HIV prevention classes, must be designed and delivered with a conscious plan for women’s participation or the benefit from including females will not occur. It is clear, in other words, that the need to “apply a gender lens” to phenomena once believed “objective” or “gender neutral” is real and necessary—not just a faddish or politicized phrase.

The movement to empower women economically is giving rise to the need for specialist expertise and a full program of research. It is also clear that reaping the benefits of women's empowerment requires a cross-cutting perspective that can bring together knowledge from many domains, such as medicine and anthropology, as well as economics and education. Major institutional platforms that allow thinkers to share knowledge and work together to build better systems should be built for this effort, as has been done for other high priority research programs.

However, the low level of interest on the part of universities, in particular business schools, continues to be discouraging, especially given the very high level of interest visible among multiple sectors, including major corporations. We recommend that a concerted effort be made to encourage national research councils and large foundations to put pressure and funding behind the research on women's economic empowerment, so that this hopeful way of engaging with world problems can grow and flourish.

Appendix 1

A Systematic Review on Measuring the Impacts of Women's Waged Work in Global Industries

A systematic review conducted by Catherine Dolan

1. Introduction

This literature review focuses on women's employment as waged workers in global industries, focusing specifically on studies measuring the impacts of such work on women's lives, families and communities.¹ The review does not seek to assess the positive or negative effects of employment, but instead centres on the ways in which its impacts are measured. It address three key questions: (i) what types of impacts are considered in the literature?; (ii) how are these impacts measured and understood?; and (iii) what are the gaps in existing approaches?

The review is organised in the following way. Section Two provides a brief overview of the research methodologies underpinning the literature. Section Three discusses the types of impacts addressed in the studies, including how the impacts are understood, and the methods and indicators used for their measurement. Section Four considers the prominent gaps in existing studies, while Section Five provides a broader discussion of issues and lessons arising from the literature, and their potential relevance to future research. A brief discussion of potential implications for EWT's measurement system is given in Section Six.

The review is based on searches of library catalogues; electronic journals; online search engines; and specific scholars, publications and organisations known to have contributed to the field. Searches were based on combinations of the terms "women"; "wage work"; "paid work"; "employment"; "impact"; and "empowerment". Studies were selected based on their relevance to the aims of the literature review and overall research programme.² While a significant body of literature exists on the macro-level impacts of women's employment, including on economic growth and development goals (see, for example, International Labour Organisation, 2012; Kabeer 2013; World Bank, 2014; 2012), the review focuses specifically on the measurement of micro-level impacts. The review also excluded studies using ethnographic research methods (due to the focus on measurement) and those that focused on global agricultural industries. In addition, it does not address literature on home-based workers, and focuses in which women are required to travel to a separate location from their household. Given the changing nature of global supply chains since the advent of export manufacturing (Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012a:11), it also includes only literature from the last two decades.

¹ Though these women are wage workers, they do not necessarily receive the types of contracts, terms and conditions, and benefits traditionally associated with employment in the formal economy (Pearson, 2010:118).

² A number of studies include comparisons between different types of work and sectors. However, in order to be included in the review, each study must have included a significant proportion of women employed in global industries in its sample.

2. Measuring impacts: research methods

The review is primarily based on 27 studies interested in the impacts of women's employment in global industries ("women's employment") on other aspects of their lives.³ Amongst these, the most common methodological approaches used were qualitative research methods, followed by mixed approaches, quantitative methods and secondary research:

- Ten studies used qualitative research methods, based on semi-structured or unstructured interviews, focus group discussions or a combination of the two (Dannecker, 1999; Dedeoğlu, 2010; Gates, 2002; Kabeer, 2000; Kibria, 1995; Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012b; Siddiqi, 2003; Sultan Ahmed and Bould, 2004; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011; Zaman, 2001)
- Seven studies used mixed approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods through surveys or questionnaires and interviews (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer et al, 2011; Nanda et al, 2013; Rao, 2014); surveys, interviews and focus group discussions (Naved et al, 2001); surveys and focus group discussions (Unni and Bali, 2002); or surveys and ethnographic research (Salway et al, 2005);
- Six studies used quantitative methods, either by conducting their own surveys (Heath, 2012; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Paul-Majumder, 1996), or analysing data from pre-existing surveys (Atkin, 2009; Liberato and Fennell, 2007);
- Four studies are based on secondary research alone, although most of the above also draw on secondary literature (Ahmed, 2004; Hossain, 2012; Kaur, 2000; Khosla, 2009).

Sample sizes ranged from less than 50 (Gates, 2002; Kibria, 1995; Zaman, 2001) to more than 5000 (Kabeer et al, 2011), and also varied in their composition. While a number of studies focused exclusively on women in specific types of employment, such as the garment industry, others made comparisons between women working in and out of free trade zones (Liberato and Fennell, 2007; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Siddiqi, 2003); women working in different sectors of global industries (Siddiqi, 2003); women working in different industries and types of employment, including home-based and non-working women (Amin et al, 1998; Atkin, 2009; Dedeoğlu, 2010; Heath, 2012; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Naved et al, 2001; Rao, 2014; Salway et al, 2005; Unni and Bali, 2002); and women in different areas, such as women working in urban areas and from their rural communities (Amin et al, 1998; Naved et al, 2001); or women in different countries and regions (Nanda et al, 2013; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011).⁴

Nine studies included both men and women in their research, either by including men and women workers (Kabeer, 2000; Liberato and Fennell, 2007; Naved et al, 2001; Paul-Majumder, 1996; Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012b; Siddiqi, 2003; Unni and Bali, 2002; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011);

³ The review also draws on a number of other studies for contextual and/or analytical insights.

⁴ Although Kabeer's (2000) study of Bangladeshi female garment workers in Dhaka and London is also a multi-country study, for the purposes of this review only her research in Dhaka is included.

interviewing factory managers, subcontractors or other men in senior positions (Kabeer, 2000; Dedeoğlu, 2010; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011); or by including male household members (Kabeer, 2000; Naved et al, 2001; Rao, 2014). However, as discussed in 4.1, there is limited attention to the impacts of women's work on men in the literature.

In addition, it is important to note that more than half of the studies included are interested in the impacts of women's employment in Bangladesh.⁵ Of these, the majority focus specifically on the impacts of women's employment in Bangladesh's garment industry (exceptions are provided by Kabeer et al, 2011; Salway et al, 2005; and Siddiqi, 2003). This over-representation has potentially significant implications for the relevance of these studies to other regions, sectors and contexts, and highlights a clear need for research from other geographical locations (see Section 4.1).

The different methodological approaches described have implications not only for how or where research has been conducted, but also for the types of insights they offer. As Salway et al note, for example, mixed approaches allowed them to gain an overview of patterns of behaviour, while also gaining in-depth understandings of norms and practices (2005:319). Furthermore, in a review of studies exploring the relationship between paid work and women's empowerment, Kabeer (2008) attributes their contradictory findings to different contexts and understandings of "empowerment", as well as the methods used in its measurement. This argument points to the importance of attending to variation in methods, as well as contexts and the impacts themselves.

3. What types of impacts are considered?

This section discusses the impacts addressed in the literature, including how they are understood, and the indicators used in their measurement. In addition, a summary of key studies' research methods is provided for each type of impact. It is divided into three sub-sections: first, impacts on individuals; second, impacts on women's families and households; and third, wider impacts, including for their community and political action, gender identities, roles and relations, and empowerment. It is worth noting that many of the studies consider multiple types of impact, and are referred to more than once.

3.1 Impacts on individuals

Individual-level impacts include: women's financial autonomy and well-being; their freedom of movement in public places; their life course, including marriage, fertility and adolescence; their personal identity and social status; their health; and their exposure to violence, abuse and harassment. These are discussed in turn.

⁵ 17 of the 27 studies focus exclusively on Bangladesh, while Nanda et al (2013) and World Bank and International Finance Corporation (2011) also include Bangladesh in their research.

Measuring impacts on women's financial autonomy and well-being: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Kabeer, 2000; Kibria et al, 1995; Zaman, 2001)
- Quantitative methods: large-scale surveys (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Paul-Majumder, 1996)
- Mixed methods: large-scale surveys combined with interviews (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer, 2011); large-scale survey combined with ethnographic research (Salway et al, 2005); survey combined with focus group discussions (Unni and Bali, 2002)

As Kabeer has argued, there is a difference in women's abilities to access wages through employment, and their abilities to control those wages (2000:143). With this in mind, a central question in much of the literature is women's financial autonomy, or in other words, if they are able to choose whether and how income from their employment is used. Studies focus on women's management and control of their income, based on indicators including:

- whether they manage all or part of their income, or if it is handed over to or pooled with household members (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kibria et al, 1995; Salway et al, 2005; Unni and Bali, 2002; Zaman, 2001),
- whether they have their own savings or investments (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kibria et al, 1995; Paul-Majumder, 1996; Salway et al, 2005; Zaman, 2001);
- whether they keep part of their income for their personal use, and if so, how it is spent (Kabeer et al, 2011; Khosla, 2009; Paul-Majumder, 1996; Salway et al, 2005), including whether they are able to make decisions about their own health care and choose their own clothes (Kabeer et al, 2011);⁶
- and, if they are living away from their natal families, whether they remit contributions to their parents or siblings (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kibria et al, 1995).

The latter is particularly relevant to Bangladeshi and other South Asian contexts, in which women traditionally lose ties with their natal family after marriage (Kabeer et al, 2011; Salway et al, 2005).

However, despite the attention given to women's management and control over their income in the literature, it is problematic to assume it is a straightforward reflection of women's financial or wider power. First, as Kabeer's interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh found, there is not necessarily a "cut and dry"

⁶ The ability to choose one's clothes may be particularly relevant to the Bangladeshi context, as previous research has shown its significance for women in the country (Kabeer et al, 2011).

relationship between women's management over their incomes, and their abilities to decide how it is used (2000:145). For example, she found that in cases in which women "managed" their incomes, they were more likely than men to consult other family members regarding its use.

Second, women's control over their incomes may not always be a reflection of deeper challenges to gender roles and relations. Kibria's (1995) study of the income control and income-related experiences of women workers in Bangladesh's garment industries distinguishes between "male-dominant budgets", in which a male family member exercised substantial or complete control over women's incomes; instances in which women kept their wages, but only with the permission of male household members; and those in which women controlled their wages. Yet, based on her interviews with women workers, Kibria argued that it is only the latter that represented challenges to patriarchal family relations (a similar analysis is provided by Kabeer, 2000).

Third, measuring women's control over their incomes may be further complicated by the fact that such behaviours may not be overtly practiced. Yet, only three studies explicitly look for evidence of both overt and covert income control, with the latter including, for example, women secretly putting parts of their wages, such as from overtime, aside (Kabeer, 2000; Kibria, 1995; Salway et al, 2005). In addition, depending on women's own attitudes to households and family systems, autonomous control over their incomes may not always be a primary concern (Amin et al, 1998:194). For example, Kabeer found that women's control over their incomes had less significance if their husbands also fulfilled their household responsibilities, but became more important during times of marital conflict (2000:149).

Finally, women's control over their incomes may be of lesser importance if their incomes are not sufficient to meet their basic needs. Yet, while there are numerous studies interested in the implications of women's work for the well-being of their households and families, as well as on household decision-making processes and expenditure patterns, few seem to be focused on the impacts of women's wages on their own poverty levels or abilities to meet their basic needs (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer, 2000 and Kibria, 1995 provide some exception). This may be a reflection of contextual realities, such as in Bangladesh, in which women's interests are seen as intimately bound with those of their family members (Salway et al, 2005:322).

With these complications in mind, Kabeer (2000) offers an alternative approach. In addition to exploring women's "control" over their wages, she also analysed her interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh from the standpoint of "choice", asking "what difference women's wages made to their lives, [and] what kinds of options became possible as a result of their new earning status" (2000:153). She considered both how women's wages were actually spent, and the extent to which this reflected their own priorities; and the subjective meanings and values women attached to the use of their wages, and their more general wage-earning capacity. Through this approach, Kabeer uncovered a wider range of impacts of women's work and incomes, including for their own survival needs, their household's welfare, and their perceptions of themselves.

3.1.2 Freedom of movement

Measuring impacts on women's freedom of movement: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews (Kabeer et al, 2011); large-scale survey combined with ethnographic research (Salway et al, 2005)

Of lesser concern in the literature is women's physical autonomy, or in other words, their unaccompanied freedom of movement in public places, perhaps reflecting the assumption that it is of lesser importance for women already working outside the home. Yet, the concern is particularly relevant to Bangladeshi and other South Asian contexts in which *purdah* has traditionally been practiced. Recognising that women's freedom of movement in public places can have wider implications, including on their exposure to information, social networks and overall independence, Kabeer et al (2011) and Salway et al (2005) use women's public mobility as an indicator of the broader impacts of paid work for women in Bangladesh. In their study of the impacts of paid work on women's empowerment in Bangladesh, Kabeer et al (2011) used women's ability to move freely in public domains as one of several indicators of women's empowerment overall. Based on a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample, public mobility was measured by women's abilities to visit key sites of interest unaccompanied, including health facilities, markets, cinemas and natal relatives.

While Salway et al take a similar approach by using women's public mobility as an indicator of the challenges to traditional gender identities brought by women's paid work in Bangladesh, they differentiate between women's perceived and actual freedom of movement. In a large-scale survey, women were asked both whether they *could* travel, and in the last year *had* travelled, to visit a friend or relative in Dhaka, take a child to a health clinic outside their slum, and go shopping outside their slum unaccompanied, with or without their husband's permission. In doing so, Salway et al recognise that the significance, and measurement, of women's public mobility as an indicator of change is not necessarily straightforward, as it may reflect economic necessity rather than women's own preferences or those of their family members (Amin, 1995 in Salway et al, 2005:321).

3.1.3 Marriage and adolescence

Measuring impacts on women's marriage and adolescence: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Sultan Ahmed and Bould, 2004); interviews and focus group discussions (World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011);
- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews (Amin et al, 1998); large-scale survey combined with interviews and focus group discussions (Naved et al, 2001)

As Section 5.4 discusses, the impacts of women's work are likely to vary across their life course. Yet, a small number of studies also consider the impacts of employment on women's own life courses, including their experiences of marriage, childbearing and adolescence.

Naved et al (2001) explore the effects of young female garment workers' employment, migration status and living arrangements on their experiences of, and aspirations for, marriage in Bangladesh. While the added effects of migration and resulting living arrangements are particularly relevant in the Bangladeshi context, in which the garment industry employs mainly young women migrating from rural areas, the study provides an example of how the impacts of work on marriage can be considered (2001:91). Through a large-scale survey combined with interviews and focus group discussions, Naved et al explored women's marriage timing and security, including incidences of marriage breakdown; their aspirations for the origins of their current or future spouse and their expectations of arranged marriages; their autonomy in the marriage arranging process; and whether they are saving for their own dowry. The sample included both married and non-married female garment workers, and women from migrant-sending communities, allowing for comparisons between the different groups.

While the World Bank and International Finance Corporation's (2011) study of the impacts of Special Economic Zones on women's economic empowerment in China also considers the impacts of employment on women's marriage timing and abilities to choose their own spouse, their research in other countries also finds examples of potentially negative impacts of women's employment on their marriage and childbearing. Based on interviews and focus group discussions in eight countries overall, their research in Costa Rica uncovered practices of interviewees being given pregnancy tests as part of hiring processes, and the provision of short-term rather than permanent contracts to women by firms, as a way of avoiding payment for potential maternity leave. However, the study does not show the extent to which these practices have affected women's own attitudes or choices.

In contrast, Sultan Ahmed and Bould (2004), used qualitative interviews to explore the attitudes of married, or previously married, women garment workers in Bangladesh towards marriage and childbearing more widely. Unusually, the study included separated and "deserted" women, who were asked about their sense of control over their future marriage options and whether they would marry again.⁷ Women were also asked about their views on having sons and daughters, including whether an ideal family must have a son, and if they had only daughters, if they had any regrets. Sultan Ahmed and Bould consider the women's responses not only as reflections of their own attitudes towards childbearing, but also as indicating their control over their fertility⁸, and wider changes to patriarchal family structures in the country (see Section 3.3.3). Similarly, although not the primary focus of the study, Kabeer's (2000) interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh uncovered a wider significance of women's wages on their attitudes to marriage, with women discussing, for example, the importance of savings accounts as a response to the insecurity of marital relationships.

⁷ "Deserted" women refer to women whose husbands left them, in contrast to "separated" women, who left their husbands (Sultan Ahmed and Bould, 2004).

⁸ They argue that the combination of women's beliefs in the lack of difference between sons and daughters and their families' dependency on their wages allows the women to reject their husbands' requests for additional children.

While also considering workers' timings of marriage and childbirth and views on ideal family sizes, Amin et al (1998) are unique in their focus on the implications of garment-factory work for young women's experience of adolescence in Bangladesh. Based on a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample, they explored the impacts of garment work on a range of areas of young women's lives, including their incomes, social status, mobility, marriage, personal identity, health and social interactions. Taken together, these impacts are said to represent a period of adolescence not previously open to young women in the country. The sample included garment workers and non-workers from migrant-sending and non-sending communities, enabling them to make comparisons between the different groups.

3.1.4 Identity and social status

Measuring impacts on women's identity and social status: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer et al, 2011; Nanda et al, 2013)**

Also of interest in the literature are women's views of themselves, including their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kibria, 1995; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011; Zaman, 2001); their sense of self and self-image (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer et al, 2011); and their sense of control over their own lives, futures or capacity for agency (Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kibria, 1995; Sultan Ahmed and Bould, 2004; Zaman, 2001).

As an evaluation of a workplace education programme initiated by Gap Inc. for female garment workers⁹, conducted by Nanda et al (2013) is unique in the literature, providing more specific conceptualisations of, and indicators for, workers' self-confidence – or "self-esteem" and "self-efficacy" to use their terms – than is found in other studies. Self-esteem is understood as the "perception of one's own self-worth in professional and personal life", measured by indicators including family's respect of a woman's opinion; accomplishing something positive at work; and confidence to make plans to meet future aspirations (2013:14). Self-efficacy is understood as "belief in one's ability to take action to get the results desired", and was measured by indicators including women's "ability to give feedback to others"; "capacity to lead a group or committee"; and "ability to guide siblings/children in education" (2013:14).

Other studies are not only interested in how women view themselves, but also how they are viewed by others. In their study of the relationship between paid work and women's empowerment in Bangladesh, Kabeer et al (2011) based this on women's own interpretations of how they are perceived by others (a similar approach can be found in Amin et al, 1998). In a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample, Kabeer

⁹ The programme intended to teach female garment factory workers in seven countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) managerial, interpersonal, organizational and other practical skills.

et al included a number of questions to measure women's attitudes about themselves, their families and their perceptions of their status and gender roles. These included women's views on the importance of having their own incomes for self-reliance; whether husbands of working wives should help with housework and childcare; whether women's incomes increase their respect from their family and community; and whether they were hopeful about their futures (2011:18).

3.1.5 Health

Measuring impacts on women's health: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Quantitative methods: large-scale survey (Paul-Majumder, 1996); large-scale secondary survey (Liberato and Fennell, 2007)**

As Heath notes, despite many of its perceived positive impacts, women's access to labour force opportunities is also associated with negative consequences, including to their health, safety and security (2012:2). Indeed, a number of studies refer to women's health concerns, often as one of the "costs" of their employment (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a:106 – 107; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Siddiqi, 2003:48; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011). Yet, only two studies provide in-depth analyses of the impacts of women's work on their health status: Paul Majumder (1996) and Liberato and Fennell (2007).

Paul-Majumder's (1996) study of the impacts of employment on the health of garment factory workers in Bangladesh used a large-scale survey to explore workers' physical and mental health status, and the different factors affecting their health, including their gender. Indicators of the former include workers' incidence of illness overall, and of specific types of illness¹⁰, before and after joining the garment industry. Also included are the numbers of work days lost, and monetary loss, due to illness; and workers' expenditure on medical treatment in the month prior to the study, as a percentage of their total income. While the study discusses potential factors affecting workers' mental health, it provides a limited picture of their actual mental health status or concerns. It also provides limited insights into workers' subjective perceptions of their health or wider well-being.

By including both male and female garment workers in the study, Paul-Majumder is able to compare their different health statuses, and the possible reasons behind such differences, including their job category; age; marital status; education; length of service; working hours and wages, food intake, including protein intake; expenditure on health; and overall time use. Paul-Majumder also used multi-variate analyses to identify factors affecting garment workers' status overall, including their access to, and use of, health advice and medication; socio-demographic factors including age, marital status and education; economic factors based on family income and wage rate; and working conditions, including job category; working hours; length of service; factories' size and leave, Transport, health insurance and medical facilities, as well as their other staff amenities, building structures, safety measures, and sanitation and cleanliness.

¹⁰ Specific illnesses considered are eye trouble; cough, cold and fever; headaches; weakness; jaundice; upset stomachs/diarrhoea; and urinary infections.

In contrast, in their study of the influence of gender and free trade zone employment on the health of female-headed households in the Dominican Republic, Liberato and Fennell (2007) place a greater emphasis on workers' abilities to respond to illness. Using data from the 1996 Demographic and Health Survey of the Dominican Republic¹¹, their measurement of health is based on four variables: tenure of social security coverage; usage of preventative medicine, including whether medical visits had been made in the previous six months for vaccinations, general health checks, pregnancy or contraception; hospitalization in the last 30 days prior to the interview; and occurrences of illness in the week prior to the interview. Like Paul-Majumder, Liberato and Fennell focus on physical and objective measures of health, therefore excluding emotional, psychological or subjective dimensions of health and well-being. While their interest is in free trade zones in particular, their sample included both free trade and non-free trade zone workers, as well as female and male-headed households, allowing for direct comparisons between the different groups. Liberato and Fennell also recognise that measuring the relationship between work and health outcomes is not necessarily straightforward, as it is also dependent on a range of other factors, including women's "survival" strategies in their families and communities, as well as variables such as the number of children in the household.

3.1.6 Violence, abuse and harassment

Measuring impacts on experiences of violence, abuse and harassment: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Siddiqi, 2003)
- Quantitative methods: large-scale survey (Heath, 2012)
- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with ethnographic research (Salway et al, 2005)

As with regards to health, some studies make reference to women workers' experiences of violence, abuse and harassment (Kabeer et al, 2011; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011). Again however, few are primarily concerned with the impacts of work on such occurrences, either within the home, within the workplace, or between the two.

Heath (2012) focuses on the relationship between Bangladeshi women's access to employment opportunities and the incidences of domestic violence they experience. Drawing on Eswaran and Malhotra's (2011) theoretical household bargaining model she looked for evidence for heterogeneous relationships between women's labour force participation, their bargaining power before entering the labour force, and the incidence of domestic violence they experience. In a large-scale survey, women's experience of domestic violence was based on their response to the question "has your husband ever beaten you?". Heath used two primary measures for women's bargaining power before entering the labour force: age at marriage and education, both of which are associated with higher status within the household in Bangladesh and other locations (2012:12).

By including measures of women's bargaining power before marriage, Heath highlights the complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between work and domestic violence (2012:4). Yet, her measure of domestic

¹¹ This survey was administered by USAID.

violence excludes women's experiences of verbal or other forms of abuse within the household. In contrast, Salway et al (2005), while considering it as one of many potential impacts of women's work in Bangladesh, uses a broader understandings of domestic violence, asking women in a large-scale survey whether they had experienced "verbal abuse" or "beatings" by their husbands, and how frequently, over the past year in particular. However, neither of these studies recognizes the possibility of violence or abuse by other family members.

The studies also do not consider incidences of violence, abuse or harassment outside the home. Siddiqi (2003) is the only study specifically focused on female workers' experiences of violence, abuse or harassment in the workplace and – recognising women's potential vulnerability in public spaces – while commuting. Based on interviews with garment workers and electronics workers in Bangladesh, women's experience of sexual harassment within the workplace is measured by whether they have experienced sexual harassment, physical harassment or unwanted physical contact; whether they have heard sexual expletives or propositions at work; whether they have seen incidents of sexual intimidation or coercion; and whether they have heard of incidents of rape at their own or other factories. Women were also asked about their experiences of these different forms of harassment and abuse while travelling to and from work.

By including women in a range of factories and sectors, Siddiqi is able to explore the links between sexual harassment and particular occupations and working conditions, including instances of harassment and abuse during night shifts; differences in experience between garments and electronics workers, and between workers in and outside of Export Processing Zones; and the relationship between workers' experiences and their own sense of job security. In addition, the study explores the impacts of sexual harassment on other areas of the workers' lives, including their short and long-term productivity, job performance, and mental health and well-being; and workers' reactions, including their knowledge of legal rights and labour laws and use of informal factory dispute resolutions.

3.2 Impacts on households and families

Impacts on households and families include household and family well-being; household decision-making processes; division of labour within households; and impacts on children and child-care strategies.

3.2.1 Household and family well-being

Measuring impacts on household and family well-being: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Kabeer, 2000; Zaman, 2001)
- Quantitative methods: large-scale surveys (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kabeer and Tran, 2006)
- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews and focus group discussions (Naved et al, 2001); survey combined with focus group discussions (Unni and Bali, 2002)

Despite little attention to the poverty or well-being implications of work for individual women, a number of studies are concerned with such impacts for women's households and families. This includes the extent of women's contributions to household incomes (Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Naved et al, 2001; Unni and Bali, 2002; Zaman, 2001); and the significance of these contributions for families' poverty status and economic stability (Kabeer, 2000) and ability to satisfy the needs of household members (Unni and Bali, 2002).

Kabeer and Mahmud's (2004a) study of the poverty implications of garment work in Bangladesh provides a more detailed assessment of women's contributions to household incomes and well-being, giving a fuller picture of how women's incomes are spent. In a large-scale survey, women were asked about the most important use of their wages, including for rent, food, clothing, medical expenses, remittances, savings and school fees. They were also asked about the most important benefits of employment for their households, including its economic solvency; the provision of financial support; having three meals a day; regular payment of rent; the capacity to save; the ability to buy clothes and amenities; children's education; remittances; medical expenses and the reduction of household debt. Their sample included female garment workers working in and outside of Export Processing Zones, and those who are self-employed or other waged workers, allowing them to make comparisons between the different groups.

3.2.2 Household decision-making

Measuring impacts on household decision-making: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Qualitative methods:** interviews (Gates, 2002)
- **Quantitative methods:** large-scale survey (Heath, 2012)
- **Mixed methods:** household survey combined with interviews (Rao, 2014); survey combined with focus group discussions (Unni and Bali, 2002)

As noted earlier, it is problematic to assume that women's access to income opportunities necessarily provides them with greater bargaining powers in the household (Kabeer 2000:145, 152). With this in mind, four studies explore the extent to which women's participation in household decision-making has been affected by their work. Unni and Bali's (2002) study of subcontracted¹² garment workers in India assessed this through a direct survey question, asking workers whether their decisions were taken alone, with their parents, or with their spouses; and whether there had been any increase in their decision-making power since taking up subcontracted work. By including both men and women in their study, Unni and Bali are able to make comparisons along gender lines. Similarly, in her study of the relationship between women's work and domestic violence in Bangladesh, Heath (2012) used a large-scale survey to ask women if their husbands consulted them about household decisions, as well as if they needed permission to spend small amounts of money or money on themselves.

¹² Their sample includes both home-based workers and workers in small or medium-sized factories.

A more in-depth picture comes from Rao (2014), whose study of women's work, agency and well-being in rural India highlights the complexity and variety of decision-making processes within households. Rao used a household survey and individual interviews to ask couples about their decision-making in three different realms:

- **reproductive sphere:** decisions on children's upbringing and running the household, including decisions on children's health and schooling provision; the preparation of food; and on inviting guests home;
- **productive sphere:** financial decisions, including on the purchase of major goods, wives working outside of the home, the purchase or sale of jewellery, expenditure patterns, and borrowings;
- **personal/private sphere:** decisions surrounding fertility and marriage, including on the number of children to have and whom to marry.

Couples were also asked about their perceptions of who has the final say in these household decisions.

Again, as mentioned earlier, with regards to income control, it is worth recognising that not all participation, or influence, on household decision-making are necessarily "formal" or "overt" (Kabeer, 2000). Yet, it is only Rao who also sought evidence of women's covert influence on household decisions (2014:93).

A different approach is taken by Gates (2002), who explores the reasons why employment seems to have uneven effects on women's household power. Based on interviews with women maquiladora workers in Mexico, she examined the strategies used by women to negotiate for their interests within the household, and the extent to which these affirmed or challenged their traditional gender identities. In doing so, Gates adds an additional layer to the complexity of the relationship between women's work and their household power, showing that it is not only dependent on the work and household itself, but also the process, and gendered meanings, of household negotiating strategies.

3.2.3 Household division of labour and time use

Measuring impacts on household division of labour and time use: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Qualitative methods:** life history interviews and semi-structured questionnaire (Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012b)
- **Quantitative methods:** large-scale survey (Paul-Majumder, 1996)
- **Mixed methods:** survey combined with focus group discussions (Unni and Bali, 2002)

A common concern associated with women's work is the "double day" or "triple shift", in which women continue to be responsible for unpaid household reproductive activities while also taking on paid work (Kabeer, 2012:16). Paul-Majumder's study of the health impacts of garment factory work in Bangladesh and Unni and Bali's survey of subcontracted workers in India's garment industry both compare differences in time use between male and female workers, including on household duties; personal care, entertainment or leisure activities; economic work; sleep and time of waking in the morning; and whether they receive any help from

other members in their household duties. Yet, while they find significant differences between the workers, no study measures the impacts of women’s work on the division of labour within households, or on changes to women’s own time use, or that of their male household members.

A different approach is taken by Pearson and Kusakabe (2012b), who used life history interviews and semi-structured questionnaires to study the strategies used by Burmese migrant women workers in export factories in Thailand to fulfil their productive and reproductive responsibilities, including caring for their natal families in Burma and new families in Thailand. Although the women’s strategies are made more complicated by their status as migrant workers, and limited access to state services, the study shows the value of considering not only working women’s additional tasks, but also the strategies they must employ to fulfil their range of responsibilities.

3.2.4 Children

Measuring impacts on children: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Quantitative methods: large-scale secondary survey (Atkin, 2009)**

While a number of studies refer indirectly to the well-being of working women’s children, including women’s abilities to care for their children while working (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a); women or families’ abilities to pay for children’s education or healthcare (Paul-Majumder, 1996); only one looks specifically at the impacts of women’s work on their children’s health. Based on data from secondary surveys, Atkin (2009) uses a LATE (local average treatment estimator) to study the relationship between women’s work in export manufacturing in Mexico and their children’s health, operationalised as height for their age. Although only one indicator of health, Atkin argues height for age also reflects investments in children’s health and nutrition up to that age, and thus is an indicator of children’s wider welfare (2009:21, 3).

3.3 Wider impacts

Kabeer argues that studies exploring the impacts of women’s paid work have tended to focus on individual and domestic spheres, with lesser attention to wider impacts, including on women’s collective action (2008b:93). Yet, it is problematic to assume that changes at one level will necessarily lead to wider changes (see also Pearson, 2004:117). Although less prominent than individual and household-level impacts, this review did find a number of studies relating to broader changes, including on women’s participation in communities and as political actors; on gender identities, roles and relations; and women’s empowerment and social exclusion, discussed in turn.

3.3.1 Participation in communities and as political actors

Measuring impacts on women’s community participation and collective action: summary of research methods used by key studies

- **Qualitative methods: interviews (Zaman, 2001)**
- **Quantitative methods: (Kabeer and Tran, 2006)**
- **Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews (Kabeer et al, 2011)**

Kabeer et al’s (2011) study of the impacts of paid work on women’s empowerment in Bangladesh is the only study to consider the impact of women’s work on their knowledge and participation in the collective life of their communities. Identifying this as one indicator of women’s overall empowerment, they used a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample to measure women’s knowledge of the existence of labour laws; whether they have been consulted by others for advice and information; whether they voted in local elections and made their own decisions about who to vote for; whether they are comfortable attending rural committee meetings unaccompanied; and whether they had participated in such meetings or other protests.

In contrast, in her interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh, Zaman (2001) documented individual and collective acts of women’s “resistance”. These include women asking supervisors directly to stop verbal abuse; arranging travel to and from factories in groups to avoid risks of abuse or harassment on streets; participating in protests or meetings on workers’ rights; and building links with women’s groups and trade unions. Zaman also speaks more generally about a “sense of sisterhood” and “double consciousness” amongst women workers, arising from their roles as workers and family members. However, as with other studies interested in the relationship between women’s work and “resistance” or political action, there is limited attention to how such concepts or relationships may be measured (see also Dannecker, 1999; Kaur, 2000; Rock, 2003).

A clearer approach is provided by Kabeer and Tran who, in a large-scale survey of women in working export-oriented and domestic industries in Vietnam, explored the extent of trade union presence and activities in workplaces, including the percentage of workers reporting a trade union in the work place; the percentage of workers reporting membership in a trade union; the main activities of unions, such as meetings and worker education; and whether workers had been consulted by, raised issues with, or benefitted from a trade union (2006:60). However, while this approach provides insights into the extent of union activities and participation across different sectors, there is little discussion of the implications of this for women’s lives or status as political actors.

3.3.2 Gender identities, roles and attitudes

Measuring impacts on gender identities, roles and attitudes: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Dedeoğlu, 2010; Sultan Ahmed and Bould, 2004)
- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with ethnographic research (Salway et al, 2005)
- Review of secondary literature (Kaur, 2000)

Of greater concern in the literature is the extent to which the impacts of women’s employment represent wider challenges to existing gender identities, roles and attitudes. Salway et al (2005) explore the extent to which women’s inclusion in different types of employment in urban Bangladesh presents challenges to prevailing gender identities. Combining a large-scale survey with ethnographic research, they considered five key aspects of women’s “gendered positions”, selected for their particular relevance to the Bangladeshi context: public mobility; involvement in resource management; protection of independent personal interests; ties with natal kin; and domestic conflict and violence.

In contrast, three studies are interested in the consequences of women’s work for gender roles and relations. Kaur’s (2000) case study of industrialisation in Malaysia used secondary literature to draw comparisons between the composition of industrial work forces and the organisation of factory work with wider patriarchal structures in the country. Dedeoğlu’s (2010) analysis of interviews with sub-contracted and home-based workers in Turkey’s export garment industry draws on Elson and Pearson’s (1981) framework to look at the impact of employment on the “decomposition” or “recomposition” of existing gender inequalities. Indicators of the former include women’s autonomy; bargaining power at home; freedom to make marriage choices; and the roles they play in the industry; while the latter includes challenges – or lack of challenges – to women’s traditional roles as housewives and mothers, and the extent to which the behaviour of women and girls is controlled in the workplace.

In contrast, Sultan Ahmed and Bould (2004) are specifically interested in gender roles and relations within families. They used interviews to explore the extent to which women’s work in garment factories in Bangladesh challenges traditional patriarchal family systems, asking women about their attitudes to marriage and ideal families (see Section 3.1.3 above), their financial contributions to their husbands’ parents and their own natal families; their sense of control over their lives and incomes, and how this had changed with employment. Similarly, through her interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh on the significance of their new incomes, Kabeer (2000) discovered changing attitudes amongst mothers towards their girl children, and particularly an increased willingness to invest in girls’ education. While not the sole focus of the study, this highlights the value of considering the impacts of work – and wages – on wider gender roles and relations, including amongst subsequent generations.

Yet, despite this interest in gender, and despite a large number of studies including men and women in their samples, there is limited attention to the impacts of women’s work on men or male attitudes (see Section 4.1).

3.3.3 Women’s empowerment

Measuring impacts on women’s empowerment: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Qualitative methods: interviews (Zaman, 2001)
- Mixed methods: large-scale survey combined with interviews (Kabbeer et al, 2011)
- Review of secondary literature (Ahmed, 2004; Hossain, 2012)

Several studies also look at the impact of women’s work on their overall “empowerment”, offering a range of conceptualisations and corresponding indicators of the term. Zaman (2001) uses the term in her analysis of interviews with female garment workers in Bangladesh, and refers to a range of changes in women’s personal, family and political lives. However, there is limited direct discussion of what “empowerment” means, or how it might be measured.

In contrast, Kabbeer et al’s (2011) study of the impacts of paid work on women’s empowerment in Bangladesh presents a clearly defined understanding of empowerment, and corresponding indicators. Based on a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample, Kabbeer et al incorporate women’s personal, family and political levels in their understanding of women’s empowerment, identifying as indicators women’s income control; public mobility; knowledge and participation in the community; and attitudes and perceptions about themselves, their relationships and their perceptions by others. In addition, they incorporated a number of other variables which show strong and consistent correlations with indicators of women’s empowerment, including membership of NGOs; access to savings and credit¹³; the extent to which women said their work is valued by their family; their routine watching of television; and their wearing of the burkah or hijab.

Ahmed (2004) and Hossain (2012) both reviewed secondary literature to assess the effects of garment industry employment on women’s empowerment in Bangladesh.¹⁴ In her understanding of empowerment, Ahmed draws on Hirschman’s (1970) framework of “exit” and “voice”. However, only a small number of indicators are used, potentially presenting a limited notion of empowerment itself. “Exit”, in this context, is used to reflect women’s abilities to leave employment if conditions are unbearable, while “voice” reflects women’s abilities to bargain both individually (e.g. by moving jobs) and collectively (e.g. ability to unionize) for improved wages or working conditions, or to participate in household-decision making (measured by control over household income).

Hossain, however, identifies a wide range of indicators for empowerment, again including both personal and political dimensions. Women’s “economic” empowerment is based on their motivations for entering work and their control over their wages; “social” empowerment includes the opportunity to learn, work in a modern

13 This indicator was later dropped as it did not prove significant in statistical analyses.

14 These include a number of studies already discussed, and to avoid repetition are not referred to elsewhere in this Section.

sector, expand social networks and make their own choices regarding relationships and marriage; while “political” empowerment includes workers’ awareness of their rights as citizens, their participation in protests, and the role of women in state discourse and public policy language in the country. Hossain also discusses a number of other potential effects of women’s participation in the garment industry, including on men’s attitudes; the expansion of basic education for girls; and the feminisation of public space.

3.3.4 Social exclusion

Measuring impacts on women’s social exclusion: summary of research methods used by key studies

- Review of secondary literature (Khosla, 2009)

Like Ahmed (2004) and Hossain (2012), Khosla (2009) used secondary literature to consider the impacts of women’s employment in the Bangladeshi garment industry on their social exclusion.¹⁵ Drawing on Estivill (2003) and Sen (2000), her understanding of social exclusion is based on economic, social and political dimensions or “capabilities”. While overlapping with other studies – particularly those on women’s empowerment – she is the only scholar to consider social exclusion directly. “Economic” capabilities include women’s opportunities to receive higher or more regular wages; to spend, save and invest incomes; meet their own basic needs; and support their families. “Social” capabilities include the opportunity to develop social identities, social visibility and respect; increased knowledge and confidence; a sense of modernity; health and education; abilities to negotiate familial roles; and to participate in household decision-making. “Political” capabilities include workers’ awareness of their rights and their participation in unions and other forms of political action.

4. Gaps in existing literature

As Section Three has described, the types of impacts covered in the literature range from individual-level changes to wider social and political effects. Yet, despite the range of impacts covered in the literature, there are a number of gaps which can be identified. This section discusses gaps in current approaches, first, within the literature overall, and second, within specific impact areas.

4.1 Overall gaps in the literature

First, as noted in Section Two, the literature is dominated by studies of Bangladesh, particularly Bangladesh’s garment industry. More than half of the studies included here focus on Bangladesh, with the others focus almost exclusively elsewhere in South or Southeast Asia, or Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. The only studies exploring the impacts of women’s employment in the Middle East or Africa are Dedeoğlu (2010) on subcontracted garment workers in Turkey, and the World Bank and International Finance Corporation

¹⁵ Again, as this includes a number of studies already discussed, this study is not referred to elsewhere in this section.

(2011) on the implications of Special Economic Zones for women’s economic empowerment in Bangladesh, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya and the Philippines.

While this regional bias may in part be a reflection of export-oriented manufacturing itself, and the exclusion of agricultural sectors from this review, similar patterns have been noted elsewhere (Atkin, 2009:2; Bair, 2010:214; Kabeer, 2008b:92; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011:71). Not only does this limit our knowledge of potential impacts and measurement approaches outside Asia and Latin America, it is also problematic as the approaches described here have potentially lesser relevance for other regions, particularly given the importance of context in influencing women’s work (see Section 5.3 below). Similarly, given that the types and conditions of work also affect its impacts (see Section 5.2 below), the literature also has potentially lesser relevance to areas of global employment beyond garment industries.

Second, and related, is the lack of multi-country studies in the literature. It is notable that the only multi-country studies come from “grey” literature: the World Bank and International Finance Corporation (2011) and Nanda et al’s (2013) evaluation of GAP Inc.’s workplace education programme for garment workers in Asia.¹⁶ While this gap may reflect the challenge of conducting comparative research across contexts and regions (see Section 5.3 below), it also means there are limited approaches from which multi-country initiatives, such as EWT, may learn.

Third, as has also been noted, despite a number of studies including men in their samples, limited attention is paid in the literature to the impacts of women’s work on men or male attitudes, or the role that men play in influencing the impacts of work on women themselves. Again, this is a limitation also identified elsewhere (Kabeer, 2008b:94; 2011:8). Yet, men can play crucial enabling, or disabling, roles in women’s empowerment and the wider impacts of women’s work. As Kabeer argues, “men play a critical role in shaping trajectories of women’s empowerment. Future research on women’s empowerment in the context of livelihoods and labour market concerns should have an explicit focus on both men and women” (2011:8).

Finally, while a small number of studies make reference to the potential for work to widen women’s social networks (Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Naved et al, 2001), there is limited specific attention to the impact of paid work on women’s social relations beyond the family, or to how such impacts may be measured. Again, this limitation has been noted elsewhere (Kabeer, 2008b:49). Yet, not only does paid work outside the home potentially offer exposure to different ways of life and relations, including new friendships and links with political organisations, but, conversely long working hours may also limit women’s time for social relations, including within their families (Kabeer 2008b:36; Kabeer and Tran, 2006:36). Yet, limited attention is given in the literature to the impacts of work on social relations, its measurement, or its implications.

4.2 Gaps in individual-level impacts

At the individual-level, a number of gaps in the literature can be identified, including:

- *Financial autonomy and well-being*: addressed in ten studies, significant attention is given in the literature

¹⁶ Although Kabeer et al’s (2011) study of the impacts of paid work on women’s empowerment in Bangladesh is part of a wider research project, with accompanying studies from both Ghana and Egypt, the latter studies focus on other aspects of women’s employment beyond global industries, and so are not relevant here (see Kabeer, 2011 for information on the wider research project).

to women's management and control over their income. Yet, despite the problems of considering women's income control as either an impact in itself, or as an indicator of women's wider power or challenge to gender roles and relations, these are only considered by a small number of scholars (see, in particular, Kabeer, 2000; Kibria, 1995). Furthermore, as has been noted, there is limited attention to the impacts of work on women's own survival and well-being. However, Kabeer's (2000) framework for considering income in terms of "choice", rather than "control", offers a potentially valuable alternative for a deeper understanding of income-related decisions, and their significance.

- *Identity and social status*: despite suggestions that women's employment impacts both on their own identities, and on their wider social status, there are limited indicators provided to assist in the measurement of such impacts (an exception is provided by Nanda et al, 2013). Despite discussions of women's "self-esteem" or "self-confidence", for example, there are limited explanations of what these terms mean, or how they may be measured.
- *Health*: despite a number of references to health as one of the "costs" of employment, only two studies are specifically focused on the impacts of women's employment on their health (Liberato and Fennell, 2007; Paul-Majumder, 1996). In addition, there is very little attention paid to the impacts on women's mental health, or on their subjective understandings of their own health and well-being.
- *Violence, abuse and harassment*: similarly, despite references to women's vulnerabilities to sexual harassment or violence in the workplace and at home, only three studies specifically focus on the impacts of women's employment on their experiences of violence, abuse and harassment (Heath, 2012; Salway et al, 2005; Siddiqi, 2003). Amongst those focusing on domestic violence, there is lesser attention paid to women's exposure to verbal abuse, and none paid to abuse committed by family members other than women's husbands.

4.3 Gaps in household and family-level impacts

At household and family-levels, gaps in current literature include:

- *Household decision-making*: while some attention is paid to the impacts of women's employment on household decision-making, only one study explores different decision-making patterns across different domains, and seeks evidence of covert influences on decision-making processes (Rao, 2014). Thus, while household decision-making may be an important reflection of women's power in domestic arenas, there is limited recognition of its complexity in the literature.
- *Household division of labour and time use*: as discussed, no study seems to measure the impacts of women's work on the division of labour within households, or on women's own time use, or that of their male household members. Given the ongoing resilience of the "double day" globally (Kabeer, 2008b:48), and its potential implications for women's health and well-being, as well as wider gender roles and relations, this gap is significant.
- *Children*: only one study is specifically interested in the impacts of women's work on their children (Atkin, 2009). This reflects a wider gap in the literature, in which there is limited discussion of the impacts of women's work on their families, including their children and husbands (see above).

4.4 Gaps in considerations of wider impacts

Overall, there is lesser attention paid in the literature to the wider impacts of women's work, including their roles as actors in communities or political processes; their relationships with labour organisations or movements; and the impacts on broader gender roles and relations, including their empowerment of social exclusion.

It is problematic to assume that the impacts of women's work on individual or domestic spheres necessarily translates to wider changes (Kabeer, 2008b:93). Yet, broader social and political processes are not separate from women's lives, but intertwined with their own experiences, including the potential impacts of their work. As Kabeer argues, with regards to Bangladesh, "women's ability to exercise agency and make choices... are not circumscribed by economics alone, but by their social vulnerability" (2000:191). Yet, there are limited in-depth explorations of the potential of women's work to impact these wider social contexts.

5. Discussion

This section identifies a number of issues and lessons arising from the literature, which may be of relevance to attempts to measure the impacts of women's employment, both within and beyond EWT.

5.1 What kinds of impacts?

As Section Three indicates, the literature highlights a wide range of areas potentially impacted by women's employment. This raises the question, which impacts should be considered in a study? Kabeer distinguishes between studies which choose to evaluate the impacts of work from "women's own perceptions and priorities" and those which offer more explicit criteria to be examined (2008b:18). A combined approach is offered by Kabeer's (2000) own study of Bangladeshi female garment workers, in which women were asked both about their control over their wages and its significance for their "choices", and more broadly about the positive and negative changes occurring in their own lives, and in women's lives more generally, as a result of work (a similar approach can be found in Kabeer et al, 2011, Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Kabeer and Tran, 2006).

The identification and measurement of different types of impacts is further complicated by their potential interdependence. For example, women's abilities to translate access to paid employment into greater financial freedom, will depend, at least in part, on existing household and familial relationships (Heintz, 2008:13). Such complexity suggests a need to both consider the impacts of women's work at individual, household and collective levels, and to consider the interactions, and potential contradictions, between these (Ahmed, 2004:41-42; Kabeer et al, 2011:38; Koggel, 2003:176). As Kabeer explains, "the potentially empowering aspects of work do not always occur in tandem with each other and their effects may be curtailed or offset by negative aspects of the work itself or by repercussions associated with work" (2008b:51).

Furthermore, although changes may be identified, attributing these to women's work poses another challenge. For example, Sultan Ahmed and Bould (2004), despite identifying a number of challenges to patriarchal family structures by female garment workers in Bangladesh, suggest these changes have emerged not from women's work, but wider contextual changes, including the decreasing abilities of men to provide material support. In

addition, even in cases where women’s “work” is identified as the cause of any changes, it is worth considering which aspects of work are likely to have been significant, such as their access to income, or their exposure to new ideas or social networks (Kabeer, 2008b:46).

5.2 Type, quality and conditions of employment

The nature of wage work can also be quite heterogeneous, with the quality and conditions of employment varying significantly and affecting its potential impacts. As Kabeer argues,

wage labour opportunities, like entrepreneurial activities, can be located on a continuum encompassing “bad” jobs at one end of the spectrum (poorly paid, highly exploitative and often demeaning work) and “good jobs” at the other, characterised by formality of contract, decent working conditions, regularity of pay along with social and legal protection. The empowerment potential of wage labour likely to be closely associated with its location on this continuum (2012:33)

This suggests a need to not only consider the impacts of women’s “work”, but also to look closely at what such work entails (see also Kabeer, 2008; Kabeer et al, 2011:30; Koggel, 2003:167; Rao, 2014:81).

With this in mind, one approach – taken by a number of studies included in this review – has been to compare the experiences of women in different types of work (Amin et al, 1998; Atkin, 2009; Dedeoğlu, 2010; Heath, 2012; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a; Naved et al, 2001; Rao, 2014; Salway et al, 2005; Unni and Bali, 2002). However such comparisons may lead to different findings according to the different types of work included, Kabeer and TrĐn argue, for example, that women’s employment in export-oriented manufacturing has tended to be viewed as less favourable when compared to other formal sector employment, but more favourable when compared to unregulated and casualised forms of employment (2006:36). Furthermore, such comparisons may also overlook the subjective dimensions women ascribe to their work, which also have the potential to affect its impacts, including women’s motivations to work, their abilities to choose their employment, and the significance of their work for themselves and their families (Kabeer, 2008b; Kabeer, 2000; Kibria, 1995).

5.3 Contexts

The studies also emphasise the need to look closely at the contexts in which women are situated (Bair, 2010:207; Kabeer, 2008b; Koggel, 2003; Rao, 2014). At the local or community level, in addition to the types and conditions of work available, factors influencing women’s experience of work, and its potential impacts, may include “high unemployment, environmental disasters, persistent poverty, political corruption, civil unrest, and the absence of labour protection laws”, as well as “conservative social norms”, “localized social practices” and “political institutions” (Koggel, 2003:176, 169); and the “degree of religious or cultural conservatism, the dynamism of the rural economy, socio-economic connectivity (roads, transport, communications, electricity, media, particularly TV) as well as the quality of local governance” (Kabeer, 2011:9).

Regional contexts also influence women’s work. Dominguez et al (2010) and Sen (2004) both warn against generalizing from Bangladeshi contexts, yet, as has been discussed, the majority of studies included in this review focus on Bangladesh. At global levels, Koggel also emphasises the need to recognise the influence of

multi-national corporations in affecting women’s work and its corresponding meanings (2003:169 – 176).

In terms of measurement, the influence of context raises a number of potential challenges. As Kabeer (2011) argues, context must influence not only how “empowerment” is measured, but also what questions are asked. Yet, in order to conduct comparative research, a balance must be struck between general questions allowing for comparison, and those that are context-specific (Kabeer, 2011:9). Furthermore, contexts are not static or separate phenomena, but also intersect, and change over time (Koggel, 2003:169). All of this suggests a need to pay close attention to contexts at different levels and their relationships at particular moments, to identify both what may be of relevance, and what may be excluded.

5.4 Multiple forms of difference

Of course, even within particular contexts, women are not a homogenous category, and nor are they only “women”. Their identities and experiences are also shaped by multiple forms of difference, including their “caste, social differences, marital status, stages in the life cycle, kinship support and individual attributes” (Rao, 2014:80). These factors, as well as others, such as women’s exposure to and participation in political and social organizations, and the identities and relationships of other household members, can influence their access to and the potential impacts of employment (Dominguez et al, 2010:189; see Ahmed, 2004; Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer et al, 2011; Kibria, 1995; Rao, 2014 for examples). As Pearson and Kusakabe (2012b) highlight, migration and migrants’ status can also have significant impacts on both on women’s work and their families (see also Amin et al, 1998; Kabeer and Tran, 2006; Naved et al, 2001; World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2011:104). Given the growing migration of workers engaged in global production, these intersections will likely be of continued significance (Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012b:252).

Given these additional factors affecting women’s lives and their work, there is a need to avoid static and generalized approaches to measurement (Koggel, 2003:174). Although some methodological approaches may allow controls for different aspects of women’s lives¹⁷, it is also important to pay attention to the temporal dimensions of impact, i.e. how it shifts over time. For example, some studies show that while employment may support women in the short-term, the conditions of work, or other changes in women’s lives such as marriage or childbearing, may mean such impacts are not sustainable in the long-term (see, for example, Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004b:151).

5.5 Women’s agency

Measuring the impacts of women’s work on their lives also does not mean overlooking their own agency (Lim, 1990 in Koggel, 2003:174; Sen, 2004:95). Some studies emphasise women’s “resistance” to the negative impacts of work, such as sexual harassment or exploitative working conditions (Siddiqi, 2003; Dannecker, 1999; Zaman, 2001); or the steps they take to reduce the potential “risks” of work (Amin et al, 1998; Zaman,

¹⁷ For example, Kabeer et al (2011) used multiple regression techniques to control for relevant differences in women’s individual, household and location-specific characteristics

2001). Others emphasise women’s agency as the “missing link” between their work and its impacts; as Gates’ (2002) study of the ways in which women maquiladora workers in Mexico negotiated for their household interests found, the strategies employed by women themselves can affect the potential contribution of work

to household power, and the strengthening or challenging of gender norms and identities. More broadly, it is important to recognise that women may exhibit agency in a variety of ways.

Overall, these studies show that the relationship between women and the impacts of their employment is not straightforward, but rather is affected by a wide range of factors, including women themselves.

6. Conclusion

This review, based primarily on 27 studies, has considered the impacts of women’s employment in global industries on their lives, families and communities. Though there are a number of gaps in the literature, including the lack of studies available from outside South or Southeast Asia and Latin America; the lack of multi-country studies; the limited attention given to men in the literature; and the lack of focused attention to the impacts of work on women’s social relations, it is clear that there are also some valuable lessons for EWT arising from existing approaches, including the identification, interdependence and attribution of impacts; the need to pay attention to the types, conditions and subjective meanings of work itself; the importance of local, regional and global contexts; the multiple forms of difference between women; and the need to recognise women’s agency as a potential “missing link” between their work and its impacts.

There are also implications for how EWT might think about the measurement of employment-related impacts specifically. First, its multi-country nature presents a need to develop a research methodology and indicators which allow both for comparisons between countries, and context-specific understandings of particular locations, types of impact and processes of change. While there are a limited number of multi-country studies to learn from, Kabeer’s (2011) reflections on comparative research, as discussed in Section 5.3, may provide a starting point. Similarly, Salway et al’s reflections on the value of mixed approaches in providing insights into overall and in-depth patterns of behaviour, as discussed in Section Two, suggest mixed approaches may also support comparisons between locations, while also enabling insights into particular contexts. Given the lack of existing studies from outside Asia and Latin America, there is also a need to consider context-specific types of impacts and indicators, which may have particular relevance for the regions in which EWT works. Second, the inclusion of both female entrepreneurs and their employees within the EWT initiative suggests a need to pay close attention to the varying types, conditions and subjective meanings of work amongst participants, as discussed in Section 5.2. Third, there may be value to incorporating less prescriptive “objective” indicators in a measurement system that allows space for women’s own identifications of the positive or negative changes happening in their lives. Finally, overall, the literature review highlights the range of potential impacts of women’s employment in global industries, including at different levels, and the complex relations between these. This highlights the value of developing multi-dimensional measurement systems, and the potential of such systems for gaining insights into women’s lives, families, communities and wider societies.

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Appendix 2

Questions Asked as a Measure of Women's Empowerment in Studies to Date

Assembled by Anna Custers

In Part 1 of this appendix, we have compiled a sample of questions being used in studies of women's economic empowerment. At the top of each entry, we have given the source document, so that readers can follow up for more information. We ask readers to note several things about these questions:

Many of the questions are directed to an agricultural economy, specifically among the rural poor of developing economies; thus they include questions about things like fetching water and livestock ownership. Since much of the work so far on women's empowerment has come out of economic development, this focus on the rural poor is understandable. However, given that gender inequality occurs in urban as well as rural environments, in high technology industries as well as agriculture, among the rich as well as the poor, and in developed as well as developing nations, these studies are really only representing a small, and biased, view of the larger phenomenon. Even if one intends only to conduct programs among the rural poor, it is important to be measuring the core phenomenon, which is not specific to those populations.

Because of the agricultural focus, many of these questions may not be relevant to current interventions, such as EWT, that focus on other aspects of economic life, such as market exchange and technology access.

Many of the questions focus on extended family dynamics that would not be relevant in many countries, especially in the cities, as well as marital arrangements that would not be applicable in many places.

Some of the financial empowerment questions are unlikely to be relevant in a more developed economy, specifically one where a consumer culture is in place, because they place emphasis on control over decisions that are either no longer relevant to the way of life in those places (such as purchase and sale of livestock) or they involve purchases that are too trivial to be seen as meaningful enough to differentiate (purchase of clothing or toiletries or small treats).

Some questions seem to envision the backdrop of a small community where the members borrow from each other regularly and give each other advice on private matters, including both sex and money. These are practices that are not as common, or not thought appropriate, in many other settings.

The answers to some questions may be affected by other issues besides gender empowerment. For instance, in some places, political participation may be low among both men and women because of fear of danger or feelings of cynicism.

Some articles mention indicators, even providing tables of multiple factors to be measured, but do not show the questions, and some focus on macro-level measurements, such as fertility rates or labor participation rates. We have put these in Part 2 of this appendix.

Linda Scott

Part 1. Questions Being Asked

Source: Alkire, Sabina, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Amber Peterman, Agnes Quisumbing, Greg Seymour, and Ana Vaz. "The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index." *World Development* 52 (2013): 71-91. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2013.06.007.

Role in household decision making around production and income generation

Did you (singular) participate in [ACTIVITY] in the past 12 months?

How much input did you have in making decisions about [ACTIVITY]?

How much input did you have in decisions on the use of income generated from [ACTIVITY]?

Access to productive capital

Does anyone in your household current have any [ITEM]

How many of [ITEM] does your household currently have?

Who would you say owns most of the [ITEM]?

Who would you say can decide whether to sell [ITEM] most of the time?

Who would you say can decide to mortgage or rent out [ITEM] most of the time?

Who would you say would keep the majority of [ITEM] in the case a marriage is dissolved because of divorce or separation?

Who would you say would keep the majority of [ITEM] in the case a marriage is dissolved because of death of your partner/spouse?

Who contributes most to decisions regarding a new purchase of [ITEM]?

Access to Credit

Has anyone in your household taken any loans or borrowed cash/in-kind from [SOURCE] in the past 12 months?

Who made the decision to borrow from [SOURCE]?

Who makes the decision about what to do with the money/item borrowed from [SOURCE]?

If more credit had been available from this source, would you have used it?

Why would you not have borrowed more from [SOURCE]?

Did you want to borrow to get a loan from [SOURCE] in the last 12 months but did not?

Why were you not able to borrow from [SOURCE]?

Decision making

When decisions are made regarding the following aspects of household life, who is it that normally takes the decision?

To what extent do you feel you can make your own personal decisions regarding these aspects of household life if you want(ed) to?

My actions in [domain] are determined by the situation. I don't really have an option.

My actions in [domain] are partly because I will get trouble with someone if I act differently.

Regarding [domain] I do what I do so others don't think poorly of me.

Regarding [domain] I do what I do because I personally think it is the right thing to do.

Individual leadership and influence in the community

Do you feel comfortable speaking up in public to help decide in infrastructure (like small wells, roads, water supplies) to be built in your community?

Do you feel comfortable speaking up in public to ensure proper payment of wages for public works or other similar programs?

Do you feel comfortable speaking up in public to protest the misbehavior of authorities or elected officials?

Is there a [GROUP] in your community?

Are you an active member of this [GROUP]?

How much input do you have in making decisions in this [GROUP]?

Why are you not a member of this [GROUP]?

Time allocation

24 hour log

Was yesterday a holiday or nonworking day?

Regarding the amount of sleep you got last night, was that: less than average, average, more than average?

How satisfied are you with your available time for leisure activities like visiting neighbors, watching TV, listening to the radio, seeing movies or doing sports?

During the last four weeks, how many days of your primary daily activities did you miss because of poor health?

Do you suffer from a chronic disability?

Are you or your spouse currently doing something or using any method to delay or avoid getting pregnant?

Are you currently pregnant?

Are you currently breastfeeding?

Source: Bandiera, Oriana, Niklas Buehren, Robin Burgess, Markus Goldstein, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul, and Munshi Sulaiman. Empowering Adolescent Girls: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Uganda. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, October 2012.

Empowerment index

Who should earn money for the family?

Who should have a higher level of education in the family?

Who should be responsible for washing, cleaning and cooking?

If there is no water pump or tap, who should fetch water?

Who should be responsible for feeding and bathing children?

Who should help the children in their studies at home?

Who should be responsible for looking after the ill persons?

Source: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona, and Innovations for Poverty Action. Final Impact Evaluation of the Saving for Change Program in Mali, 2009-2012. Oxfam America and Freedom from Hunger, April 2013. Available at: <https://www.freedomfromhunger.org/final-impact-evaluation-saving-change-program-mali-2009-2012>.

Intra-household decision making power index

Free to decide about food expenses

Free to decide about educational expenses

Free to decide about health expenses for children

Free to decide about personal health expenses

Free to decide about visiting a friend

Free to take decisions about business

Social integration index

Knows other woman in sample

Asked other woman in sample

Would ask other woman in sample for money

Would give money to other woman in sample

Go to market with other woman in sample

Source: Garikipati, Supriya. "The Impact of Lending to Women on Household Vulnerability and Women's Empowerment: Evidence from India." World Development 36.12 (2008): 2620-2642.

Ownership of household assets and incomes (power over):

Own family home?

Own agricultural land?

Own livestock (excludes poultry)?

Contributes at least a quarter of the household income (double points)

Control over minor finances

Keeps money from sale of poultry

Has regular personal spending money

Has money for emergency use

Control of major finances

Retains money from sale of crops

Retains money from sale of goats

Retains her own wage earnings

Retains her children's wages

Retains husband's wages (double points)

Say in household decisions

Decides (individually or jointly) on children's education

Decides what crops to grow

Decides to lease in/out agricultural land

Has made a major financial decisions (open a bank account, apply for loan etc)

Initiated the financial decision (above)

Decides to sell crops

Decides to buy/sell large livestock

Decides to buy agricultural inputs

Work time allocation

Manages or helps any business

Works on family farm

Non-farm wage work

Any one of the (above) is also primary work occupation

Doesn't want to change the way spends work time

Division of domestic chores

Shares tasks of fuel gathering and preparing with others in the family

Shares tasks for water collection

Shares cooking tasks

Shares washing utensils task

Shares washing clothes task

Source: Hashemi, Syed M., Sidney Ruth Schuler, and Ann P. Riley. "Rural Credit Programs and Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh." *World Development* 24.4 (1996): 635-653. doi:10.1016/0305-750X(95)00159-A.

Economic security

Owns house or land

Owns (any) productive asset

Has cash savings

Savings were ever used for business or money lending

Ability to make small purchases

Purchases small items used daily in food preparation for the family

Purchases small items for oneself

Purchases ice cream or sweets for the children

Ability to make larger purchases

Purchases pots and pans

Purchases children's clothing

Purchases saris for herself

Purchases family's daily food

Involvement in major decision

Making a decision (individually or jointly with the husband), within the past five years about house repair or renovation

Decided to take in a goat to raise for profit

Decided to lease land

Decided to buy land, a boat or a bicycle rickshaw

Relative freedom from domination by the family

Money taken from her against her will in the past year

Land, jewelry or livestock had been taken from her against her will (in the past year)

Had been prevented from visiting her natal home

Had been prevented from working outside the home

Political and legal awareness

Knows the name of a local government official

Knows the name of a Member of Parliament

Knows the name of the Prime Minister

Knows the significance of registering a marriage

Knows the law governing inheritance

Participation in public protests and political campaigning

"Campaigned for a political candidate or had gotten together with others to protest against:
a man beating his wife, a man divorcing or abandoning his wife, unfair wages, unfair prices, misappropriation of relief of goods or 'high-handedness' of police or government officials"

Source: Ibrahim, Solava, and Sabina Alkire. "Agency and Empowerment: A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators." *Oxford Development Studies* 35.4 (2007): 379-4031.

Empowerment as control: Control over Personal Decisions

How much control do you feel you have in making personal decisions that affect your everyday activities?

Empowerment as choice: Domain-specific Autonomy and House-hold Decision-making

When decisions are made regarding the following aspects of household life, who is it that normally takes the decision? [decisions: minor household expenditures, what to do if you have a serious health problem, how to protect yourself from violence, whether and how to express religious faith, what kind of tasks will you do.]

Now I am going to describe three reasons why you do these activities, and ask you to tell me how true each one is. [domains: minor household expenditures, what to do if you have a serious health problem, how to protect yourself from violence, whether and how to express religious faith, what kind of tasks will you do.]

How true would it be to say that your actions with respect to [domain] are motivated by a desire to avoid punishment or to gain reward?

How true would it be to say that your actions with respect to [domain] are motivated by a desire to avoid blame, or so that other people speak well of you?"

How true would it be to say that your actions with respect to [domain] are motivated by and reflect your own values and/or interests?

Empowerment in community (power with): Changing Aspects in one's Life [individual level]

Do you feel that people like yourself can generally change things in your community if they want to

Empowerment as change (power from within): Changing Aspects in one's life [communal level]

Would you like to change anything in your life?

What three thing(s) would you most like to change?

Who do you think will contribute most to any change in your own life?

Source: Kim, Julia C., Charlotte H. Watts, James R. Hargreaves, Luceth X. Ndhlovu, Godfrey Phetla, Linda A. Morison, Joanna Busza, John D. H. Porter, and Paul Pronyk. "Understanding the Impact of a Microfinance-Based Intervention on Women's Empowerment and the Reduction of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa." *American Journal of Public Health* 97.10 (2007): 1794-1802. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2006.095521.

Self confidence: Two questions (positive response to one or both of the questions):

If you were at a community meeting, how confident are you that you could raise your opinion in public?
(Positive direction is "very confident")

Neighbors often share similar problems – how confident do you feel about offering advice to your neighbor?
(very confident)

Financial confidence: Two questions (positive response to one or both of the questions).

In the event of a crisis (e.g., house fire) how confident are that you alone could raise enough money to feed your family for four weeks (positive direction is "very confident")

Is your ability to survive this kind of crisis better, the same, or worse than it was two years ago (better)

Challenges gender norms

Series of six statements accepting traditional gender norms e.g., "A women should do most of the household chores, even if the husband is not working" (disagree with all six).

Autonomy in decision-making

Series of ten questions about household decisions e.g., making small, medium, large purchases, taking children to the clinic, visiting family or friends (does not need partner's permission for 5 of 10).

Perceived contribution to household: One question.

How does your husband view the money that you bring into the household? (yours is the most important contribution)

Household communication: Three questions (positive response to any of the questions).

In the past year, have you communicated with anyone about sex or sexuality?

Your partner?

Your children?

Other household members?

Partner relationship: Two questions about relationship with intimate partner over the last year (positive response to one or both of the questions).

Has he encouraged you to participate in something that was outside the home that was only for your benefit?

Has he asked your advice about a difficult issue or decision?

Social group membership: Series of 18 questions about participation in a range of formal and informal social groups e.g., burial society, village health committee (number of such groups)

Collective action: One question

In the past two years have you participated in a meeting, march, or rally about HIV/AIDS awareness (positive response to question)

Intimate partner violence indicators

Primary outcome

Past year experience of physical or sexual violence: Two questions on physical violence and two questions on sexual violence (positive response to any of the questions)

In the past 12 months, has your partner ever

1. Pushed you or shoved you?
2. Hit you with his fist or something else that could hurt you?
3. Physically forced you to have sex when you did not want to?
4. Have you had sex when you did not want to, because you were afraid of what he would do if you refused?

Secondary outcomes

Past year experience of controlling behaviour: Four questions (positive response to any of the questions)

In the past 12 months has your partner ever

1. Kept you from seeing your friends?
2. Insisted on knowing where you are at all times?
3. Wanted to you ask permission before seeking healthcare for yourself?
4. Insulted or humiliated you in front of other people?

Progressive attitudes to Intimate Partner Violence: Eight statements condoning physical and sexual intimate partner violence (disagree with all 8)

Source: Mason, Karen Oppenheim. "Measuring Women's Empowerment: Learning from Cross-National Research." In *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Deepa Narayan, 89-102. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2005.

Economic Decision Making

Please tell me who in your family decides the following:

Whether to purchase major goods for the household, such as a TV/refrigerator/etc.

Whether you should work outside the home?

Who of these people usually has the greatest say in the decision:

Major purchases?

Whether you should work outside the home?

If you wanted to buy yourself a dress/sari, would you feel free to do it without consulting your husband (or a senior member of your family?)

If you wanted to buy yourself a small item of jewelry, such as a bangle/beads/etc., would you feel free to do it without consulting your husband (or a senior member of your family?)

Family Size Decision Making

Please tell me who in your family decides the following: how many children to have?

Who of these people usually has the greatest say in this decision: how many children to have?

Freedom of Movement

Do you have to ask your husband or a senior family member for permission to go to:

1. The local market?
2. The local health center?
3. Fields outside the village?
4. A community center, park, or plaza in the village?
5. The home of relatives or friends in the village?

Interpersonal coercive control items

Are you afraid to disagree with your husband for fear he may become angry with you?

Does your husband ever hit or beat you?

Source: Nanda, Priya, Anurag Mishra, Sunayana Walia, Shubh Sharma, Ellen Weiss, and Jennifer Abrahamson. *Advancing Women, Changing Lives: A Comprehensive Evaluation of the Gap Inc. P.A.C.E. Program*. Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women, 2013.

Self Esteem

To what extent do you feel that your family will ask your opinion in buying land/house?

To what extent do you feel that your family will ask your opinion in buying a vehicle (Car or two-wheeler)?

To what extent do you get upset if things don't turn out the way you want?

To what extent have you made plans to meet your future aspirations?

To what extent do you fear that you will be scolded for taking wrong decisions at home?

To what extent do you fear getting scolded for taking wrong decisions at work?

Self Efficacy

How capable do you feel of doing the next higher job to yours?

How capable do you feel about travelling alone to a far-off city or village to attend a family or social event?

How capable do you feel about admonishing a man's inappropriate behavior on the street?

To what extent are you able to guide your children or siblings in their studies or decisions about their education?

To what extent are you able to guide your close friends on their personal problems?

If someone in your community has a problem, to what extent do you go out and give them your advice?

To what extent are you able to give feedback to others without affecting their feelings?

To what extent can you express your point well when there is a difference of opinion between you and your family members?

Workplace Efficacy

To what extent do you meet production targets on time?

To what extent do you give error-free production?

To what extent do you take greater responsibilities in your work?

To what extent do you feel confident to resolve a problem at work with your seniors in the factory?

To what extent do you have work skills that you value?

Workplace environment

To what extent do you arrive at work on time?

To what extent do you help others in completing the tasks in the line/department?

To what extent do you inform in advance about your leave to the supervisor?

Whenever you face stress at home, to what extent can you talk about it to someone at workplace?

To what extent can you share any new learning about your work with your colleagues?

Part 2. Indicators Without Questions

Source: Golla, Anne Marie, Anju Malhotra, Priya Nanda, and Rekha Mehra. *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment. Definition, Framework and Indicators*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women, 2011.

Power and Agency Indicators:

	Individual/Household Level	Community/Institution Level
Control over assets	Women's ownership of productive assets (land, animals, machinery)	Laws that protect women's property rights
	Women have their own source of income	Existing laws are enforced at the community level
	Share of household income provided by women	Women represented as owners of larger businesses and in business leadership
	Women have control over how to spend some cash or savings	Use of community resources in ways that benefit women (pumps, clinics, schools, etc.)
Agency/Decision-making	Proportion of women's income spent on herself and children	Women's participation in community groups/ associations/networks
	Women's involvement in major household decisions i.e. large purchases (car, house, household appliance), agricultural decisions	Women's involvement in community decision-making
	Women's access to information and technology	Women have leadership roles in community
Autonomy and Mobility	Women's ability to visit friends, family, associates	Rates of abuse, assault, harassment against women in public places
	Women's ability to use public transportation/travel freely in public spaces	
	Women's use of media, phone, technology	

Self-confidence/ Self-efficacy	Psychological wellbeing	Community valuing of women's entitlement and inclusion
	Attitudes on own self-esteem	
	Articulateness and confidence in speaking with authorities	
Gender Norms	Ability to negotiate sexual and reproductive decisions	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems
	Attitudes on women and work	Community acceptance of women working
	Attitudes on women and mobility	Community acceptance on women's sexual and reproductive roles women and work
	Attitudes on women and violence	Community attitudes on women and violence
Gender Roles/ Responsibilities	Number of hours spent in housework	Sex-disaggregated employment rates by sector
	Gender segregation of male and female work, ability to enter profitable jobs	Community attitudes on what work women should do
	Equity of domestic duty load	

Source: Jones, Nicola, and Mohammed Shaheen. *Transforming Cash Transfers: Beneficiary and Community Perspectives on the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme—Part 2: The Case of the West Bank*. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2012. Available at: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8179.pdf>.

Power within - agency and capability

Awareness of rights

Self assurance

Self confidence

Skills and capability

Self confidence in managing the business

Have future life goals/life planning

Feel more economically independent

Behaviour and communication with parents/guardians on financial issues (for girls)

Respect from spouse

Attitudes to work

Life satisfaction

Power with – social relations, networks

Social prestige, being recognised and respected

Recognition as productive contributor to the household and community economy

Self help groups formation

Networks

Social capital and social networking

Networks of friends

Collective voice and collective identity (cooperative)

Participation in village politics

Awareness of seats in local institutions

Power over – economic advancement

Income of clients of services (micro finance)

Employment and self employment / labour force participation

Job promotion

Average weekly earnings / wages

Earning from different activities

Consumption of goods

Paying for healthcare and housing

Ownership of physical assets

Productive assets and household assets

Control over cash

Saving

Informal borrowing

Managing production and marketing

Owning land

Access to credit

Access to market information

Increased productivity

Price advantage (for sales)

Business revenue

Source: Kabeer, Naila “Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment.” *Development & Change* 30.3 (1999a): 445–6.

Egypt: Household budget, food cooked, visits, children’s education, children’s health, use of family planning methods (Kishor, 1997).

India: Purchase of food; purchase of major household goods; purchase of small items of jewellery; course of action if child falls ill; disciplining the child; decisions about children’s education and type of school.

Nigeria: Household purchases; whether wife works; how to spend husband’s income; number of children to have; whether to buy and sell land; whether to use family planning; whether to send children to school, how much education; when sons and when daughters marry; whether to take sick children to doctor and how to rear children.

Zimbabwe: Wife working outside; making a major purchase; the number of children.

Nepal: What food to buy; the decision by women to work outside; major market transactions; and the number of children to have.

Iran: Food purchase; inputs, labour and sale in agricultural production and other income-earning activities; sale and purchase of assets; children’s education; seeking health care for children.

Pakistan: Purchase of food; number of children; schooling of children; children’s marriage; major household purchases; women’s work outside the home; sale and purchase of livestock; household expenses; purchase of clothes, jewellery and gifts for wife’s relatives.

Bangladesh: Ability to make small and large consumer purchases; house repair; taking in livestock for raising; leasing in of land; purchase of major assets (Hashemi et al., 1996). Bangladesh: Children’s education; visits to friends and relatives; household purchases; health care matters.

Source: Kabeer, Naila (1999), “The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment.” UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 108. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1999b.

Typical locations in mobility indicators (pp.20):

Egypt: just outside the house; local market; health centre; neighbourhood; homes of friends and family (Kishor, 1997).

Nepal: local health centre; local market; homes of relatives; fields outside the village; community centre; fair or shrine; next village; cinema (Morgan and Niraula, 1995).

Pakistan: homes of relatives; fields; market; health centre; neighbouring village (Sathar and Kazi, 1997).

Bangladesh: market; medical facility; cinema; outside village (Hashemi et al., 1996).

India: market; health centre; home of friend or relative; fair; next village (Jejeebhoy, 1997).

Direct evidence of empowerment

Devaluation of women: reports of being beaten; dowry paid at marriage;

Women's emancipation: belief in daughters' education; freedom of movement;

Reported sharing of roles and decision-making: egalitarian gender roles; egalitarian decision making;

Equality in marriage: fewer grounds reported for justified divorce by husbands; equality of grounds reported for divorce by husband or wife;

Financial autonomy: currently controls her earnings; her earnings as share household income.

Sources of empowerment:

Participation in the modern sector: index of assets owned; female education;

Lifetime exposure to employment: worked before marriage; controlled earnings before marriage.

Setting indicators:

Family structure amenable to empowerment: does not live and has not previously lived with in-laws;

Marital advantage: small age difference between spouses; chose spouse;

Traditional marriage: large educational difference with husband; chose husband.

Source: Malhotra, Anju, and Sidney Ruth Schuler. "Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development." In *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Deepa Narayan, 71-88. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/7441/344100PAPEROMe101OfficialUseOnly1.pdf?sequence=1>.

Community indicators Dimension

Economic: Access to employment. Access to credit. Involvement and representation in local trade associations. Access to markets.

Social and cultural: Access to and visibility in social spaces. Access to modern transportation. Existence and strength of extrafamilial groups and social networks. Shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference).

Representation of the female in myth and ritual. Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self-selection of spouses, reduction in practice of dowry, acceptability of divorce). Local campaigns against domestic violence.

Legal: Community mobilization for rights. Campaigns for rights awareness. Access to legal mechanisms. Effective local enforcement of legal rights. Involvement or mobilization in local political system/campaigns. Support for specific candidates or legislation.

Political: Representation in local government.

Psychological: Collective awareness of injustice. Potential of mobilization.

Source: Moghadam, Valentine M., and Lucie Senftova. "Measuring Women's Empowerment: Participation and Rights in Civil, Political, Social, Economic, and Cultural Domains." *International Social Science Journal* 57.184 (2005): 389-412.

Social indicators of women's empowerment: measuring women's participation and rights in civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural domains

Socio-demographic indicators¹⁸

Life expectancy at birth (years, female/male)

Sex ratio (female/male)

Average female age at first marriage

Adolescent marriage (% of female in age group 15-19 ever married)

Number of births to 1,000 women (age 15-19)

Total fertility rate (births per woman)

Bodily integrity and health¹⁹

Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)

Child mortality rate (% age 0-5, female/male)

Contraceptive prevalence (% married women)

Female genital mutilation prevalence (%)

People HIV infected (% female among adults)

Sexual abuse of women (% total population)

Physical abuse against women by an intimate partner (% of adult women who have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner, in past 12 month, ever in any relationship)

Literacy and educational attainment²⁰

Youth literacy rates (% ages 15-24, female/male)

Adult literacy rates (% ages 15+ and over, female/male)

School life expectancy (expected number of years of formal schooling, female/male)

Net secondary school enrolment (% female/male)

Tertiary enrolment rates, gross enrolment ration (% female/male)

Economic participation and rights²¹

Adult labour force participation rate (female/male)

Female share of paid labour force

Unemployment rate (% female/male)

Estimated earned income

Female professional and technical workers (as % of total)

Length, amount, and source of paid maternity leave

Political participation and rights²²

Seats in parliament in Single or Lower chamber (% female) Seats in government at ministerial level (% female)

Seats in government at sub ministerial level (% female) Female legislators, senior officials and managers (as % total)

Cultural participation and rights²³

Access to computers, internet (% female/male)

Print and electronic media (number of existing feminist resources)

Number of women's NGOs

Tertiary students in fine arts and humanities (as % of all tertiary students female/male)

Existence of paternity leaves (Yes/No)

Museum staff (% female)

Ministry of Culture decision-making staff (% female)

Ratification of international legal frames for women's rights

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979 + Optional Protocol, 1999 (year of ratification; ratification with or without reservations)

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 (adopted; with or without reservations and interpretative statements)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966 (year of ratification; with or without reservations)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 (year of ratification; with or without reservations)

UNESCO Conventions

Discrimination in education, 1960 (year of ratification, acceptance)

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 1984 (year of ratification; with or without reservations)

ILO Conventions

Discrimination in employment/occupation, 1958

Equal remuneration for men and women for equal work, 1951

Freedom of association and right to organise, 1948 (year of ratification).

Appendix 3

Women's Empowerment in the UK

This report by Daria Luchinskaya. The sections on Childcare, Unpaid work, and Quotas for women on corporate boards have been adapted from memos prepared for the Scottish Government (Luchinskaya, 2013): <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/key-clients/women-and-work/> see "RESEARCH" tab.

What is women's empowerment?

Empowerment has been used in different contexts and has been described in different ways. Most definitions of empowerment focus on the ability to make choices. For example, empowerment can be broadly defined as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" Kabeer (2001, 19). In Kabeer's framework, three dimensions constitute the ability to exercise choice: *resources* (economic, human, and social), *agency* (the ability to identify and act on one's goals), and *achievements* (the outcomes of choice).¹ The resources, agency and achievements aspects of particular choices will vary within different social contexts. Empowerment is context-specific.

Women's empowerment in particular has some additional considerations: (1) women cut across various disempowered groups in society; (2) household and inter-family relations play a more important role for women than for other disempowered groups; and (3) women's empowerment requires a systemic transformation of patriarchal structures as well as social institutions in general (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005, 71–2). Women's empowerment differs from related concepts of *gender equality* and *female autonomy* because it focuses on the *processes* of change and on women's *agency* in those processes (2005, 72). Furthermore, resources in themselves are not sufficient to bring about empowerment "without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interests" (2005, 73).

One of the main difficulties in measuring women's empowerment in different countries is its context-specificity. What may signify empowerment in one country may be a norm in another.² Added to this difficulty is the fact that most research on indicators of women's empowerment has focused on developing countries³ where societal norms, legal frameworks, and household relations tend to acutely contribute to women's disempowerment. Composite indicators of women's empowerment, such as the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) tend to be composed specifically for the context of developing countries rather than developed ones. The SIGI in particular omits OECD countries (Branisa et al., 2014; OECD, 2010, 17; see also

¹ Changes in the ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of changes in three inter-related dimensions which make up choice: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; agency which is at the heart of the process by which choices are made; and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. (Kabeer, 2001, 19) Resources and agency constitute *capabilities* ('the opportunit[ies] to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings – what a person is able to do or be' (Sen, 2005, 153)).

² "For example, a woman being able to visit a health center without getting permission from a male household member may be a sign of empowerment in rural Bangladesh but not in, for example, urban Peru, where women routinely move about in public on their own." (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005, 76).

³ This review uses the terms "developed" and "developing" countries as a statistical shorthand without judgement on the countries' development process, in line with the UN Statistics Division designations (UN Statistics Division, 2014, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49.htm>).

Figure 1). Other gender empowerment measures have attempted to have a more global reach. In contrast, the UNDP Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), has been criticised for an elite bias which made the measure less appropriate towards developing countries (Klasen and Schüler, 2011; Klasen, 2006).⁴ The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index ranks countries in terms of their distance from gender equality expressed in terms of male and female ratios⁵ (see Figure 2 for its constituent aspects), but explicitly foregoes the emphasis on gender empowerment (WEF, 2014)⁶ and has been critiqued for its mix of indicators and weighting procedure (e.g. Klasen and Schüler, 2011; Beneria and Permanyer, 2010).

Women’s empowerment in developed countries is not a redundant issue. In the UK, for example, many women’s abilities to make choices about employment are still influenced by access to affordable and accessible childcare (e.g. EHRC, 2010).⁷ Issues such as these are often omitted from existing aggregate indices of women’s empowerment.

Figure 1: The composition of the SIGI

Social institutions and gender index				
Discriminatory family code	Restricted physical integrity	Son bias	Restricted resources and assets	Restricted civil liberties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal age of marriage • Early marriage • Paternal authority • Inheritance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence against women • Female genital mutilation • Reproductive autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing women • Fertility preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure access to land • Secure access to non-land assets • Access to financial services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to public space • Political voice

Source: OECD, 2014, 8.

4 The GEM was comprised of indicators relating to political representation, representation in senior positions in the economy, and power over economic resources (Klasen and Schüler, 2011). The GEM was discontinued in 2010 and a new measure, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) was introduced, although the new measure is closer to gender inequality than empowerment concepts.

5 The WEF GGI penalises deviations from parity when there is a lower proportion of women than men, but neither penalises nor rewards deviations where there is a higher proportion of women than men (WES, 2013).

6 The WEF states: “Our aim is to focus on whether the gap between women and men in the chosen variables as declined, rather than whether women are ‘winning’ the ‘battle of the sexes’” (WEF, 2014, 4), however this is an unconventional definition of women’s empowerment.

7 While men are increasingly providing childcare and childcare is no longer viewed as solely women’s responsibility, women in the UK are still more likely to be the primary childcare givers than men (DWP, 2010).

Figure 2: Structure of the Global Gender Gap Index

Economic Participation and Opportunity	Education Attainment	Health and Survival	Political Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female labour force participation • Wage equality between women and men for similar work • Female estimated earned income • Female legislators, senior officials and managers • Female professional and technical workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female literacy rate • Female net primary enrolment rate • Female net secondary enrolment rate • Female gross tertiary enrolment ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex ratio at birth • Female healthy life expectancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females with seats in parliament • Females at ministerial level • Number of years of a female head of state (last 50 years)

Source: Adapted from WEF, 2014, 4. Measures expressed as female to male ratios.

This review aims to summarise the main issues facing women’s empowerment in the UK. This by no means infringes on women’s empowerment activities in developing countries, nor introduces any kind of value judgements about which issues are more or less important.

The UK in a global context

In terms of global gender equality measures, the UK performs at or slightly above the average level of comparable income-group countries and is located roughly within the top quintile of countries globally. According to the WEF Gender Gap 2014 report, the UK ranked at number 26, having slipped from 16th place in 2011 and 9th place in 2006. However, the UK’s 2014 Gender Gap Index (GGI)⁸ score of 0.738 was close to the 2014–2006 0.742 average,⁹ which suggests that the UK position has remained fairly stable over the period while other countries have made gains. The top 5 places were dominated by the Nordic countries. Other indicators show the UK performing at a similar level globally and slightly improving over time. For example the UNDP Gender Inequality Index for the UK has diminished from 0.228 in 2000 to 0.193 in 2013; the Social Watch Gender Equity index has slightly improved from 0.74 in 2007 to 0.76 in 2012. Table 1 below shows how the UK compares to Sweden, a country regarded as having a high extent of gender equality, across different measures using latest available data.

8 The GGI is an asymmetric index as it penalises countries where the proportion of women is less than parity, but neither penalises nor rewards deviations where the proportion of men is less than parity.

9 The UK GGI was 0.746 at its highest in 2010/11 and 0.736 at its lowest in 2006.

Table 1: UK and Sweden – gender equality measures rankings

Organisation	WEF ¹	UNDP ²	UNDP	UNDP	EIU ³	SW ⁴	EU ⁵
Year	2014	2013	2013	2013	2012	2012	2010
Measurement	GGI	GII*	HDI	GrDI	WEO	GEqI	GEI
UK rank	26	35	14	14	13	25	5
UK score	0.738	0.193	0.892	0.993	0.789	0.76	0.604
Sweden rank	4	4	12	6	1	4	1
Sweden score	0.817	0.054	0.898	1.004	0.904	0.87	0.743
Number of countries	142	187 (195)	187 (195)	187 (195)	128	168	27

*Note: for GII a lower score implies less gender inequality.

Sources: ¹ World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report Gender Gap Index: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/rankings/>; ² UNDP Human Development Reports Data (Gender Inequality Index, Human Development Index, Gender-related Development Index (female to male HDI ratio): <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/>; ³ Economist Intelligence Unit Women's Economic Opportunity http://www.eiu.com/public/thankyou_download.aspx?activity=download&campaignid=weoindex2012; ⁴ Social Watch Gender Equity Index: <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14365>; ⁵ EU EIGE Gender Equality Index: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index>.

However, these measures need to be interpreted with caution. At the aggregate level, the measures mask changes in the constituent parts of the indices. At the constituent sub-index level, data are often patchy, particularly for developed countries. Even when particular components of the index are selected, for instance the WEF GGI Enrolment in tertiary education or Women in parliament, they only provide a quantitative picture of an aspect of social and economic life rather than examining the differences and processes within these categories. For example, the WEF GGI enrolment in tertiary education indicator does not give information about male- and female-dominated subjects, which can lead to earnings differences after graduation; nor does economic participation and opportunity sub-index give a full indication of sex-segregation in the labour market. Such trade-offs are necessary when constructing internationally comparable indicators, but as a consequence more detailed analysis is required when attempting to understand the situation in a particular country or differences between countries.

Women's empowerment: UK

Women's empowerment in the UK is on the business and political agenda. The UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) were launched in the UK in April 2012. The seven principles stated below, adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles¹⁰,¹¹ are targeted to "challenge the unconscious gender bias in the UK and improve gender equality in the workplace".¹¹

¹⁰ https://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/equality_means_business.html; <http://www.calvert.com/womensprinciples.html>

¹¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/corporate/womens-empowerment-principles/>

The seven Women's Empowerment Principles are:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

In particular, the first principle is concerned with the representation of women at senior management positions, and the second principle refers to employment discrimination, which for women is more often than not whether they are planning to have or are having children. Some aspects which are not specifically mentioned in the WEPs but which have an effect on women's empowerment include unpaid work and caring responsibilities. The following review concentrates on gender issues in the labour market with respect to women's empowerment, partly drawing on the Scottish Women's Employment Summit evidence paper 2013 (WES, 2013).

Women in the labour market

Employment rates

In the UK, the proportion of women in employment increased over the last 40 years from 53% in 1971 to 67% in 2011, while the proportion of men in employment decreased over the same period from 92% to 76% (ONS, 2013). Most of this change occurred between 1971 and 1991 – partly related to the economic shift from manufacturing to services over the period where the latter sector has traditionally employed more women, the decrease in economically inactive women (e.g. increase in mothers in employment), and the increase in economically inactive men (e.g. taking on childcare responsibilities or participating in full-time education, ONS, 2013, 2). Employment rates for men and women without children are similar across age groups, but for people with children men were more likely to be in employment than women for every age group. The employment rates for women with children increased with the age of the children: with a youngest dependent child aged 0-3, 65% of mothers in a couple and 39% of lone mothers were in employment, while with a youngest child aged 11-18, 80% of mothers in a couple and 74% of lone mothers were in employment (ONS, 2013, 10).

Part-time and flexible work

The employment rates discussed above suggest that the majority of households are dominated by two-person earners. However, Crompton (2006) argued that although women were in employment in many countries, the UK included, they were more likely to work part-time, and therefore a "one-and-a-half breadwinner" model

persisted. In the UK, about a quarter of all those in employment worked part-time in 2013 (12% men, 42% women) compared to 20% for the EU-28 (9% men, 32% women) (Eurostat, 2015).¹² In the UK, part-time work is associated with significantly lower wages and is predominantly found in the catering, caring, and retail sectors. The part-time median pay gap is between 10 and 20 percent in managerial, professional, associate professional and skilled trades occupations. However, for all other occupations, the gap is either very small (5% or less) or is negative (women's median wage is greater than men's) (WES, 2013).

Approximately 12% of all women in employment aged 16 and above work flexi-time (around 118,000), where they can choose, within limits, the times they start and finish work (LFS 2013 Apr-Jun). The majority of women on such arrangements work in the public sector (WES, 2013). However, one important question is about whether women who work part-time would prefer to work full-time. There is some evidence that during the UK recession there was a rise in underemployment (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010) with an increase in the proportion of workers who were working fewer hours than they would like, and an increase in the proportion of part-time work, possibly as a consequence of companies cutting labour hours (Lyonette et al., 2010 in: ONS, 2013).

Some researchers (e.g. Hakim, 1995, 1991) have argued that many women, not only those with childcare responsibilities "voluntarily" choose to work part-time, and challenged the claim that childcare was a central barrier to employment. However, any choice-based argument must address the fact that choices are made in a social and economic context (Ginn et al., 1996). Framing the gender wage gap question in terms of "discrimination" or "rational choice" obscures the issue of the feasibility of continuing to work while raising children in a given social context.

The LFS asks a particular question about reasons for not choosing to work full time. About a quarter of women who did not want a full-time job reported that the reason they worked part-time was because suitable care services for children were not available or affordable, while the equivalent figure for men was 8%. (LFS 2013 Apr-Jun, in: WES, 2013, 10).¹³ The Annual Population Survey 2012 showed that in Scotland, 21% of women who were classed as economically inactive responded that this was because they were looking after the family or the home, compared to 4% of men (WES, 2013, 15).

Occupational segregation

The UK labour market exhibits areas of high occupational gender segregation. Female-dominated occupations at the major group level include caring and leisure, administrative and secretarial, and sales and customer service occupations (SOC 2010 major groups 6, 4 and 7 respectively), while male-dominated occupations include managers and senior officials; process, plant and machine operatives; and skilled trades occupations (SOC 2010 major groups 1, 8 and 5 respectively) (ONS, 2013). The female-dominated occupations tend to be located at *lower-middle* skill levels (e.g. Olsen et al., 2010; Gallie, 1994). Moreover, there are large gender variations

within occupational groups. Even though the proportion of men and women in the professional and associate professional occupations is broadly similar, men and women tend to work in different areas of professional occupations (for example, the modal occupation for women was nursing (£16.61 per hour) and the modal occupation for men was programmers and software development professionals (£ 20.02 per hour) (ONS, 2013).

Occupational segregation can be viewed as an outcome of socialisation processes, where people's choices are influenced by the norms and values held in society (e.g. Fortin, 2005; Betz and O'Connell, 1989; Corcoran and Courant, 1987). Women working in predominantly male-dominated occupations and men working in predominantly female-dominated occupations may face increased incidence discrimination, or perceived discrimination or may need to redefine their gender identities (e.g. Wright, 2015; Farquar, 2007; Simpson, 2004). Evidence suggests that occupational segregation can start earlier in life than at the point of labour market entry. For example, female graduates were more likely to work in a slightly lower-skilled occupational group than men (ONS, 2013),¹⁴ but, these aggregate figures mask differences in subjects studied at university and more disaggregated degree results.

In the UK, the possibility to study some university subjects, such as mathematics, engineering and the natural sciences depends on the university applicant having studied a particular combination of A-level (or equivalent) subjects, usually mathematics and sciences, which are typically more male-dominated (DfE, 2015; Marszal, 2013; Vidal Rodeiro, 2007).¹⁵ The beginnings of occupational gender segregation can start in school (e.g. Macpherson, 2008; Payne, 2003), although research suggests that gender stereotyping for different occupations is not clearly demonstrated – possibly more relevant for boys than for girls (Whitehead, 1996). At schools, apprenticeships tend to be underplayed as a route into employment compared to higher education, and where they are advertised, aspects related to pay differentials for different apprenticeships are usually made explicit (Brinkley et al., 2013).

Apprenticeship new starts in the UK have been fairly evenly split in the UK (53% female and 47% male for 2013/14, FE data library, 2015), but this overlooks the variation in apprenticeship subject groups. Certain apprenticeships are particularly sex-segregated, for example, Scottish data for 23012/13 showed that childcare, hairdressing and barbering, and health and social care apprenticeships were the most female-dominated areas (over 80% female new starts); while construction, engineering, and freight logistics areas were the most male-dominated (94-98% male new starts) (WES, 2013). Apprenticeship wages generally reflect labour market wages, and so tend to be lower for the female-dominated service-based apprenticeships. Moreover, Scottish Modern Apprentices in construction, engineering, and manufacturing were also the most likely to report career progression, and were also the most male-dominated (SDS, 2013).

University subjects have a significant impact on post-graduation careers. Futuretrack (Purcell et al., 2013) data for 2009/10 university graduates in the UK showed that about 25% of female graduates had studied

¹² The Netherlands is a notable exception, with 50% of the workforce employed part-time (26% men, 77% women) (Eurostat, 2015) partly because part-time work is "embedded in mainstream employment" (Sandor, 2011, 35).

¹³ See the section on childcare for more information.

¹⁴ A higher proportion of female graduates were employed in lower skilled middle jobs such as teaching assistants, care workers, and administrative occupations (27% compared with 13% of male graduates), despite fairly equal performance in degree results (two thirds of female graduates achieving a 1st class or 2.1 degree class compared to just over half of male graduates) (ONS, 2013).

¹⁵ The only female-dominated science is Biology.

subjects allied to medicine, and biology, veterinary science, and agriculture and related subjects compared to about 11% of male graduates, while just under 25% of male graduates studied mathematical and computer sciences and engineering and technologies subjects, compared to just 3% of female graduates.¹⁶ Both of these subject groups have stronger vocational links to jobs than other, more gender balanced subject areas, such as business and administrative studies, mass communication and documentation, historical and philosophical studies, medicine and dentistry, and physical sciences subject areas. The role of the academic subject appears to be important in explaining some of the gender pay gap, as discussed in more detail below.

The pay gap – does it exist? Yes.

Aggregate estimates

Much has been written about the gender pay gap. Aggregate estimates of the gender pay gap using hourly median wages excluding overtime for full-time employees were 12.6% in 2007 (Leaker, 2008) and 9.4% in April 2014 (ONS, 2014),¹⁷ part of a gradual downward trend since 1997 (17.4%).¹⁸ For all employees (full- and part-time), the pay gap was higher, at 19.7% in 2013 (DCMS, 2014).¹⁹ Estimates using mean earnings also tend to be higher, because the mean measure is positively skewed by very high earners, who are much more likely to be men than women (DCMS, 2014; Perfect, 2011).

Factors associated with the pay gap

Lifecycle

Factors contributing to the gender pay gap are complex. The extent of the gender pay gap varies depending on different areas of the labour market and different personal circumstances. Age is an important factor. It has been well-documented that the gender pay gap is low for those aged between 16–29 and increases with age (e.g. Close the Gap, 2014; Perfect, 2011; Leaker, 2008). For example, looking at the top 10% of earners by age groups, the proportion of men and women is fairly equal between the ages of 16–24 and 25–29, but falls sharply to 38% for 20–25 year olds, continuing to fall thereafter (ONS, 2013). The fall in the proportion of women among the top 10% of earners coincides with childbirth in late 20s, but the LFS does not collect data on the factors that may be responsible for this occurrence.

¹⁶ Mathematical and computer sciences and engineering and technologies subjects were generally male-dominated with at least 80% men, and education was the most female-dominated, with over 80% women having studied these subject groups. Languages and linguistics and classics subjects were also fairly female-dominated, while architecture, building and planning subjects were fairly male-dominated, but these subject areas accounted for a relatively small proportion of graduates.

¹⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2014-provisional-results/stb-ashe-statistical-bulletin-2014.html>

¹⁸ The steep decline in the gender pay gap between 2002 and 2005 was possibly attributed to the effects of the minimum wage legislation in 1999 on the low-wage work in the labour market (New JNCHES, 2011, ASHE data).

¹⁹ ONS tends to use the ASHE (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to measure the gender pay gap and other salary statistics, however as the ASHE is based on PAYE tax returns it excludes people in self-employment. These data can be found in the LFS, which gives fairly similar salary statistics to ASHE (see Leaker, 2008) and tends to be used by non-government researchers.

Occupational choice

Occupational segregation, women self-selecting into lower paying jobs or into part-time work, is another main explanatory factor (e.g. New JNCHES, 2011; Chevalier, 2007). Part-time work tends to be more prevalent in lower paid jobs such as catering, caring, retail²⁰ and in the low-skill occupations in any industry sector (Woodroffe, 2009; Manning and Petrongolo, 2005). However this raises the question of why female-dominated occupations tend to have, on average, lower wages, than comparable male-dominated occupations. Some literature argues that the social value placed on skills in female-dominated occupations such as catering, caring and clerical work, has historically been low by equating these skills to innate abilities specific to women (Anderson et al., 2001 in: WWC, 2006). Arguably, these occupations may require lower skills and training which justifies lower salaries, while male-dominated occupations may be carried out in unpleasant working conditions, which justify higher salaries to compensate or to attract workers (e.g. Shackleton, 2008).²¹ However, skill is partly a social construct (e.g. Green, 2013) and the unpleasantness of working conditions is subjective, moreover, certain unpleasant characteristics are compensated for while others are not.²²

Career interruptions

Human capital theory (Becker, 1985) suggests that women will rationally make lower investments in human capital as they anticipate having to take time off work to raise children (in: Schulze, 2015). However, more women than men go on to complete higher education and a higher proportion of women achieve 1st or 2.1 degree class results than men, although gender differences in the types of subjects studied is likely to affect the jobs that men and women enter after graduation.

A review of the gender pay gap by the UK Government Equalities Office (Olsen et al., 2010a, 2010b) found that the main drivers behind the gender pay gap were the effects of interruptions to employment and the lack of “good” part-time work. However, the wage difference in part-time work disappeared when work histories were accounted for. In particular, Chevalier (2007, see below) found that not only interruptions to employment, but expectations of interruptions to employment influenced the pay gap for early career graduates (see also the section on childcare).

Discrimination or omitted variables?

Discrimination in the labour market is another possibility (e.g. Olsen et al., 2010a, 2010b; Bayard et al., 2003),

²⁰ Predominantly female-dominated occupations, as discussed in the section on occupational segregation.

²¹ Using EU-wide evidence, Fagan and Burchell (2002) reported that men were more likely to be exposed to material and physical hazards, and to lifting heavy loads than women, largely because of the prevalence of men in manual jobs, but there were few gender differences in exposure to poor ergonomic conditions or repetitive tasks.

²² However, Fagan and Burchell (2002) noted that the ESWC did not contain questions on “risks of contact with other peoples’ blood, bodily fluids and infections that many care workers in health and education are exposed to” (2002, 53) which can underestimate occupational risks facing women.

where men and women with similar characteristics receive different rewards in the labour market.²³ However, data on discrimination is difficult to obtain. Survey data tends to be scarce, while interview data tend to focus on small numbers of respondents and can be difficult to generalise and verify (see, for example, Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) in the section on Childcare). The size of the pay gap is not necessarily related to the incidence of discrimination, as it can take place in a variety of ways. For example, if laws prevent firms from paying women less than men, a discriminating firm may hire fewer women than men while paying the same wage (Shackleton, 2008). The following section focuses on pay-based discrimination.

In his review of the gender wage gap, Shackleton highlighted the tendency to overestimate the unexplained part of the gender pay gap (usually interpreted to be discrimination) by omitting relevant variables from economic models. When additional variables are included, much of the pay gap disappears. For example, Machin and Puhani (2003) found that controlling for degree subject explained between 8–20% of the overall male/female gender pay gap, and between 24–30% of gender wage gap regression decomposition. Similarly, Chevallier's (2007) analysis of over 5000 university graduates graduating in 1995 over their early careers (3.5 years after graduation in full-time employment) systematically added groups of control variables to the basic gender pay gap model specification to control for subject of undergraduate degree, workplace characteristics, and individual attitudes and expectations. The full model explained 84% of the gender wage gap and found that childcare expectations were the main driver for the gap.²⁴ The implications were that family friendly policies allowing women to have more options regarding childcare could alleviate a large part of the pay gap.

Analysis of later UK graduate cohorts also corroborated the gender pay gap in early careers. Purcell et al. (2013) reported that the modal earnings category was £21,000–£23,999 for women, compared with £24,000–£26,999 for men (unadjusted). Having studied at a high-tariff requirement institution and having done medicine and related subjects were also associated with higher starting salaries. There was almost no gender difference for graduates from engineering and technologies subjects, nor from linguistics and classics subjects, but a high gender difference in starting salaries for law graduates (this may reflect the heterogeneity of degree subjects classed under "law"). A multivariate analysis on both Futuretrack (class of 2009/10) and Class of '99 pooled data showed that a 5% gap was apparent: the coefficient on being male on the effects on the natural log of earnings was 0.051 (t-statistic=0.007) when controlling for subject studied, degree class, employment contract, hours worked, age, gender composition at workplace, industry sector, and personal and educational characteristics (Purcell et al., 2013, Appendix Table A5.1, 207–9).

²³ Chzhen and Mumford (2011) carried out a quantile regression decomposition on log hourly wages using BHPS 2005 data. They controlled for men's and women's self-selection in the labour market (non-random probability that they will work full-time) through work experience, age, education, being married, dependent children, positive attitudes to working mothers, firm size, private sector and occupational category. They found that the gender log wage gap *corrected for self-selection* was larger than the unadjusted gap, and was predominantly related to women receiving lower rewards for their characteristics than men. However, the regressions did not control for degree subject or industry sector, which are also likely to influence the size of the pay gap.

²⁴ Chevallier's findings showed that "[j]ob values and life expectations are important components of the gender wage gap, accounting, respectively, for 21% and 12% of the explained gap, while subject of study and job characteristics represent another 25% each" (2007, 821). Female graduates expecting to take a career break to raise children were more likely to be found in a poorer job match and less willing to change employer (possibly to show commitment to the employer in the hope that the employer will accommodate future work organisation to be compatible with childrearing) (Chevallier, 2007).

Is there any evidence for discrimination?

Even when controlling for childrearing preferences and personal values as well as other relevant differences, 16% of the gender pay gap remained unexplained (Chevallier, 2007). Is the difference down to discrimination? Discrimination in the labour market has been theorised in two main ways: (1) as employer preferences favouring certain groups of employees over others (Becker, 1971); or (2) as "statistical" discrimination, based on differences between means or between variances of groups. In the mean case, risk-averse employers make inferences about an individual based on group stereotypes in the absence of information about the individual's characteristics (e.g. Arrow, 1972; Phelps, 1972). In the variance case, even if mean productivities of groups are the same, rational employers may discount the group with the higher variance in productivity (e.g. Aigner and Cain, 1977).

Rational discounting

There is a body of research that suggests that initial difference between men's and women's starting salaries may account for differences over time, even though women may have similar or better prospects in terms of promotions and pay increases compared to men (e.g. Gerhart and Milkovich, 1989; Megdal and Ransom 1985; very little UK-level data is available). If discrimination does occur in terms of wages it may take place at time of entry to the firm using the signalling framework (Gerhart, 1990).²⁵ When the employee has been with an employer for some time, the employer can observe "actual" performance. In circumstances where employers are resorting to stereotypes or beliefs about women,

a woman who knows her productivity is being underestimated may temporarily accept a lower salary than a comparable man in order to obtain the opportunity to undergo a trial work period and demonstrate her true productivity. Based on this new and perhaps more directly job-relevant information, salaries for such women may rise to correspond to revised productivity judgments. (Aigner and Cain (1977) in: Gerhart (1990:420))

Gerhart (1990) used firm-level data to look at salary differentials at time of hiring and at time of study between men and women in one large US firm, controlling for college major, job title, and tenure at the company. The findings suggested that women's lower "current" salaries were due to their lower starting salaries rather than due to discrimination when in work. In particular, for graduates, the degree subject was one of the main reasons behind men's higher starting salary accounting for over 40% of the difference (in particular, mechanical and electrical engineering subjects). Although the findings have limited generalizability because the data came from one large firm, Gerhart argued that the firm selected was fairly typical of other similar large firms.

²⁵ Because of asymmetric information employers cannot observe actual abilities of the workers and must rely on signals, such as qualifications, about their ability.

More recent research has re-examined this issue, and some are summarised below. The majority of such studies were conducted in the US. Unfortunately, comparable studies for the UK labour market hardly exist.

Carter and Silva (2010) used US evidence to look at whether, after completing an MBA, women earned the same amount as men and whether they faced similar earnings growth trajectories when matched for similar characteristics. The authors found that, even controlling for ambition and for children, women faced a penalty right from the first job. Men were more likely to start their careers at higher levels than women. The authors examined whether women were more likely to be treated differently by their bosses. The findings showed that women were much more likely to change work because of poor relations with their managers. The implications are that early career experiences matter for the later career trajectory.

Crothers et al. (2010) investigated the gender pay gap in the US school psychology occupation, a female-dominated profession. The authors surveyed school psychology practitioners and university instructors of school psychology practitioners (total N=510). They found that female practitioners and instructors earned less than male practitioners and instructors respectively when controlling for degree attainment and years of experience.

Sterling and Fernandez (2014) explored whether periods of trial employment such as internships would provide employers with information about prospective employees, thus reducing the need to use stereotypes when setting initial wages. The authors found that for women in professional occupations in the US there was a wage discount on job entry, however, that this discount disappeared when employers conduct trial employment periods.

Equal opportunities policies

The UK introduced the Equal Pay Act 1970, which came into force at the end of 1975, prohibited discrimination between men and women in terms of pay and employment conditions. Anti-discrimination legislation was extended to other aspects of employment by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. These Acts have been largely superseded by the Equality Act 2010, which brought together the different aspects of British anti-discrimination law relating to different characteristics, such as religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

There is little evidence that equal opportunities policies have discernible outcomes. According to the Workplace Employment Relations Survey²⁶ 2004 data, most employees were in workplaces covered by equal opportunities policies (Walsh, 2007). However, research about the relationship between such policies and outcomes has been limited and inconclusive. For example, positive associations between equal opportunities policies and employee productivity (Perotin and Robinson, 2000 in: Walsh, 2007), and between racial diversity

²⁶ The Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) contains information about the workplace from managers', employees', and employee representative perspectives. See <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/surveys/wers.aspx> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/workplace-employment-relations-study-wers> for more information.

and firm performance (Richard, 2000 in: Walsh, 2007) have been documented. However, research looking at whether workplace monitoring and pay review policies affected the gender pay gap found that the effect of such policies was inconclusive, as both men and women were paid higher wages at organisations implementing those policies than in those that did not (Davies and Welpton, 2006).

Even when opportunities are equal in law, gender stereotyping can operate in practice. Rutherford (2011) pointed out that equal opportunities policies assume that work organisation is neutral, and that by removing legal obstacles, women would be treated the same as men. However, Rutherford argued that this omitted the intrinsic political organisation of work, and in so doing was “giving women an equal chance under the men’s rules” (2011, 37). Salary negotiations provide an interesting example. Influential research findings suggested that men are more likely to negotiate for higher wages than women and more likely to be more successful in negotiating (e.g. “women don’t ask” – Babcock and Laschever, 2009). However, when women did negotiate for higher salaries, they were often met with hostility for transgressing the female gender stereotype (e.g. Linn, 2014; Babcock and Laschever, 2009). In light of these findings, current advice for women suggests that women negotiate for higher salaries in a more “feminine” way, such as using “relational accounts” (e.g. Bowles, 2014; Bowles and Babcock, 2012).

Women’s entrepreneurship

UK female entrepreneurs are an “under-utilised economic resource” (Burt, 2015, 6). Female entrepreneurs form a diverse group, with different types of businesses, strategies and aspirations. However, as the brief review points out below, there are certain aspects of entrepreneurship, such as business size, area of industry, and access to particular resources, which are more prevalent among female entrepreneurs.

Self-employment vs. entrepreneurship

Self-employment should be conceptually distinguished from entrepreneurship. Self-employed people may or may not be entrepreneurs. Some of the literature attempting to define entrepreneurs have focused on personality traits (“Who is an entrepreneur?” e.g. Brockhuas and Horwitz, 1985) while others have undertaken a more behavioural approach (“How does an organisation come into existence?”, i.e. what do entrepreneurs do?, e.g. Gartner, 1988).

Although there is a degree of overlap between entrepreneurs, small-business owners, freelancers etc., definitions of entrepreneurial ventures frequently mention differences the emphasis on growth aspirations of the business and innovation / creativity. For example, most *small business owners* reproduce existing business (practices, products, etc.) while *entrepreneurs* are creating a “new successful enterprise based on a novel product or service and/or a novel organisational means of producing a good or providing a service and/or the novel marketing and distribution of goods and services.” (Curran, 1986, 17 – i.e. Schumpeterian creative destruction). However, despite this distinction, most statistics conflate self-employment with entrepreneurship.

UK entrepreneurship in a European context

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2012), the total entrepreneurial activity rate (TEA

for women aged 16–64 was around 6%, just above the 5% average for developed European countries. The corresponding male TEA for developed European countries was 9%. The UK female TEA increased from about 3.5% in 2005/06 to almost 6% in 2011/12. About two thirds of TEA were carried out by those who had at least a post-secondary degree (same proportion for men and women), however the GEM did not distinguish by degree subject or undergraduate/postgraduate qualifications.

Interestingly, the perceptions between male and female entrepreneurs varied. Male entrepreneurs in the UK were more likely to see good opportunities, have capabilities to start a business, and to personally know an entrepreneur than female entrepreneurs. In contrast, a higher proportion of female entrepreneurs had a fear of failure (40% compared to 33%). These differences were broadly replicated across developed European countries as a whole. Female entrepreneurs were also slightly more likely to start their business out of necessity than male entrepreneurs (24% of female TEA compared to 15% of male TEA), and slightly less likely to do so out of opportunity (74% of female TEA compared to 82% of male TEA). These differences were greater for the UK than for developed Europe as a whole. Lastly, both new and established female business owners were more likely to have no employees compared to new and established male business owners in the UK, with UK differences wider than for developed Europe as a whole.

Types of entrepreneurship

Just under one-third of those in self-employment are women, however women have accounted for 80% of the new self-employed between the 2008 recession and 2011 (Prowess, 2015), and the growth of women in self-employment between 2009 and 2014 was more than double that of men (36% compared to 15%). This difference may be partly to do with the negative effects of the economic crisis on work in male-dominated skilled-trades areas such as construction, compared to female-dominated work in the service sector (ONS, 2014).²⁷ Nineteen percent of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) were women-led²⁸ in 2012, and 23% were led by an equal mix of men and women. The women-led SMEs tended to be smaller than average, consistent with other UK and international evidence (GEM, 2012; OECD, 2012; WETF, 2009).

Self-employed women earned less than men – in the OECD the gap between the median incomes of men and women is between 30 to 40% (OECD, 2012). Part of this difference could be to do with the different types of businesses that men and women were more or less likely to head, such as business size and type of industry.

Around half of female TEA rates in developed European countries took place in consumer services (compared to a third of male TEA) and a quarter – in business services (compared to a third of male TEA) (GEM, 2012). In the UK, the top three occupations for self-employed women were cleaners and domestics, child minders and related occupations, and hairdressers and barbers (ONS, 2014).

²⁷ Although this may be partly out of necessity than out of opportunity; see Storey (1982) and Binks and Jennings (1986), both in: Curran (1986) on the association between self-employment and economic recession.

²⁸ Controlled by a single woman or had a management team with a majority of women.

Causer and Park (2009) used LFS data on self-employment as a proxy for business ownership to analyse the role of women in business. Among the reasons cited for starting a business, men and women tended to give similar answers. However, women were almost five times as likely as men to report that they wanted to become self-employed for family reasons, while men were almost twice as likely to report that they wanted to become self-employed to make more money (Causer and Park, 2009).

According to 2005 Federation of Small Business (FSB) statistics just over one third of all businesses were home-based, however, only 14% of home-based businesses were entirely owned by one or more women, a fairly low proportion, although higher compared to other types of SMEs (10%) (Mason et al., 2008). Setting up a home-based business has been sometimes highlighted as a way of combining domestic responsibilities with flexible working arrangements (e.g. Walker and Webster, 2004). However, research using GEM data for the UK found that home-based entrepreneurial activity was disproportionately taken up by women with poor levels of entrepreneurial resources, and was more likely to operate on a part-time basis, generally associated with slower growth and no or few employees (Thompson et al., 2010). The authors cautioned that “starting a business from the home can offer opportunities for women to get on the first ladder of entrepreneurial activity but if not properly supported could have a detrimental impact on female self-employment” (2010, 235).

Business performance

Whether differences in male and female management styles exist has been a hotly contested area of investigation. A comprehensive review by Eagly and Johnson (1990) showed that there were some “reliable” gender differences, in particular that women tended to be more participative and democratic in their leadership styles or emphasise their interpersonal and relational skills (see also Patel, 2013; Buttner, 2001; Connell, 2000; Rosener, 1995). There has also been some evidence that women in male-dominated environments are pressured into adopting “masculine” management styles (Gardiner and Tiggeman, 1999). However, other research has found no gender differences to exist (e.g. Brownell, 1994; Wajcman, 1999).

Access to resources

According to the SME Access to Finance Survey 2012, a similar proportion of female led-firms sought finance as male-led firms between 2009 and 2012 (44% compared to 45%). Similarly, there were few gender differences in terms of accessing different types of finance (WETF, 2009).²⁹ Despite this, female entrepreneurs in the UK were slightly more likely to perceive barriers to access to finance (Kwong et al., 2012; Roper and Scott, 2009). The WETF study stated that “[t]here is no evidence of discriminatory financing but there is evidence of lack of coherence in data and definitions that cloud the issues around women’s access to finance” (2009, 14).

Another important issue is access to networks and mentors. WETF (2009) found that both men and women business founders used a variety of sources of advice, but those ranked the most useful were mentor/coach,

²⁹ Some differences existed: for example, women were seeking lower amounts of finance compared to men (women’s median of £5,000 compared to the men’s median of £17,000) (WETF, 2009, 9). This may be related to the higher likelihood of male-led businesses being larger, on average.

another entrepreneur, and government support agencies such as Business Link. However, men were slightly more likely than women to have used those resources (no significant difference for mentor/coach, another entrepreneur). In contrast, women were more likely to use professional sources of advice (such as bank, legal and accounting) than men and were more likely than men to find these sources of advice useful (WETF, 2009).

According to the Small Business Survey 2012 (BIS, 2013), respondents (not necessarily business owners) who did use mentors did so mostly for advice about business strategy, and least so for access to finance. Women were slightly more likely to have used mentors and to have been interested in using mentors than men (9% and 23% of women, compared to 5% and 20% of men). SMEs using mentors were associated with being more aware of alternative sources of finance, had higher employment, turnover, and growth than those that did not (WES, 2013).

Evidence about the growth of women-run businesses compared to those run by men is mixed. Some research has cited evidence of women-run businesses being more likely to have short-term planning horizons (Mitchellmore and Rowley, 2013 – however this research paper surveyed female entrepreneurs only). Other research (e.g. Hart et al., 2010) found that gender itself did not have a direct effect on the likelihood of high business growth, but that there was some evidence of an indirect effect between gender and start-up capital (consistent with WETF (2009) findings that female-led businesses tended to seek lower median levels of finance than male-led business). There may also be more significant differences between different aspects of entrepreneurial activity but not for actual firm performance (Keppler and Shane, 2007 in: Hart et al., 2010). Indeed, the Goldman Sachs 10 000 Small Businesses Programme found no evidence that gender was significant for differences in growth among participating small business owners (Goldman Sachs, 2014).

Sex, power and the media

While women comprise half of the population and more than half of HE graduates, they remain a minority in senior positions in many areas. Under-representation of women in positions of power and influence can underplay their perspectives from decision making in economy and society (EC, 2010).

The Sex and Power reports analyse women's participation in areas of public life, defined as "areas which either raise or spend public money (e.g. health), which make fundamental decisions about individual lives (e.g. the courts) or which influence or affect our national culture (e.g. the media)" (Sex and Power, 2013, 5). In the UK parliament, Labour had the highest proportion of female MPs (one third) compared to the other major parties (16% Conservative and 13% Liberal Democrats, overall House of Commons average of 23%). Compared to the EU, the UK was ranked 18 out of 28, while the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain were among the top ranked with women's representation in parliament at 35% or above.

Representations in the media are important because they affect the ways in which people construct their identities:

If, through an unequal distribution of narrative resources, the materials from which some people must build their account of themselves are not theirs to adapt or control, then this represents a deep denial of voice, a deep form of oppression (Couldry, 2010 in: GMMP, 2010).

Media also shares a two-way relationship with gender stereotypes, which in turn can have effects on women's (and men's) career decisions. Regarding women in the media, only one out of 19 national newspaper editors and one out of ten current affairs and political magazine editors were female, however there was a majority of female editors in magazines largely targeted at women (Sex and Power, 2014). The Fourth Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP UK, 2010) found that, although the visibility of female news producers and subjects has increased since 1995, there was a relatively stable ratio of one woman to three men.³⁰ Similar proportions were found in the US (WMC, 2014). Radio and TV anchors/announcers were relatively evenly split, but only about one third of radio and TV reporters, and newspaper story authors were women (GMMP UK, 2010; GMMP 2010).

Media representation of entrepreneurship can influence attitudes to entrepreneurship and affect people's intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Levie et al., 2010). However, narratives of "entrepreneur" tend to be male-orientated (e.g. Hamilton, 2013; Nicholson and Anderson, 2005). For example, among newspaper coverage of entrepreneurship in 1989 and in 2000, only 13 female entrepreneurs were mentioned out of 480 articles, 12 of whom were defined in terms of their relationships or sexuality, whereas male entrepreneurs were defined in active terms such as "creator, seducer, aggressor, charmer, savior or pursuer" (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005, 163). Women's media representations of female entrepreneurs have tended to emphasise *women* entrepreneurs as focused on domestic activities and/or engaging with typically "female" pursuits (Eikhof and Summers, 2013). One future direction may be to strive towards more diverse representations of different types of entrepreneurial activity among men and women in the media.

Childcare

"Childcare" typically includes all types of early childhood education and care provided by a registered childcare professional, approved childcare professional and through informal arrangements. The Third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) report³¹ showed that, in the EU-27, the proportion of men and women who said that they were involved in caring for children or grandchildren at least once a week was 21% and 33% respectively, but of those in paid employment who were engaged in these tasks at least once a week, men spent 18 hours on childcare while women spent 28. In the UK, men spent on average 26 hours per week caring for children, while women spent 47 hours.

Results from the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study for parents of 10 month old children in 2005/06 (birth cohort 1 (BC1)) and in 2010/11 (birth cohort 2 (BC2)), showed that 79% of those using childcare in BC2 were using at least one informal arrangement and 39% were using at least one formal arrangement. Compared with BC1, use of any informal provision increased from 75%, whereas use of any formal provision has remained static. Those who were using formal childcare arrangements in BC2 were more likely to be using them in combination with an informal provider. On average, families using childcare did so for 22 hours per week in BC2, almost identical to the corresponding figure of 21 hours for BC1.

³⁰ The GMMP country monitors were allocated specific number of newspapers, and radio and television newscasts to monitor based on the national media density (GMMP UK, 2010, 16). For more information see: <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp>

³¹ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/64/en/1/EF1264EN.pdf>

The average weekly cost of childcare for parents with 10 month old children was £88. Comparing with BC1 data indicated that in real terms, there has been an average increase in childcare costs for a 10 month old child of £12 per week, or approximately £624 per year (Bradshaw, 2013).

Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey data from 2009/10 suggested that the mean length of maternity leave taken by women was 39 weeks in 2008 (Chanfreau et al., 2011). Less than half of mothers used the remaining period of unpaid leave. The same survey found that 91% of fathers took some time off around their baby's birth, though not all of these took statutory paternity leave. However, there were no available statistics for take up of statutory parental leave or additional paternity leave.

The timing of having children and the decision to have children are often related to career prospects. Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) conducted matched interviews with female senior managers in Finland and in Scotland about their experiences of ageism at different life-stages. In the interview narratives the authors found evidence of a trade-off for younger women between "young talent" and maternity leave "threat". Older women related encounters of ageism at the workplace, such as young women's suggestions not being taken seriously, or older women being replaced by younger workers. Viitanen (2014) looked at the effects of children on the wages of women sampled from the longitudinal National Child Development Study (NCDS). The results confirmed the negative effect of children on wages, however, the impact varies over the lifecycle. For instance, the long-term effect on wages is greater the younger the mother: those who became mothers before 23 had 15.5–18.4 % lower wages ten years later and 8–9 % lower wages twenty years later, compared to women who had not become mothers by 23, while there were no long-term wage effects for those who became mothers between 33 and 42 (Viitanen, 2014:273).

Gender role attitudes may change after the birth of a child. Schober and Scott (2012) investigated how these changes relate to women's paid work and the type of childcare used. Their results suggested that less traditional attitudes among women and men (and more sharing of childcare responsibilities) were more likely to occur in couples where women's labour market participation after childbirth and their take-up of formal childcare contradicted their traditional prenatal gender role attitudes. Schober (2013) also found that higher absolute wages and more egalitarian attitudes of women prior to childbirth mitigated the post-childbirth shift towards a more traditional division of labour.

Among some of the wider-reaching reasons for the postponement of first births in Western societies, Mills et al. (2011) highlighted the rise of effective contraception, increases in women's education and labour market participation, value changes, housing conditions, economic uncertainty and the absence of supportive family policies as the central reasons behind the trend. The authors also discussed whether direct or indirect cash-transfers and work-life balance policies can be effective in mitigating birth postponement decisions. The transfers had mixed results, partly explained by the different cultural contexts of Western societies in their attitudes towards families, women and employment.

The social and cultural context should not be underestimated in comparative policy analyses. When looking at parental childcare and labour market organisation, it is not just the institutional effects which matter, but also the cultural differences (e.g. Sayer and Gornick, 2012; Craig and Mullan, 2011). Aspects of work organisation

such as flexible working arrangements can help mitigate the impact of child-caring, and other care associated responsibilities, on women's and men's careers (see also the section on unpaid work below). For example, Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) contrasted the relatively new flexible working arrangements in the UK with relatively established and more varied arrangements in Finland.³² However, some research has argued that flexible working arrangements in the UK have coincided with an intensification of work (e.g. Kelliher and Anderson, 2010).

Unpaid work

Measuring unpaid work

Unpaid work can include a variety of work, including domestic and care work, unpaid labour market work and voluntary work. UN estimates suggest that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10 and 39% of GDP (based on Budlender, 2008).³³ However, unpaid work is generally unrecognised and under-valued by policy-makers and legislators.

The most commonly used way of measuring the extent of unpaid work is collecting time-use information, about how much time men and women spend per day, week or month carrying out activities that constitute the categories of unpaid work. However, other measures, such as private spending on dependents as a proportion of total spending have also been proposed, as well as other ways of working with time-use or hours of care data to construct care work indices (Folbre, 2006).

Current situation in the UK

Gender aspects of unpaid work (such as housework, cooking, and childcare), are also covered in Eurofound's recently published Third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS).³⁴ The EQLS asked people how often they were involved in these activities outside of paid work. The differences between men and women were striking, especially with regard to housework and, to a lesser extent, childcare: twice as many women as men (78% vs. 39%) did cooking or housework every day in the EU-27. Of those in paid employment who engaged in these tasks at least once a week, men in the UK spent on average 26 hours per week caring for children, while women spent 47 hours, compared to the EU-27 average of 18 and 28 hours respectively. The average time spent on cooking and housework by in the UK by men and women in paid employment was 9 and 14 hours, the same as the EU average.

The Scottish Government report *Caring in Scotland: Analysis of existing data sources on unpaid carers in Scotland* (Stewart and Patterson, 2010) analysed the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2007/08. It found that 63% of women, compared to 37% of men, provided care to someone not living with them. Looking at gender by age, across almost all age groups, women were more likely than men to be carers. The exception was for the 0–18 age group, where a higher proportion of men than women were carers (Stewart and Patterson, 2010).

³² However, the interviews with female senior managers in both countries suggested that there was more similarity than difference in terms of experiencing age-related discrimination, despite different institutional arrangements (Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012).

³³ See also: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/UnpaidWork.aspx>

³⁴ See also: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/gender/iwd2013.htm>

Caring in Scotland provided further detail from its analysis of 2001 Census data on unpaid care work within the respondents' households. It found that across all age groups women were more likely than men to be carers, and that the gender balance is more pronounced for young carers (0-15) and carers aged 85 and over. For male carers, the number of hours caring increased with age, although this pattern was not as obvious or acute as for female carers. However, it was younger and middle-aged female carers who were more likely than other age groups to be providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care each week (SG, 2013).

Dex's (2009) review of paid and unpaid work highlighted that there is some evidence of convergence towards the proportion of unpaid work done by men and women. The total amount of work done (paid and unpaid) by men and women was almost equal (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Harkness, 2008), and claims of the "double burden" carried by women who are both employed and do the larger share of unpaid work were often not supported for the majority of women (Sullivan and Gershuny, 2000). Where women appear to do more of unpaid work hours than men, the discrepancy was often due to the types of tasks and work items were included in the calculations: when gardening and maintenance/odd jobs were included, the gap narrowed substantially (Gershuny, 2000). Gershuny described this combination of changes in women's and men's paid work and domestic work times as movements towards a convergence in time spent on the different types of work by men and women which was apparent in a large number of countries.

However, the conversion thesis is not so straight-forward. In other studies, Gershuny also pointed out that the type of unpaid work done by men and women was very different, with women more likely to engage in routine domestic work and caring, while men were more likely to contribute to non-routine domestic work (Kan et al., 2011). Other research has found that although gender differences have diminished over time, they have continued to persist. For example, Sayer (2005) used nationally representative time use data from 1965, 1975, and 1998, and found that although gender differences in paid and unpaid work have narrowed, women continued to do more unpaid and less paid work than men (the time use data included "male" housework tasks such as outdoor chores and repairs).

Quotas for women on corporate boards

The possibility of mandatory EU-wide quotas for women on boards has been recently discussed in policy, media and academic research. Bottom-up measures to increase women's representation have been raised as alternatives to enforced quotas. Women tend to be underrepresented on corporate boards in most countries (see Figure 3). In 2003, Norway passed a law for 40% gender quotas on boards of public limited companies. The quotas were initially voluntary and did not achieve much progress (Sweigart, 2012). From 2008, they became mandatory, with non-compliant companies facing dissolution. By 2009, the target had been achieved. Prior to the enforced quotas, women made up less than 10% of seats on Norwegian corporate boards.³⁵

Evaluations of the Norwegian quota law have been mixed. On the one hand, mandatory, rather than voluntary quotas were the key driver for change in the representation of women on corporate boards (Dowling, 2010). On the other hand, so far the quota law does not appear to have affected the representation of women among senior

³⁵ In private enterprises (public limited companies) women occupied 6% of all board seats, while state-owned companies had between 33% and 42% female board representation (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2003/06/feature/NO0306106F.htm>); there had been a 40% quota in all public committees since 1985 (http://www.europeanpwn.net/index.php?article_id=150).

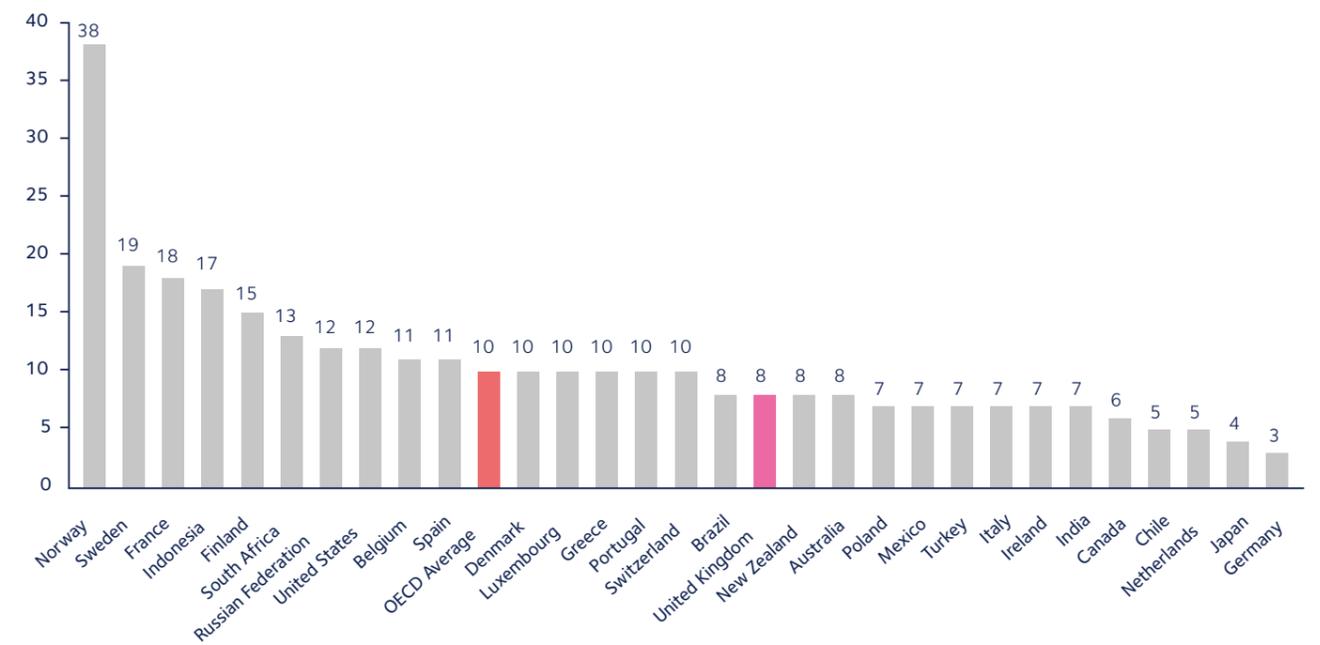
management (High Pay Centre, 2012). In addition, as only a short time has elapsed since the introduction of the law, the long-term effects remain difficult to predict.

Current situation in the UK

According to 2009 OECD data, Norway had the highest proportion of women on corporate boards in listed companies, at almost 40% thanks to its quota law, double that of Sweden and France at just under 20%. The proportion of women on boards in the UK was below the OECD average (8% and 10% respectively). Germany had the lowest proportion of women on corporate boards, at just 3%.³⁶

Despite the complications in evaluating the Norwegian quota law, it has been widely acclaimed as a successful government intervention to improve the representation of women on boards and to increase board diversity (Patel, 2013; Storvik and Teigen, 2010). In the UK in 2011, the Davies Review recommended a voluntary quota, aiming to increase female representation on boards to 25% by 2015, double the proportion in 2011, but not ruling out possible future government intervention if progress is slow (Davies, 2011). It looks like the target for 2015 has been narrowly missed, with the proportion of women on the boards of UK's largest listed groups just below target at 23.5% at the start of March 2015 (Smith, 2015).

Figure 3: Share of women on boards in listed companies



Source: OECD Gender Data Browser, 2009 data only. The y-axis measures the percentage of women on corporate boards.

³⁶ On March 06 2015, Germany passed legislation which requires large companies to allocate 30% of non-executive board seats to women (Reuters in Berlin, 2015).

Tokenism

Quota opponents have argued that mandatory quotas will lead to qualified men being passed over for less well-qualified women in board appointments, and that the process will not be meritocratic. Counter-arguments have highlighted that board appointments are seldom purely meritocratic, often based on informal networks with a lack of transparency around the selection processes (Davies, 2011), and that newly appointed female directors are at least as well qualified as men. For instance, a study of FTSE 100 new female directors found that they were more likely to have MBA degrees and international experience compared to new male directors, although they were in general younger (Singh, Terjesen and Vinnicombe, 2008).

Other anti-quota arguments have highlighted that women appointed to boards through quotas would be viewed as tokens and their position would be undermined. Research has found that while just one woman on a corporate board may be viewed as a token, she is nonetheless able to learn the board dynamics and power relations and become influential in decision making (Huse and Solberg, 2006). Other research suggests that tokenism becomes less of an issue when there is more than one director, in particular, the presence of women on boards becomes normalised when there are three or more women board members (Torchia et al., 2011; Erkut et al., 2008). Women's ability to make a contribution to the board may be attributable to their different leadership styles (Matsa and Miller, 2012). The presence of women on corporate boards seems to increase board effectiveness through reducing the level of conflict and ensuring high quality of board development activities (Nielsen and Huse, 2010).

Corporate governance and financial performance

Studies looking into the relationship between the ratio of women on corporate boards and company financial performance have found mixed results, with positive, negative and no association, although more recent studies have tended to find positive associations, while other studies have found that diversity overall rather than gender diversity per se has a positive impact on financial performance (e.g. Erhard et al., 2003; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2001; Burke, 2000; Shrader et al., 1997).

However, most studies miss out corporate governance and board effectiveness – the processes by which board composition affects company performance. Studies looking at the gender composition of boards and corporate governance have found that men and women have different leadership styles, and that the presence of women on corporate boards can reduce conflict and increase board development activities, such as strategic planning, evaluation, benchmarking etc. (Nielsen and Huse, 2010).

Most studies report on correlations between financial performance and the proportions of female board members, but do not conclusively establish causation. Among studies which establish causation, findings remain mixed – one study found that women on boards do increase monitoring, which has a positive impact on financial performance when shareholders are weak, but a negative impact when shareholders are strong, which suggests it is the link between corporate governance and performance that is more important than the gender ratio itself (Adams and Ferreira, 2008).

Overall, it appears to be too early to identify the impact of board diversity in terms of gender on firm financial performance. There is more robust evidence that increasing female representation on boards decreases board conflict, increases governance and reduces risk-taking behaviour. However, the mechanism by which corporate governance is related to financial performance is complicated, and more time and further research are needed. Doubts about the qualifications of female board members appointed through quotas on balance remain unfounded.

Main issues facing women in the UK

This brief literature review has attempted to summarise some of the main issues affecting women's empowerment in the UK. The UN's seven Women's Empowerment Principles set out at the start of the review are listed below:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

This review has shown that one of the most pressing issues remains access to childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements, for both men and women. Although men have taken up more childcare and other care responsibilities, it is particularly having children which affects women's career choices and impacts financial rewards: women face interruptions to their careers and the aggregate gender pay gap starts to increase for people aged 30 and older.

However, part-time employment or self-employment in low-skilled, low-pay sectors in the economy is not the solution. Workplaces could make more use of different flexible working policies and help mainstream rather than marginalise take-up of such policy provision. However, evidence suggests that gender role perceptions continue to affect women's and men's progress at work, even in the presence of equal opportunities policies. Initiatives such as shared parental leave or challenging gender stereotypes in the media could contribute towards reshaping perceptions about gender roles, and thus expand the options available to men and women at work and home.

Given that empowerment is usually defined as increasing people's abilities to make strategic life choices, research should look at the factors facing women's and men's decision making processes at different points in life. More research about women's empowerment in a country like the UK should take into account its institutional context and the extent to which women's choices are shaped by social and institutional factors, such as gender role expectations, choice of school and university subjects, and choices within self-employment and entrepreneurship. Systematic qualitative studies conducted across the population could hold the key to pinpointing the main gender-related pressures facing women and men at different life stages. Existing quantitative surveys can also be used to research these issues, but attention should be paid to people's aspirations, choices, and reasons behind certain choices, without simply focusing on outcome-based indicators.

Appendix 3 Bibliography

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Appendix 4

A First Pass at the Possibilities for Using Psychometric Scales to Monitor and Assess Women's Economic Empowerment: A Select Bibliography

The following citations came from searches intended to explore the use of psychometric scales that might have applicability to women's empowerment programs. Several measures, such as grit or resilience or mastery, seem to promise a more appropriate and focused approach than generalized wellbeing questions, as well as a less culturally specific approach compared to current questions about permissions and decision-making. These citations are just a starting point, but we found the potential to use such measures so promising that we are providing this bibliography as a kind of community "starter kit." We will be exploring these scales in future research and hope others will do so as well.

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