VIDEO GAMES AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE HALF THE SKY MOVEMENT

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Digital games have been used in the international development industry for over a decade, yet they have received little scholarly attention. This dissertation uses the Half the Sky Movement's (HTSM) digital games as a case study to understand the production and use of games for development purposes. In doing so, it analyzes the games both as texts that extend the discourse of development, and as material objects with important political economic implications. Specifically, it looks at how the narratives embedded in these games disrupt or reinforce dominant narratives already at play in the development industry, and it considers how the private/public relationships created through the production of the games shape game content and impact both the gaming and development industries. The study uses critical qualitative methods, including textual analysis and in-depth interviews, and a political economic approach to complete this work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2009, husband and wife journalist team Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn published what would be their third best-selling book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. The book, "from two of our most fiercely moral voices," according to the jacket description, is "a passionate call to arms against our era's most pervasive human rights violation: the oppression of women and girls in the developing world" (Half the Sky, n.d.). The authors' stated goal was to "recruit" the reader into a worldwide movement to end what they call the key moral challenge of our time, and, based on the number of readers, they had many recruits. The book quickly became a bestseller and received tremendous praise from readers, mainstream media outlets, celebrities, and key names in the world of international development scholarship (see, for instance, Martha Nussbaum writing in the New York Times). They also received substantial backlash on a variety of issues, from the book's paternalism to its voyeurism (see Moore & Grant, 2012, or North, 2012, for a round-up of critical voices). But praise and book sales outnumbered the critiques greatly, and Kristof and WuDunn became prominent faces in the fight to empower women and girls in the developing world.

The year 2009 also saw the induction of Hillary Clinton as the United States Secretary of State. For Clinton, empowering women and girls was a central tenet of American foreign policy. In a 2012 statement, Clinton noted that "Putting women and girls at the center of our foreign policy is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do," (Press Statement). Her emphasis on connecting the wellbeing and stability

of the U.S. to the wellbeing and stability of women and girls both nationally and globally can be seen throughout her tenure as First Lady and as Secretary of State. In a surprise appearance at the 2010 TED Women conference, Clinton urged the audience to "integrate women's issues into discussions at the highest levels everywhere in the world," because empowering women is "in the vital interests of the United States of America" (Clinton, 2013).

And Kristof, WuDunn and Clinton were certainly not the only ones extolling the virtues of empowering women and girls at this time. For instance, The Girl Effect, launched in 2008 by the Nike Foundation, which "pioneers an integrated brand approach that reframes the value of girls and shapes new social norms that break the cycle of poverty," seized "the world's attention" with its short film on the subject (Girl Effect, n.d.). And the *10,000 Women* initiative, launched by the Goldman Sachs Foundation in 2008 worked to provide "women from across 56 countries with business and management education, mentoring and networking" skills through a multimillion dollar program (Goldman Sachs, n.d.). A focus on empowering women and girls, often through education, skills training, and small business ventures, was taking shape within a range of social corporate responsibility departments, private foundations, nonprofits, and governmental organizations. By the mid-2000s, empowering girls was seen by many as the key to social change at every level.

All of this attention from government and industry built on decades' worth of work within the international development industry. Beginning with the push for the inclusion of women that led to the Women in Development (WID) movement of the 1970s, the role of women and girls in international development—and the role of

international development in helping women and girls—had been a point of, if not a key focus, of discussion. By the release of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000—in which promoting gender equality and empowering women was goal number three of eight—women and girls had become integral to the concept of development both within the international development industry and beyond (as evidenced above). It seemed as if finally, after so many years of “speaking into the wind,” (Interview E, 2016) the message of development practitioners focused on women’s issues around the globe was being heard.

Concurrently, the years from 2000 to 2009 saw major growth in a niche corner of one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy: the video game industry. By 2009, the Serious Games Movement (SGM), which includes a variety of games for change, or social impact games, had evolved from a few individual titles and a lot of enthusiasm for the potential of video games to engender social change, to a sub-industry of its own with Serious Games (SG) conferences, festivals, trade associations, and nonprofit and commercial gaming corporations—not to mention, projected industry growth that would see the SG industry hit billions of dollars in sales in the coming years. In May of 2009, these two worlds–the development world with its focus on women and girls, and the SG world with its focus on games for social change—would collide.

The Sixth Annual Games for Change Festival was held at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City. The festival was organized by Games for Change (G4C), a New York City based SG nonprofit organization. On the morning of the first day of the conference, Nicholas Kristof gave a keynote address based on his work writing about the problems facing women and girls around the globe, which the audience would

be able to read about further in his forthcoming book, *Half the Sky*. After his address, Kristof told Asi Burak, the soon to be president of G4C, that he wanted to reach more people. Specifically, he wanted to reach "beyond the converted": those who were already likely to read his columns in *The New York Times*, or pick up a nonfiction book on women's oppression, or watch a documentary on the subject. He, and his wife and partner, WuDunn, wanted new recruits to "join the global movement to empower women and girls" (The Game Trailer, 2013). They wanted to turn *Half the Sky* into a game.

It was the beginning of a five year long project that would bring together commercial gaming corporations, global communication companies, U.S. government agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private foundations. The project would ultimately result in the production of four games designed as tools for both awareness and fundraising in the Global North, and for carrying out on-the-ground development projects in the Global South. The Facebook-based game, *The Half the Sky Movement: The Game* (HTSMG), would reach over 1 million players four months after its launch in the spring of 2013. The Half the Sky Movement's three mobile phone games were described as a way for the organization's development projects to reach "the hardest to reach" – millions of low-cost mobile phone users in India, Kenya and Tanzania (Half the Sky, n.d.a).

In addition to two health education games that teach players about management strategies for a "healthy and successful pregnancy" (*9 Minutes*), and a "simple de-worming solution that has had an incredible impact" (*Worm Attack!),* the movement, with its focus on women's issues worldwide, hoped to "empower" women and enhance their status in their families through the playing of the game *Family Values* (Half the Sky,

n.d.a). The games are all part of the larger *Half the Sky Movement* (HTSM) transmedia project that seeks to "ignite the change needed to put an end to the oppression of women and girls worldwide" (Half the sky, n.d.). The games, along with a four-hour PBS broadcast television series, two websites, and a series of educational videos and classroom curricula, were developed as channels to "provide concrete steps to fight these problems and empower women" (Half the sky, n.d.).

The HTSM can be viewed as the manifestation of the collision of "the girl as the untapped resource" phenomenon seen in mainstream discourse across development and commercial industry and the growing discourse of video games as a revolutionary tool for social change. While players might have encountered such a narrative in other spaces, the HTSMG on Facebook is the first to bring the mainstream discourse of empowering/investing-in women and girls as key to development directly to a social media gaming audience. These social media gamers were Kristof's "beyond the converted"—understanding the goal of conversion, then, is necessary to understanding the implications behind the game.

The mobile phone games, developed for use by NGOs working in India and Kenya, would target a different audience, creating a new channel for the dissemination of development messages. Both are part of a continued convergence between private foundations, governmental development agencies, and the for-profit sector; and both are part of a new, burgeoning industry that sees the development field as a space for growth. And yet the HTSM games, and the thirty or so other games designed as tools for international development over the last decade, have received little scholarly attention.

In 2005, the United Nation's World Food Programme (UNWFP) released the first-ever humanitarian-aid video game, *Food Force*. Designed for download and play on a PC, *Food Force* was created to teach young students about the problems of global hunger and the logistical challenges of delivering food during a humanitarian crisis. The game was released in English, Japanese, Italian, Polish, French, Hungarian, and Chinese, was downloaded over six million times, and had an estimated global audience of ten million players. The game was considered a success.

Since then, millions of dollars have been spent on games created for use in a variety of international development capacities—from fundraising, to awareness raising, to, most recently, on-the-ground development work. According to Fisher (2015), at least thirty of these types of games have been created to date, many of them funded by institutions such as the World Bank (WB), the United Nations (UN), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). And, based on the rapid expansion of the SG industry over the past several years, the number of digital development games (DDGs) is expected to grow substantially. Yet little to no research has been conducted to examine the games themselves, the ways they are being created, the development narratives they deploy, or the specific ways in which they are being used. Indeed, much of the discussion around DDGs begins and ends with a short sentence along the lines of "Games are going to change the world."

From our current position, we know mass communication technology-based development projects (e.g., radio, satellite, ICTs) have failed as often as they've succeeded in meeting their goals, and that they have been used to maintain, as well as to challenge, dominant systems of power (as will be thoroughly explored in Chapter 2).

DDGs, must be understood as the newest in this long line of tools. And critical analysis of how DDGs are used, and to what ends, must be prioritized as the number of games, and the industry behind them, grows. This dissertation uses the HTSM games as a case study for exploring the construction, production, and dissemination of games created as tools for international development.

An analytical approach to the study of the individual games themselves, as well as of the relationships among the bilateral/multilateral funding institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and commercial gaming and communication technology companies behind them, is overdue. A political economic approach will be used to examine the broader SG market and how the HTSM games fit within it. The analytical techniques of the political economy tradition will be further used to examine the relationships among public, private, and governmental organizations generated by the production of these games, as well as to understand how the various sectors have benefitted from them. This analysis will highlight the ways in which the gamification of development creates additional sub-industries and areas of expertise within the development industry, further professionalizing and monetizing the international development project.

Further, this study will highlight the ways in which this process consolidates control over production and makes it more difficult for smaller gaming institutions to create and present work in this field, challenging the idea that games will be more inclusive, participatory, and grounded in the local. Finally, this section will look at the ways in which games, like other mass-communication technologies used in the

development industry, create and reinforce unequal power, knowledge, and economic structures.

In-depth, qualitative interviews with key individuals from the HTSM, Games for Change, and USAID/FHI 360—the key organizations involved in the creation of the games—will be used to highlight why these games were made, the processes behind their design and production, how development narratives were defined and embedded in them, the role of various organizations in making them, and the use and impact of the games. Critical textual analysis will be used to understand how development problems and solutions are defined within the text of the games themselves as well as how these development narratives disrupt or reinforce dominant development narratives already at play in the industry; the implications of such narratives for women in the developing world will be explored. This study deploys a critical approach that combines ideological criticism, critical discourse analysis, and a procedural rhetoric (i.e., rules of the game) analysis to examine the development ideologies embedded in the games, as well as their role in broader development industry discourse.

Because the HTSM is particularly interested in the discourse on "empowering women and girls," this study will pay particular attention to the ways in which women and empowerment are conceptualized and represented in the games, and the ways in which ideas of women and empowerment are used to position players in relation to their ability to help women in the developing world. As the mainstream discourse of women and empowerment, both within and outside of the development industry, is one grounded in ideas of 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics,' this study will look at the ways the HTSM, through these games, reinforces or disrupts such a discourse. Further, this study

will question the implications of a discourse that prioritizes women's individual agency and frames them as potential economic entrepreneurs.

The HTSM is a well-publicized, celebrity and media backed project that has received ample funding from both the private sector and the main development body of the U.S. government, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Kristof and WuDunn were able to parlay the popularity of their bestseller into a multimedia event that continues to grow. With their most recent venture, a book and documentary titled *A Path Appears*, the team has created another avenue for continuing their work. And they, like others, are actively working to establish and grow a new gaming market around social impact and social change. Using the HTSM, then, as a case study, creates a space for analyzing a variety of factors relevant to the future of the international development industry and the use of digital games within it.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, presents a review of pertinent literature from both the development and games studies fields. The research questions relevant to this dissertation are grounded in the literature and presented at the end of Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents an in-depth look at the methodology used to carry out this study. The case is made for games as an important area of study, and for the usefulness of studying games both as meaningful cultural texts and as political economic products with implications for the development and SG industry. The research questions are tied to the specific methods used to work towards answering them, and the foundation is laid for the rest of the study. Chapter 4 uses a political economic approach and qualitative in-depth interviews to analyze the rise of the SG industry, the overlap between it and the development industry,

and the production of the HSM games. This chapter works to address the following questions:

- RQ1: How do the HTSM games fit into the broader Serious Games market?
- RQ2: What kinds of public/private/governmental relationships were created in the making of the HTSM games?
- RQ3: How did these relationships shape the games, including their goals, narratives, and use?

Chapter 5 uses critical textual analysis (in this case, a proposed combination of ideological criticism, critical discourse analysis, and procedural rhetoric) to analyze the individual HTSMGs. This chapter works to address the following questions:

- RQ4: How are women and girls represented and used in the HTSM games?
    - RQ4a: How are the development problems facing women and girls defined and represented?
    - RQ4b: How are the solutions to these problems defined and represented?
- RQ5: How do the narratives of women and gender in the games disrupt or reinforce dominant development narratives already at play within the industry?

Chapter 6 considers the implications of the HTSMGs specifically, and DDGs more broadly, for the international development industry. In this chapter, alternative approaches to making games are considered, and future possibilities highlighted.

Limitations of the study and future directions for research are also presented in this final chapter. A list of acronyms and abbreviations used throughout this study is included as Appendix F (p. 268).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Video games have been used by international development organizations since 2005. From downloadable PC games played in classrooms to the newest versions designed to work on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, the development industry has spent almost a decade adapting and redesigning games for its cause. While the earliest games focused on raising awareness about development and humanitarian aid issues by targeting students in the so-called developed world, social cause games have evolved over time to include mechanisms for direct-donations; they've embedded real-world-impact features into game play; and, most recently, they've become part of on-the-ground development work in the Global South. With its combination of social media and mobile phone based games, the HTSM has used DDGs at both levels—to gain support for its movement and to carry out on-the-ground development work.

The mission of the HTSM is to continue journalist Nick Kristof and Cheryl WuDunn's quest to turn "oppression into opportunity for women worldwide," by focusing on empowering women and girls. The creation of the HTSM games is part of the almost decade-long trend of gamification in the development industry—a trend that has led to the rise of non-profits focused on facilitating the creation and distribution of social cause games, a growing web of conferences, awards, and funding for these games, as well as new relationships between the development industry, national governments, telecommunication corporations, and the for-profit gaming sector.

Digital games, however, are certainly not the first mass communication tool to be eagerly taken up by the international development industry. Just as innovations in

communication technologies have changed the media landscape over time, so have they impacted how international development projects are carried out, creating new ways for practitioners to spread development messages and inspiring new communication strategies for increasing awareness, influencing favorable attitudes, and affecting behavior change in target audiences (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Radio, satellite television, websites, phone apps and, now, digital games, have all been taken up as tools used to achieve a variety of development goals. But regardless of the tool, its place in history, or the specific ways in which it is used, each innovation brings about a similar discourse on the power of technology to revolutionize the process of development and change the world.

An analysis of DDGs, then, must take into consideration the history of mass communication technology use in the development industry. It must also highlight the specific discourses DDGs are used to disseminate, as discourse plays an important role in shaping how development work is conceptualized and carried out. This chapter begins by defining the term ‘development’ and then highlights literature on the role of discourse in shaping development goals and practice. Because DDGs must be understood as both discursive and material products, the next section presents political economy theory and highlights the importance of a feminist political economic approach.

The section that follows analyzes the use of the term ‘gender’ in development, tracking the ways in which both ‘gender’ and ‘women’ have been taken up and used in development discourse, beginning with the Women in Development (WID) framework and ending with the current focus on women and girls utilized by a mainstream, neoliberal development project. Next, I give a brief overview of the history of

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in development, and the implications that history has for the study of DDGs. Following that, literature from game studies is brought in and used to define the process of gamification (both generally and within the development industry specifically) and to examine the role of games as tools for education, behavior change, and governmentality. The research questions asked in this study come out of this review of the literature and conclude this chapter.

Defining Development

As a goal, ‘development’ can mean many different things, to different people, at the same time (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse, 1998; Sen, 1999). While most would agree it speaks to an intentional process meant to improve quality of life and create beneficial social change, a standard, contemporary definition of what beneficial change looks like, who is in the best position to enact it, how it should be done, and for whom is less clear (Escobar, 1984; Fair & Shah, 1997; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Parpart, Rai, Staudt, 2002; Wilkins & Mody, 2001). In a 1997 study, Fair and Shah found that out of 140 studies of communication and development, only about third put forth a definition of ‘development’.

Though often challenged, the dominant approach in the development field has historically been one based on modernization, which prioritizes capitalist economic development, promotes rationality and objectivity in individuals, and emphasizes technology acquisition and industrialization (Lerner, 1958; McClelland, 1967; Melkote, 2010; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Rogers, 1976a). Alternative perspectives have critiqued the ethnocentrism of the dominant modernization paradigm, calling for more holistic and contextual approaches that take into account the roles of gender, the environment,

religion, and indigenous knowledge in creating sustainable development solutions. Whether feminist, environmental, theological, and/or grassroots in nature, these critical approaches work to disrupt the top-down hierarchical structure of a Western-development model and move beyond economic definitions of development.

From a feminist perspective, the development project was sharply critiqued for its failures to include women in development planning and projects (a critique that led to the WID and later GAD movements, which will be explored in depth in a later section), for its prioritization of economic growth, and for its ethnocentrism (Boserup, 1970; Cornwall, A., Harrison, E. & Whitehead, A., 2007; Mohanty, Russo & Torres, 1991; Spivak, 1988). Recently, the trend towards neoliberal development, and the purported benefits neoliberalism brings to women, has been challenged up by a number of feminist scholars who have found the practices of neoliberalism to not only *not benefit* women in the developing world, but to quite often be actively detrimental to them.

Further, whether development, as a project, is indeed a worthy cause or simply a continuation of colonial practices used to perpetuate forms of governmentality and control remains a contested issue for Third World feminists and postcolonial scholars (Escobar, 1984; Ferguson, 1994; Mohanty, 1998; Spivak, 1988). Within postcolonial studies specifically, the assumed benefits of an international development project for those in the developing world is contested through a continued critique of issues of colonialization and decolonialization (Shome & Hegde, 2010). Postcolonialism actively works to question both the impacts of colonialism and the ways in which such impacts can be undone. Postcolonial study is political in nature, and its goal is emancipation (Shome & Hegde, 2010).

The work of postcolonial scholars (see Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Chakraborty, 2000) presents "the recognition that institutionalized knowledge is always subject to forces of colonialism, nation, geopolitics, and history," and works to be "an interruption to established disciplinary content that was, and continues to be, forged through structures of modernity and histories of imperialism" (Shome & Hegde, 2010, p. 94). And development, with its historically dominant theory of modernization (elaborated on below), is "one of the dominant western discourses that postcolonial approaches seek to thoroughly challenge and destabilize" (McEwan, 2009, p. 1).

Within postcolonial scholarship, the work of international development is seen as predicated on a North/South power divide established through centuries of slavery, colonialism and imperialism (McEwan, 2009). Postcolonial theory, then, rejects the work of the development industry because its work continues this power divide, often through the reinforcement of knowledge production/control hierarchies (as elaborated on in a later section on ICT use and development). In spite of decades of critique, the development project continues, and approaches based on theories of modernization and neoliberal economics remain dominant within the world's largest development institutions, such as the WB.

Understanding specifically how development is conceptualized in DDG projects is pertinent to this study. DDGs operate both as tools for carrying out the *work of* development and as channels for discourse *about* development. To understand the use of DDGs, then, one must understand the dual function of communication in the development industry more broadly. Communication *for* development refers to the use of communication technologies and processes in strategic interventions that work to

facilitate development goals, such as the use of ICTs in development (Wilkins & Mody, 2001). The mobile phone games used as on-the-ground tools in the Global South fit into this role. Just as important, however, as the role of communication technologies and processes for carrying out development is the role of communication in shaping how we conceptualize development, or communication *about* development (Escobar, 1984; Wilkins, 1999; Wilkins & Mody, 2001).

The discourse around development, generated by the institutions and organizations that carry out development work as well as by media representations of development, has important implications in the framing of issues, the selection of target groups, and the defining of possible solutions (Kabeer, 1994; Wilkins, 1999). Wilkins and Mody (2001) point out that the act of defining a target group at whom a project should be aimed (often done by isolating demographic terms such as gender or ethnicity) both generates and reinforces understandings of social responsibility: “For example, when women are highlighted in projects designed to reduce fertility rates, contraception becomes reinforced as a female responsibility” (pp. 392). As DDGs play an increasing role in extending development discourse, they work to frame the understanding of development issues and possible solutions for more and more people (Arce, 2003). Thus, understanding how DDGs work to reinforce or disrupt established development discourse is necessary to understanding the current and future role they might play.

Trends and changes in the global development landscape impact how issues and solutions are framed within development discourse (Wilkins, 2000; Wilkins & Enghel, 2013). For instance, the rise of celebrity advocacy, ‘causumerism’, and ‘clicktivism’—

seen perhaps most easily in U2-frontman Bono's global (RED) campaign—has led to an emphasis on 'compassionate consumption' and capitalist solutions to development problems. Though such projects have gained mainstream popularity, critical scholars argue this approach works to not only erase, but to in fact recreate and reproduce the productive forces behind global inequality (Cameron & Haanstra, 2008; Choudry & Kapoor, 2013; Wilkins & Enghel, 2013).

Similarly, enthusiastic discourse about the "magical potential" of the Internet to act as a democratizing force in closing information gaps accelerated "the scale of development projects based on information and communication technologies" and the promise of a "painless transition to modernity" through technology (Chakravartty, 2009, p. 37), while simultaneously erasing the effects of growing inequalities in access to technology (Leye, 2009; Ogan et al., 2009; Wilkins & Enghel, 2013). The discourses around DDGs, which legitimize them as the newest technological key to carrying out development, as well as the discourses embedded in them—which create new spaces for representing and thus acting upon the objects of development—must be given similar critical attention.

While DDGs must be understood as discursive tools used to further particular narratives of development, they must also be understood as material products created within specific socio-historical moments. The production of DDGs has important implications for a variety of industries and, as such, a political economic approach, which works to highlight issues of ownership and power in creating and distributing DDGs, is necessary. The next section highlights classical and contemporary political economic

theory and specifically points to the need for a feminist political economic approach in the study of the HTSM DDGs.

Political Economy, Gender, and Development

The study of political economy begins in the eighteenth-century with Adam Smith (1776). For Smith, political economy was a study of "wealth" and the ways in which "mankind arranges to allocate scarce resources with a view toward satisfying certain needs and not others" (Smith, 1924, p. 161). In his writing, capitalism was understood as "a system for the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of wealth" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 18). With the writing of Marx and Engels in the nineteenth-century came a "radical critique of capitalism," with a focus on class analysis and the "unjust and inequitable characteristics of the evolving capitalist system" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 18).

For Marx, the system of economic production is the organizing foundation for all other aspects of society. It is the relations of production that constitute all other social relations, and, thus, society itself. In the *German Ideology*, Marx (1846/1978), tracks the historical development of systems of production from ancient/tribal, to feudal, to the bourgeois society. As the capitalist system, based on the commodification of wage labor, expands so does man's enslavement "under a power alien to them…a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the *world market"* (emphasis in original, Marx, 1846/1978, p.163).

Through the process of commodification necessary to the capitalist system, "every available resource," is converted, "into a good or service that can be sold for a price in the marketplace" (Murdock, 2006, p. 3). And it is this process of

commodification that acts as the driving force of capitalism, allowing it to continuously expand and take new ground (Murdock, 2006). The structuring of society according to a capitalist system of production enables the bourgeoisie, which own the means of production, to turn "personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade" (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 11).

In the capitalist system, economic activity is not about subsistence (as it was when it was confined to the households); rather, it is about the continued accumulation of wealth. The growth of economic activity beyond subsistence facilitates new divisions of labor, and it is through the continued division of labor that wealth is created: "The household produces its subsistence; the political economy produces wealth" (Levine, 2001, p. 525). According to Levine (2001), it is this "elevation of wealth to the status of the main object of economic activity…that accounts for the expansion in size and change in the boundaries of the system that make it a political economy" (p. 525). In order to create this wealth, "the political economy creates a system of dependence that destroys the local self-sufficiency of the earlier order (Marx, 1977, pp. 222-231)" (Levine, 2001, p. 525).

According to Marx, the capitalist system will necessarily "nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere," and in doing so "It compels all nations on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst; i.e. to become bourgeois themselves" (Marx, 1977, pp. 224-225). The capitalist system must spread and saturate

the globe, covering all men and all societies, before the revolution that will propel society to the end point beyond capitalism can be met.

Although the writing of Marx and Engels took a critical approach toward the capitalist system, the focus was on the economic, rather than political, foundations of such a system. As Levine (2001) writes, "For Marx, there is nothing political about capitalist economy taken in itself. It does not operate on political principles, or organize itself to accomplish political ends. It is, rather, the world of private property and the pursuit of individual ends" (p. 526). Further, the area of political economy is not looked to as "an arena for the exercise of power" (Levine, 2001, p. 526). In what he refers to as the 'new' political economy, however, "power is a decisive factor" (Levine, 2001, p. 526). Within the 'new political economy' tradition, power and its operation are central. Political economic analysis as such is organized around the ideas of power "as a primary…determinant of economic interaction and its outcomes"; "power exercised by, and in the interest of, groups or classes"; and the economy as "an essentially political reality" (Levine, 2001, p. 526).

In classical political economy, wealth gave men "freedom from want (Smith) and freedom from labor (Marx)" (Levine, 2001, p. 533). For Marx and Engels, it was not the accumulation of wealth that was necessarily the problem, rather it was the organization of production through which one class of men were enslaved to wage labor while the others, namely the bourgeoisie, were not. Wealth, and the pursuit of it, is taken "to be the solution to, rather than the source of, the problem" (Levin, 2001, p. 533). But rather than "bringing civilization," to those in the developing world, (Marx as quoted in Levine, 2001, p. 533), critical scholars argue that capitalism "impedes the development of

underdeveloped countries (Baran, 1957, p. 12)" and that the "development of capitalism in the advanced sectors also fosters underdevelopment elsewhere" (Levine, 2001, p. 531).

For Wallerstein, writing in 1983, "The Marxist embrace of an evolutionary model of progress has been an enormous trap…It is simply not true that capitalism as a historical system has represented progress over the various previous historical systems that it destroyed or transformed" (p. 98). Nonetheless, "the logic of capitalism has massively extended itself," and "capitalism has become a generalized phenomenon with the globalization of markets now a central theme" (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011, Introduction, p. 5). As such, critical political economy, based on the work of Marx and Engels, has also spread.

A political economic approach has been taken towards the study of a variety of fields, including communication and media studies. This vein of political economy concerns itself with issues such as the allocation of resources, ownership and control, relations of power, and systems of structural inequalities. According to its foundational points, as outlined by Wasko, Murdock and Sousa (2011), political economy:

> is holistic. Rather than treating 'the economy' as a specialist and bounded domain, it focuses on the relations between economic practices and social and political organization. Secondly, it is historical. Rather than concentrating solely or primarily on immediate events, it insists that a full understanding of contemporary shifts must be grounded in an analysis of transformations, shifts, and contradictions that unfold over long periods of time. Thirdly, in contrast to economics that severed its historic links with moral philosophy in an effort to present itself as an objective science, critical political economy continues to be centrally concerned with the relations between the organization of culture and communications and the constitution of the good society grounded in social justice and democratic practice. Fourthly, critical analysis places its practitioners under and obligation to follow the logic of their analysis through into practical action for change (Introduction, p. 4).

From the time of Marx and Engels, political economy has taken an activist form, with an end focus on disruption and transformation through critique. According to political economy scholars Graham Murdock and Peter Golding, the approach is "concerned with the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 19). As quoted in Steeves and Wasko (2002), "Political economy 'goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity, and the public good' (Golding and Murdock, 1991, 18)" (p. 19). And, beyond mere analysis, "Political economists…suggest strategies for resistance and intervention" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 19).

For the study of media and mass communications, political economy represents an important critical approach that works to challenge "unjust and inequitable systems of power" (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011). When studying new media, like DDGs, it is especially important to analyze the "resistance of structural inequalities and the persistence of embedded structures of power" (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011). As Wasko, Murdock and Sousa (2011) argue, the study of new media should begin at the point of power behind the new technology, rather than the technology itself:

> Rather than starting with the technology and asking what is its likely impact, critical analysis starts from the prevailing distribution of power and inequality and asks whose interests will be best served by these new potentialities. From this perspective, digital media appear not as a primary lever of change but as a new field of struggle dominated by long-standing battles and combatants. The sites and terms of engagement may shift, but the stakes remain the same.

While political economists look to class as key to understanding social divisions, feminist scholars look to gender, specifically the varied ways in which a patriarchal system oppresses women and girls. Because this study is specifically concerned with the gendered dimensions of the development industry generally, and of the HTSM

specifically, it is necessary to go beyond a focus on economic class divisions, as is the central point in studies of political economy.

As the next section will show in more detail, there is no one cohesive strand of feminist theory, rather there are dominant, competing, and overlapping feminist frameworks always at play (Steeves & Wasko, 2002). For those feminists who ground their work in Marxist theory, Marxist and socialist feminists, "gender oppression is linked with class oppression under capitalism," and combatting such oppression "requires macrolevel, if not revolutionary, political, and economic, change" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 21). According to Steeves and Wasko (2002), Marxist feminism presents "a historical understanding of the capitalist mode of production and the accompanying class structure," that helps illuminate one of the causes of women's oppression: "men's control over women's labor in most societies, evident for instance in women's concentration in lower-paying nonmanagerial positions, in inadequate maternity or child-care policies, and in the notion of 'family wage,' which has reinforced women's domestic role and depressed their wages" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 22).

Feminists who base their work on the writing of Marx and Engels have "been criticized for their failure to recognize variations within social classes as well as complications posed by race, ethnicity, nation, and culture," but understanding the part that a global capitalist system, and a contemporary neoliberal agenda within that system, plays in perpetuating or disrupting the oppression of women and girls is pertinent to this study (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 25). Further, as entrance into the system of global capital through small businesses or low-waged labor is emphasized in projects such as the HTSM as a key path to women's empowerment and gender equality, the role of that

system in perpetuating or disrupting gender inequality must be analyzed. Additionally, an analysis on the ways in which such a system profits from the inclusion of women and girls in the developing world is important. The framing of gender equality in terms of 'smart economics,' as will be detailed in the next section, necessitates a feminist political economy approach, which allows for an analysis of both the material and discursive layers of the HTSM games.

While recent political economists have included questions on texts, audiences, and consumption in their research (see Grossberg, 1995; Meehan et al., 1994; Meehan, 1999; Murdock, 1995), traditionally, political economy, concerned with the distribution of material resources within capitalist societies, has not focused on issues of representation and ideology. And, while earlier strands of feminism emphasized social structures, "the overall feminist emphasis has shifted…to discourses and symbols of marginality in texts, often with little attention to underlying material inequities" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 17). A feminist political economic approach is necessary to bring the two together: "The common Marxist base provides a materialist analysis of class divisions under capitalism; and feminism demands attention to class-linked gender oppression in political-economic analysis" (Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 17). Such an approach is of great importance in the study of communication industries, including that of SG.

As Wasko, Murdock and Sousa (2011) argue, "the communications industries play a central double role in modern societies, as industries in their own right and as the major site of the representations and arenas of debate through which the overall system is imagined and argued over". The same is true for DDGs, which are discursive texts that

extend a narrative of neoliberal development and material products with implications for several industries. Through a positive discourse on neoliberal development, DDGs may work to further the material relations of production necessary to continue and expand a neoliberal agenda and shape ideal neoliberal subjects in the Global North and South. Thus, this study works to further the work of feminist political economy by bringing together the material and discursive dimensions of the HTSM games and analyzing specifically the implications of these games on women and girls.

The material production of the games themselves has implications for the growth of a global capitalist system, the continuation of Global North/South inequities and global/local gender inequities, and the reinforcement of global structures of power and knowledge. The allocation of resources, ownership and control, relations of power, and systems of structural inequalities at play in the production and dissemination of these games is of importance to this study. A feminist political economic approach allows for an analysis of both the discursive and material dimensions of these games, including the ways in which the narratives embedded in them further a neoliberal agenda, and the ways in which power dynamics between the people and organizations responsible for the games shape such narratives.

Undoubtedly, relationships between the various actors in DDG projects—which often bring together development organizations, state institutions, and public corporations—play an important role in determining project discourse, the framing of issues and goals, and in deciding how DDGs will be used. A political economic approach allows for an analysis of the ways in which political and economic power operates through these institutions, and to what end. The political economy of communication (as

advanced by Herbert Schiller, Dan Schiller, Vincet Mosco, and Janet Wasko, among others) is especially pertinent to the study of the development industry as mass communication technologies generally, and ICTs specifically, are ever more integrated into the process of development. Thus, an understanding of the role global ICT corporations play in the global economy, for instance, is necessary to understanding the role of ICTs in international development as it points to “the power transnational ICT companies have over developing countries” (Lee, 2011, p. 527).

As Lee (2011) argues, failing to take a political economic approach into account presents ICT based projects as neutral and ignores that “it is privately owned, profit-making technology companies (mostly based in developed countries) that invent and control technology.” Further, as the games analyzed in this study specifically target female players, a feminist political economic perspective is necessary to highlight the ways in which “the production, distribution and consumption of goods and resources are gendered” (Lee, 2011). Such an approach does not “limit the focus on ICTs and women,” rather it “encompasses the relations between transnational corporations and developing countries, between the global south and the global north and between the two genders” (Lee, 2011, p. 536).

At a more micro level, power dynamics between individual donors and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or nonprofits carrying out development projects (as well as between individuals within those institutions) play a role in shaping DDGs both in terms of discourse and material reality. The economic power differentials built into these relationships often result in the prioritization of donor discourses, agendas, policies, and ideologies (Contu and Girei 2014; Edwards and Hulme 1996; Kamstra and Schulpen

2015). An analysis of these relationships is important to the continued study of the development industry specifically in highlighting what Essex (2013) calls the "neoliberalizing of development" (p. 239). By studying sites of production, it becomes clear how these relationships function to produce narratives and policies that work to reinforce or disrupt mainstream development thinking.

In the study of DDGs, it is necessary to analyze the ways in which the design of games is influenced by the transfer of both material and ideological resources put in place through the donor/NGO relationship. It is also necessary to understand the role of the global video game industry in shaping games and development projects. According to Wilson (2015), the development industry must be thought of as a complex web of:

> unequal material relationships and processes which structure engagement between the global South and the global North, as well as the primary discursive framework within which these relationships have been constructed for more than sixty years. Development conceptualized in this way is inextricable from the rapidly shifting and mutating operations of global capital…(804).

This study understands development as both discourse and process: The use of the term development here includes both the discourses and the set of practices that work to structure 'beneficial social change' as the two layers act together to shape the development project and, through it, the material reality of those it targets. Debate over the term 'development' must be understood as, "a struggle over the shape of futures" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009, p. xviii): through framing and defining the term and its processes certain futures are made possible, and legitimized, over others. By defining and representing target groups and issues, development discourse creates an object to be acted upon. As Mukhopadhyay (2014), explains, "Representing reality makes it possible to deliberate on it and to construct the means through which it will be addressed, managed

and changed. In this way, the represented domain becomes amenable to the programmes of government" (p. 359). Thus, an analysis of the specific representations of development, its issues and goals, within individual projects is necessary in order to highlight the ways in which certain types of action are made possible and legitimate.

Current mainstream discourse within the development field frames the empowerment of individual women and girls as key to achieving the goals of development. Understanding the type of action such a discourse makes possible—the futures such a discourse both legitimizes and obfuscates—is necessary. The following section explores the history of gender and development, tracking the ways the concepts of 'women' and 'women's empowerment' are used historically and contemporarily to achieve certain goals.

Gender and Development

International development has always been a gendered project. In its early days, the focus was almost entirely on men. The purpose of development was to grow national economies in the developing world, and to do so it was believed that resources must be directed to the productive members of society: men. Decades of development would ensue before women would be purposefully brought into the equation. But once they were, there would be no turning back. Within the international development industry, women went from an overlooked, unimportant demographic to its veritable poster girl. In our contemporary moment, women and young girls have become the face of global development. From the most grandiose institutional initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals, to corporate campaigns like Nike's 'Girl Effect', to multimedia, collaborative mega-hits like The Half the Sky Movement (HTSM), empowering women

and girls has been presented as *key* to solving a variety of development issues, including global poverty, food crises, environmental degradation, etc. Understanding how women have been framed throughout the history of development discourse is necessary to an analysis of contemporary projects, such as the HTSM, which use the oppression of women and their subsequent empowerment to mobilize their work.

The ubiquity of women and girls and the notion of gender equality within the current mainstream development discourse is, seemingly, a victory for feminists, who struggled for recognition of the needs and issues facing women specifically, and the importance of gender equality more broadly, for decades. Convincing those in power that women, and especially women in the Third World, were not merely needy victims, but humans with agency, was its own, ongoing battle. Thus, the current focus on women's ability to "change the world" through individual economic empowerment, via microloans and small enterprises, could perhaps be seen as a sort of victory. However, as Calkin (2015) notes, "these ostensible gains require close feminist scrutiny because much of the gender equality policy discourse is so closely tied to the advancement of a neoliberal economic policy agenda characterized by market fundamentalism, deregulation and corporate-led development" (p. 296); a process that, it will be argued, does little to achieve gender equality, and instead deepens it for its own gain (Wilson, 2015).

The following section reviews feminist development literature to highlight the progression from a Women in Development (WID) framework, to the current Neoliberal Feminism framing employed in mainstream gender equality development projects, such as the HTSM. As Wendy Larner (2000) argues, neoliberalism is a more complex phenomenon than has often been recognized, and the significance of neoliberalism in

transforming contemporary governance has been underestimated: “Neoliberalism is both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance. In this regard, understanding neoliberalism as governmentality opens useful avenues for the investigation of the restructuring of welfare state processes” (p. 2). Understanding the convergence of neoliberal policy, ideology, and governmentality with a development focus on women and girls is critically important to understanding the implications of contemporary ‘empowerment’ projects, such as the HTSM.

For many years, women were not included in development discourse or its projects: The early goal of international development was national economic growth and, because men were seen as the productive members of society, all of the resources and benefits of development were directed towards them (Kabeer, 1994; McEwan, 2009; Razavi & Miller, 1995; Singh, 2007; Tinker, 1990). It wasn’t until the United Nations Decade for Women and the subsequent Women in Development (WID) movement of the 1970s that serious attention was given to women’s role in international development.

The main arguments of the WID movement, which fought for the inclusion of women’s issues within the mainstream development framework, were based on ideas of efficiency: development resources should be directed towards women, and women included in development, because it would both benefit women and the development process itself through the economic returns their inclusion would bring (Kabeer, 1994; Razavi & Miller, 1995). As Calkin (2015), notes, it was the “first incarnation of the ‘win-win’ narrative that characterizes so much of the policy discourse today” (p. 297). WID proponents were able to “sell” their ideas to development institutions by highlighting

"what development needs from women," and they were happy to do so because of what they believed women stood to gain (Goetz, 1994, p. 30).

Boserup's (1970) seminal book highlighted the overlooked (by the development industry) work of women farmers in Sub-saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of Latin America, pointing out how governmental and development policies that privileged male household heads in distributing resources (such as land rights and agricultural benefits) misunderstood the role of women in economic production. If, instead, women were included in development policies and given access to technology, credit, income generating skills, and other resources, their economic productivity would surely benefit development at both local and national levels (Kabeer, 2016; Razavi & Miller, 1995). As Wilson (2015) notes, "In practice this often meant handicrafts and small-scale income generating projects," (p. 805), a trend that, as we will see, has changed little over time.

By highlighting women's *potential* as economic producers, early WID advocates fought against the depiction of women as needy welfare recipients and emphasized the return on investment they could bring (Razavi & Miller, 1995). Additionally, this approach allowed WID to assuage institutional fears around the redistribution of power necessary for gender equality by instead focusing on women's productivity and the potential for women to provide for the family's basic needs (Moser, 1989; Razavi & Miller, 1995; Calkin, 2015). Because of proponents' focus on the ways in which women could help development, women were brought *into* the development institution, but the concerns of critical feminists were not (Connelly, Murray-Li, MacDonald & Parpart, 2002; Kabeer, 1994; Rai, 2002; Sen, 1999).

While WID proponents fought to bring women into the development system, they failed to address the structural and societal processes, both inside and outside of it, that created and perpetuated gender inequality and injustice. By isolating women as a categorical group from the rest of their lives, WID ignored the power dynamics at play in intimate relationships, societal structures and governmental systems through which women's inequalities are reproduced (Cornwall, 2014; Kabeer, 1994; Whitehead, 1979; Wilson, 2015). By merely bringing women *into* the existing system, without addressing the structures of power established within it, the WID approach could do little to support the redistribution of power necessary to achieve gender equity (Kabeer, 1994; Moser, 1989). Third World feminists especially critiqued the lack of any structural analysis, specifically regarding global capitalism and the ways in which it reinforced gender inequalities, in WID frameworks (Calkin, 2015; Sen & Grown, 1985). From the critique of WID came a new approach, Gender and Development (GAD).

Approaches to gender and development that take a structural analysis into account question asymmetrical power dynamics at both macro and micro levels, and argue that the integration of women *into* the current development field, without challenging existing power structures, is itself problematic. Unlike WID, GAD "was concerned with the material dimensions of women's subordination and saw gender relations as power relations" (Cornwall, 2014, p. 128). Early GAD approaches critiqued both the structural inequalities at play in the lives of poor women in the developing world, as well as the inherent biases towards men that had been established in the development industry itself (Elson, 1995; Kabeer, 1994; Razavi & Miller, 1995). The GAD framework worked to center the concept of 'gender' and gendered power relations, rather than focus on the

category of ‘women’ and women’s productivity (Calkin, 2015). Through her influential work, Whitehead (1979) emphasized the relational nature of gender inequality, pointing out that women were made subordinate to men at differing levels through a variety of gender relations, in a variety of spaces (work, home, etc.). The gender relations approach of GAD worked to highlight poverty and women’s oppression as products of larger structural inequalities at the local level and as byproducts of global economic power structures (Kabeer, 1994).

But, just as many feminist concerns were depoliticized through the process of institutionalizing the WID framework, GAD has been taken up and mainstreamed in problematic ways (Wilson, 2015). One critique of the GAD logic itself is that gender was understood as men vs. women: a set of gender binaries in which women, as a group, were seen as subordinate to men, as a group (Cornwall, 2014). As Cornwall (2014) notes, “women and men were not presumed to have interests in common,” nor were relationships within gendered groups (between men, or between women) seen as “gender relations” (p. 128). Thus, while a GAD approach sought to rectify important oversights of WID, it remained limited in its definitions of gender and gender relations. Further, GAD’s prioritization of heterosexual marital relationships worked to erase “other dimensions of women’s identities,” as well as the impact of oppression and injustice based on race and class (Cornwall, 2014, p. 128). The focus on man/woman marital relationships in GAD played a strong role in the ways gender relations were understood in development policy.

Cornwall (2014) attributes the rise of second-wave feminists (who were predominantly white, middle-class, and Western) in the development process with this

"preoccupation with women's position in the household and in intimate heterosexual relations," and she sees their participation as a continuing factor in why "the limiting presuppositions of neoclassical development economics dominated development thinking" (129). Further, through the institutional uptake of the GAD framework, the categories of women and gender have converged and collapsed, conflating one with the other in a discourse where *gender = women* (Baden & Goetz, 1997; Calkin, 2015). Like WID, the necessity to translate ideas and frameworks into policy-appropriate-language has also neutralized its transformative potential (Calkin, 2015; Rai, 2002).

Feminists were successful in their fight to bring women (WID) and later gender relationships (GAD) into the development discourse. As both projects progressed, however, many of the potentially transformative insights brought about by their research were modified into "generalities that could be mobilized to secure the attention of development policymakers—who had little interest in taking seriously the inequalities and discrimination produced by inequitable gender orders" (Cornwall, 2014, p. 129). As Cornwall (2014) argues:

> These generalities became gender myths, stories about women that had wider purchase in providing a narrative that situated women as more deserving of assistance and more useful to development enterprise than men. These included: women are the poorest of the poor; women care for others while men care only for themselves; women are less corrupt than men; women are closer to nature and care more for the environment (p. 129).

These generalities about the benefits of 'developing' women persist today, although the key discourse has shifted from a focus on 'efficiency' to one of 'empowerment,' a term that can be neatly aligned with the neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility and market participation. Because the WID framework was more compatible with the "neoliberal turn" (Wilson, 2015, p. 807), it has remained the predominant development

policy approach to women and gender (Chant & Sweetman, 2013; Moser, 1993; Razavi & Miller, 1995). But to consider the contemporary mainstream approach to women and gender and development as simply a continuation of the WID framework would be to miss the complexities, challenges, and possibilities neoliberalism has brought about for women in the developing world.

Neoliberalism and Development Thinking

There is no one theory of development; the various approaches compete, overlap and borrow from one another often, and rarely is any one approach there, or gone, for good. Nevertheless, certain theories and ideologies, backed by more powerful voices, dominate at different moments in time. In 2006, the WB unveiled its new slogan for its gender and development approach: 'Gender equality as Smart Economics'. The slogan epitomizes the current focus on women and girls as an 'untapped resource': The driving idea is that generating greater gender equality via women's market access and market participation will lead to a significant return on investment in the form of economic growth.

Wilson (2015) argues that the notion of Smart Economics is "premised on the assumption that women will always work harder, and be more productive, than their male counterparts; further they will use additional income more productively than men would" (p. 807). Thus, investing in women (generally in the form of microloans to be used towards small business ventures) and young girls (in the form of educational interventions in order to shape them into strong future market participants) is seen as 'good business'. In terms of the development industry's historical focus on economic growth, this contemporary approach might feel like business as usual. But in reality

there's a twist (or two): The current focus on market growth is less about individual national economies and more about the accumulation of global capital; and the way to achieve such growth is through the shaping and buildup of a previously underutilized labor force, women and girls. The following section explores the ideological and political forces within and around the development industry that led to the current discourse on gender equality as smart economics.

It is important to discuss how the term neoliberalism is being used here. According to Larner (2000), "'neo-liberalism' denotes new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships" (p. 5). While it was once understood that the role of the state was to provide "goods and services to a national population" in order to ensure "social well-being," neoliberalism frames markets as the best arbiters of economic, and social activity, while calling for a limited, minimalist state (Larner, 2000, p. 5). Most conceptualize neoliberalism simply as a policy framework, while critics (such as Hall) point to its role as ideology (Larner, 2000). As noted in the introduction to this section, Larner (2000) argues that neoliberalism must be understood "as both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance" (p. 6). Neoliberalism, in this conception, is understood as a form of governmentality. Such an understanding is important to the discussion of development discourse and policy, and specifically to the role of games, as addressed here.

In terms of economic policies, neoliberalism can be understood as a shift from state provision of public services to the marketization and privatization of all facets of life (Calkin, 2015; Larner, 2000). Referred to as 'roll-back neoliberalism' by Peck and

Tickell (2002, p. 384), this process involves the "roll-back of state welfare provision and the destruction of social institutions" (Calkin, 2015, p. 296). Alternatively, 'roll-out neoliberalism' refers to the creation of new forms of governmentality, by new, non-state actors (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 384). It is in this way that neoliberalism works to "facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance," giving new actors, industries, and institutions the legitimacy to shape a variety of social, economic, and political norms and actions (Larner, 2000, p. 2). As an ideology, neoliberalism encourages both individuals and institutions to act in accordance with these new market norms (Calkin, 2015), a shift that is "a historic alteration in state form which enacts simultaneous changes in cultural assumptions, political identities and the very terrain of political struggle" (Janine Brodie (1996), as quoted in Larner, 2000, p 11.).

Importantly, the term neoliberalism does not encompass a coherent, singular set of policies, it is not a neat, singular ideology, nor does it entail a clean, linear process (in terms of empirical realities up to this point). Indeed, there are "different configurations of neo-liberalism, and…close inspection of particular neo-liberal political projects is more likely to reveal a complex and hybrid political imaginary, rather than the straight forward implementation of a unified and coherent philosophy" (Larner, 2000, p. 12). Thus, the discourse and practice of individual neoliberal projects must be understood as sites of political struggle and contestation, for, as Larner (2000) notes, "power is productive, and…the articulations between hegemonic and oppositional claims give rise to new political subjectivities and social identities which then enter into the 'discourse of restructuring'" (p. 12).

Understanding how new development subjectivities and new forms of governmentality are created through projects like that of the HTSM movement, then, is a necessary and worthwhile project:

> By focusing attention on the historically specific and internally contradictory aspects of neo-liberalism, and the shaping of specific neo-liberal projects by articulations between both hegemonic and non-hegemonic groups, it will become apparent that neo-liberalism, like the welfare state, is 'more an ethos or an ethical ideal, than 'a set of completed or established institutions' (Larner, 2000, 20).

Only through critical analysis and nuanced discussion will it be possible to at least attempt to ensure that the political positions, identities, and subjectivities that come out of such projects are not detrimental to those at whom they are aimed; thus, in this case, the work is done in order to highlight the implications of such an 'ethos' or 'ideal' for women and girls in the developing world.

As Larner (2000) argues, if neoliberalism is not merely one solid thing, not "a single set of philosophical principles or a unified political ideology," there is the opportunity to develop different versions of neoliberalism itself, as well as other, perhaps better, possibilities for "[enhancing] social well-being" (p. 21). We must see neoliberalism as "multi-vocal and contradictory," as well as specific to particular projects, if we hope to "make visible the contestations and struggles" *within* it, not to mention if we hope to make room for alternatives *to it* (Larner, 2000, p. 21). The next section tracks the rise of neoliberalism within the development industry, highlighting the ways in which individual women and girls are made its focus.

The sweeping changes in economic policies of the 1980s brought neoliberalism, with its focus on open markets and free trade, into many arenas, including that of international development. Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) put in place in sub-

Saharan Africa and parts of Latin America as a response to the oil shocks of the 1970s and the ensuing global debt crisis, "signalled the beginning of a worldwide shift to market-led growth strategies, spearheaded by neo-liberal governments in powerful donor countries and promoted across the world through the lending policies of the international financial institutions" (Kabeer, 2015, p. 197).

SAPs pushed for the downsizing of state economies, cuts to public spending on social services, an emphasis on private enterprise, and deregulation of markets and trade liberalization (Kabeer, 2015). But the massive failures of SAPs forced development institutions, such as the World Bank, to conceptualize a new approach that would appear drastically different from the interventionist policies of SAPs, but would leave the neoliberal framework intact (Wilson, 2015). The case of USAID, whose approach to gender equality and development more broadly must be understood as one grounded in a larger "hegemonic project of globalization (or, more specifically, neoliberal globalization…)," is useful here (Essex 2013, 85).

In response to Congressional pressure, USAID restructuring in the 1990s worked to align "the agency's development mission with state and hegemonic projects of neoliberalization, most significantly by ensuring that development strategies supported liberalized economic growth and formal democratization" (Essex 2013, 238). During this time the "one best road to development," which prioritized policies of trade liberalization, privatization, and free market economies, was decided upon and, despite internal reforms and rhetorical shifts in the agency, continues to be carried on through contemporary agency policy (Essex 2013).

This continuation can be seen specifically in the form of capacity building, which emphasizes the diffusion of skills, knowledge and training programs and constructs "populations as either responsible members of open, market-based communities moving toward development, or irresponsible and potentially dangerous outliers" (Essex 2013, 239). Capacity building, in this sense, is a political technology used in the construction and implementation of neoliberal governance, which "make[s] individuals responsible for changes that are occurring in their communities" (Phillips & Ilcan 2004, 397). Through capacity building projects, investments are made in "social capital" and "human capital," resulting (in theory) in populations who are then *capable of* and *responsible for* their own development. Such an approach, argues Essex (2013) is the "driving [force] of neoliberalizing development" (239).

Concurrently, new concerns and debates over the term "gender equality" were taking place. There were those who worried what achieving "gender equality" would mean in terms of traditional gender roles (e.g., right-wing religious interest groups), those who worried how a focus on gender inequality would impact the focus on, and support for, changes in women's positions in social life (that a focus on gender equality would hurt support for women and women's goals), and those who worried about the redistribution of power and resources that would be necessary to achieve gender equality (Cornwall, 2014).

At the same time, the discourse of "women's empowerment" was growing, particularly in Western-based NGOs and development agencies. While the discourse of empowerment had originated with feminist movements in the Global South, in the 2000s the term was taken up and used in a very different way. Displacing the focus on gender

inequality, the “association of empowerment with critical consciousness and collective action” (as it had originally been used by feminists in the Global South), “was eclipsed by the interest in investing in women and girls, which came with international development’s growing appeal to the corporate sector” (Cornwall, 2014, p. 130).

Take, once more, USAID as an example. In describing its work on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment,” the agency highlights the development gains that come from investing in women (i.e., “human capital”):

> Investing in gender equality and women’s empowerment can unlock human potential on a transformational scale. Simply by empowering women farmers with the same access to land, new technologies and capital as men, we can increase crop yields by as much as 30 percent and feed an additional 150 million people. Women account for one-half of the potential human capital in any economy and, according to the World Bank, countries with greater gender equality are more prosperous and competitive (USAID n.d.b.).

Further, USAID (n.d.a) argues that women’s participation in politics results in gains for democracy, reduces gender gaps in schools, helps improve peace processes and even results in greater social goods such as drinking water facilities and well maintained roads. Through the diffusion of skills, knowledge and training, USAID expects to see both the development of women and girls, as well as material returns for society at large. Thus, the solution to gender inequality is framed as a capacity building project in which *equality* is the ultimate return on investment. Regarding gender-based violence, USAID argues that women who are abused are “less likely to earn a living and less able to care for their children,” and presents access to “capital, markets and mobile technology,” which will enhance agricultural skills and support women’s desires to own businesses, as the best solution (USAID n.d.d). While USAID does acknowledge gender-based violence

as a human right's issues, its approach to combatting it is based again on a diffusion of skills, knowledge, and training in order to move women towards financial independence.

Making use of the already established gender myths that framed women and girls as reliable, good investments because they would be most likely to reinvest in their children, families and communities, investing in women and girls was easily presented to potential funders and policymakers "not as a way to address their obligations to gender equality and women's rights but as a way to spur economic growth and meet other developmental ends, such as improving child nutrition" (Cornwall, 2014, p. 131).
For large corporations looking to 'do good while doing well', investing in women and girls presented an incredibly appealing opportunity: these types of 'empowerment' projects were seen as "straightforward transactions, a matter of putting money directly into the hands of women and girls, training them in the arts of the market, and watching them flourish as they lift their families, communities, and national economies," all the while creating new markets, and new sources of corporate profit (Cornwall, 2014, p. 131).

A series of gender-focused policies, dubbed the 'New Policy Agenda,' built on neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory, helped construct a development discourse that emphasized the incorporation of poor women in the developing world into the global market (Alvarez, 1999; Wilson, 2015). This framework linked women's empowerment to women's market participation, and "shifted the burden of responsibility onto poor households, and specifically poor women" (Wilson, 2015, p. 808). Poverty alleviation at all levels was to be achieved through individual effort, self-help programs, microcredit loans, and small business ventures. It was a shift that would challenge and

oppress women in new ways (Aguilar & Lacsaman, 2004; Alvarez, 1999; Kabeer, 1994; Karim, 2011; Wilson, 2015).

A 2013 report by the Association of Women in Development noted three major trends within funding for women's rights. These trends include the prioritization of women and girls (at least rhetorically) in the majority of funding sectors; the rapid growth of private corporations and foundations as development funders; and a general corporatization of development agendas (Arutynova & Clark, 2013). Calkin (2015) documents a range of private corporations and public institutions that have taken up a 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics' or 'Business Case' for gender approach, including the Nike Foundation's partnership with the World Bank (The Adolescent Girl Initiative); the UN Women partnership with Coca Cola (the 5by20 Strategic Partnership); the United Nations Foundation's partnership with Exxon Mobile (the Roadmap of Women's Empowerment); and Goldman Sachs' 'Womenomics' Corporate Social Responsibility initiative 10,000 Women.

As made obvious from the cases above, not only have these projects been taken up by private corporations or public institutions individually, they have also led to remarkable relationships between transnational corporations and international development institutions. In addition, there have been numerous 'empowerment' projects created through partnerships between nonprofit organizations and corporations, the numbers of which continue to grow (Calkin, 2015). As will be discussed in a later chapter, the HTSM project, which works in partnership with a number of private corporations, governmental institutions, and nonprofit organizations is one of these.

The new empowerment approach is fueled by a discourse on women's entrepreneurial potential, as well as the current under-utilization of that potential. By framing women and girls as the world's largest 'untapped resource', the key to development (with development conceptualized here as economic growth) is premised on the unlocking of that potential, the tapping of that resource. Framing young girls as the solution to all development woes is accomplished through "an assemblage of transnational policy discourses, novel corporate investment priorities, biopolitical interventions, branding and marketing campaigns, charitable events designed to produce a social movement for change, and designer goods" (Koffman & Gill, 2013, p. 84).

While it is up to global corporations and already empowered individuals in the Global North to invest in women and girls, once they do, "responsibility shifts entirely onto the individualized figure of the girl after the initial investment in her human capital: 'she will do the rest' (Nike Foundation, 2008), and any critique of structures is rendered irrelevant" (Wilson, 2015, p. 819). As Wilson (2015) notes, the women and girls in this discourse are "always understood in contrast to her already empowered Northern counterpart," (p. 820). Corporations like Nike, with its Girl Effect project, and Goldman Sachs with its 10,000 Women initiative, are able to "'sell' the empowerment of women and girls to the private sector" by emphasizing the inevitable return on investment, while simultaneously emphasizing the "power of the consumer to empower girls around the world" (Calkin, 2015, p. 301).

Such projects position transnational corporations as "legitimate authority figures in development governance," all the while eliding the role of such institutions in perpetuating North/South economic inequality and erasing their responsibility in major

global economic catastrophes, such as the 2008 financial crisis (Calkin, 2015; Roberts and Soederberg, 2012). Further, such projects create new forms of development governmentality that "train and shape bodies for particular forms of economic agency and participation" (Calkin, 2015, p. 302). In this discourse, gender equality is understood as increased participation by women in labor markets, which, ostensibly, will lead to economic growth, which, ostensibly, will positively impact women and improve gender equality. It is framed as a positive reproductive cycle that will benefit all involved.

But, as Wilson (2015) argues, such a discourse is not merely a cooptation of feminist arguments for women's empowerment, a cooptation that instrumentalizes and depoliticizes gender objectives "in favour of an exclusively material understanding of empowerment…Rather these approaches to gender, and the specific models of material development they are embedded in, rely on, and actively reinforce and extend, existing patriarchal structures and gendered relationships of power" (p. 808). Redefining the object of governance, and creating new forms of governmentality, is part of neoliberalism generally, beyond the confines of development.

Neoliberalism encourages people to see themselves as "individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being," and it insists that both institutions and individuals strive to be "entrepreneurial, enterprising and innovative," (Larner, 2000, p. 13). Indeed, the model neoliberal subject "is one who strategizes for her/himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options" (Brown, 2003, p. 15).

Supporters of neoliberal development projects claim that a) economic growth will lead to greater gender equality and will benefit women, and that b) women's

empowerment will lead to greater economic growth. However, the feminist economics literature suggests otherwise: “The interrelationship between economic growth and gender equality is likely to be mediated by a variety of contextual factors, including the broad policy regimes, within which growth strategies are embedded, as well as the structures of local patriarchy” (Kabeer, 2016, 299-300). Making broad generalizations about the inevitable positive relationship between economic growth and gender equality is inaccurate at best and dishonest at worst (Kabeer, 2016).

For instance, although many suggest a positive association between export-oriented growth and the number of employed women generally, the actual numbers in terms of female employment vary widely by country and type of export (Kabeer, 2016). Further, the state, through policy and intervention, plays an important role in the ways in which such economic growth actually impacts women, their employment, and effects on gender equality (Kabeer, 2016). While there have been numerous studies citing the benefits of gender equality *for* economic growth, Naila Kabeer (2016) points out that “reverse findings relating to the impact of economic growth on gender equality are far less consistent” (p. 295). So, while gender equality might be great for the economy, economic growth isn’t so clearly great for gender equality, particularly as it relates to women. Indeed, the positive impact of economic growth on gender equality was found generally only in high-income countries (Kabeer, 2016). Further, a neoliberal discourse of women and efficiency, based on the assumed benefit of women’s economic empowerment via entrance into the market, glosses over the role of capitalism and globalization in further burdening women in the developing world (Aguilar & Lacsamana, 2004).

Economic growth is generally understood in terms of a country's overall production increase of goods and services in the span of a year (Kabeer, 2016). As Kabeer (2016) points out, this understanding has always excluded the invisible, unpaid reproductive work, usually done by women, necessary to the production of these goods and services – only the goods and services "bought and sold in the market place" are part of the growth equation (p. 298). While women are discursively constructed as an untapped labor source in the new 'empowerment' framework, in reality they struggle as an already-over-tapped labor source—entrance into the market (where they are generally relegated to underpaid "women's work," often in the informal sector) creates new sources of oppression and inequality (Pearson, 2005).

Calkin (2015), argues that the "liberal feminist focus on promoting women's careers in business has converged with employers' interests in exploiting female labour, resulting in a model of managerial, free-market feminism that does not contest and, moreover, strengthens the neoliberal model of privatization and state roll-back (H. Eisenstein, 2009; McRobbie, 2013; Prugl, 2015)" (p. 298). Further, such a discourse fails to contend with the ways in which women's labor allows for companies to compete in international trade in complex and problematic (for women) ways. Flexible, disposable, low-wage labor markets are necessary to the continued accumulation of global capital; and the ability of corporations to move freely about, easily leaving one labor market for a more favorable one, is part of neoliberal globalization (Wilson, 2015). Such a system adversely affects all workers, but particularly impacts women who tend to work in export industries that thrive on worker disposability.

Women are often brought into the market in even more liminal ways. Over the course of the last two decades, microfinance projects have been pointed to as the *key* for empowering women, addressing gender inequality, and alleviating poverty at individual and societal levels (Sen, 1999). However, a large body of research has shown that, in actuality, the microfinance system oppresses women in the developing world in new ways, often benefiting the middle class at the expense of the poorest (Kabeer, 2005; Karim, 2011; Mayoux, 2010; Wilson, 2015).

Further, as Wilson (2015) frames it, "microfinance epitomizes the neoliberal focus on the individual, and on moving up hierarchies rather than collectively challenging or dismantling them" (p. 809), which weakens potential solidarities across class and gender; and reinforces the idea that responsibility for poverty alleviation rests with individual, poor women, rather than the state. While most microfinance initiatives require the gathering together of women through 'empowerment' groups in order to obtain a loan, the focus on social transformation versus mere capital accumulation in these groups varies widely (Kabeer, 2005).

A key argument used in mainstream support for projects focused on women's economic productivity is that it will lead to gains for children and families. Such thinking is based on the perpetuation of the 'gender myths' referred to earlier, including the notion that women are more likely to spend their money on fulfilling family needs. However, as Kabeer (2016) points out, when mothers take up waged work outside of the home, they are often forced to keep an older daughter home from school so that she can care for other children, support the running of the household, etc. If childcare is not available,

mothers must often take their children with them to work, or leave them on their own to care for themselves (Kabeer, 2016).

Women's entry into waged labor and the subsequent increase in income does not *automatically* lead to gains for children. Further, because women are generally relegated to informal labor sectors (in which they are paid much less and face a host of new oppressive forces)—and because even in formal employment sectors women are paid much less than men—"an increase in men's activity rates is likely to lead to higher levels of income at both household and national levels than to an increase in women's rates" (Kabeer, 2016, 303).

In terms of good jobs for women within the formal sector, the reduction of the size of the state, and its role in providing for social welfare—both of which are requirements of neoliberalism—has had a strong negative impact, as work within the state sector provided "one of the few sources of 'good jobs' available to women in developing countries (Kabeer, 2016, 299). Further, the loss of state support for women's reproductive responsibilities has further impacted their ability to secure waged jobs in the formal sector (Kabeer, 2016). Thus, despite economic growth, gender inequalities persist for a variety of complex and intersecting reasons, suggesting that:

> the efficiency argument for gender equality will have to be cognizant of the underlying structures of constraint that shore up these disparities. When, for instance, the World Bank (2014) points to the growth dividends likely to accrue for policies which uphold women's land rights, facilitate their access to markets, promote their transition into high-value cash crops, provide community-based childcare centers and strengthen their ability to hire labor, the policies themselves may make a great deal of sense, but the inequalities they seek to address are not just random phenomenon to be eliminated through sensible policy recommendations. They are the surface manifestations of deeply-entrenched structures of patriarchal power and are likely to encounter considerable resistance from those who benefit from those structures" (Kabeer, 2016, p. 306).

Bringing women and gender into the development discourse has been an arduous task, and the mainstream focus on gender inequality and issues facing women is something to celebrate. However, the current neoliberal discourse around women and gender is used to "legitimize harmful neoliberal economic policies, empower corporate actors in the governance process, compound the invisibility of social reproduction and close off space for resistance by anti-capitalist feminists" (Calkin, 2015, p. 305). This new 'empowerment' approach to development posits that the solution to development lies within the current neoliberal, global capital system, and that individual women should work within it, rather than questioning what negative affects that very system has on peoples' lives or what an alternative system might look like (Aguilar & Lacsamana, 2004).

Such a discourse fails to question the asymmetrical North/South power structures and economic flows that contribute to the difficult reality of women in the developing world. Women's inequality, instead of becoming a challenge to a system that is inherently asymmetrical, is depoliticized and used to promote new market subjects (Elson, 1995; Karim, 2011). Further, the discourse of women's empowerment generally fails to consider issues of inequality and oppression across lines of gender, class, race, caste, etc. (Kabeer, 2016). Through this discourse, poor women in the Global South are framed as an "untapped resource", as individual entrepreneurs responsible not only for their own development, but for the development of society at large, regardless of the various constraints (e.g., lack of material resources, skills, education, childcare) they may face (Brown, 2003; Karim, 2011; Moser, 1989; Razavi & Miller, 1995).

However, as Larner (2000) argues, neoliberalism is an ongoing practice, not "a foregone conclusion," (p. 20). The "contemporary forms of rule are inevitably composite, plural and multiform," the sites of contestation to them are many, and the possibilities for new subjectivities and systems remain open (Larner, 2000).

The particular ways in which gendered narratives are attached to technology based projects is important to understanding the role of DDGs, which are only the most recent communication technology taken up by the development industry. To understand the discursive and political economic implications of DDGs, the analysis of them must be situated within this history. The next section highlights the ways in which mass communication technologies have been tied to the development project and the ways in which changes in technology use have followed changes in the development industry more broadly. Specifically, it looks at the use of ICTs in international development, pointing to issues of hierarchical knowledge creation and control, uneven North/South divides in production and power, and the reinforcement of gender inequality through technology-based projects.

ICTs, Gamification and Development

From the outset, the use of mass communication technology was conceived of as a key tool in carrying out the project of international development. In his foundational work *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Daniel Lerner (1958) emphasized the role of mass media—specifically radio—in promoting new attitudes and ideas to people living in traditional societies in the Middle East. Exposure to other people, places, and cultures, argued Lerner (1958), would foster the individual attitude and behavior changes necessary to ensure the transition from a traditional to modern (read: Western) society.

A proponent of modernization, Lerner saw mass communication technology as a key resource in fostering the development of individualized, rational subjects in the developing world and in promoting industrialization and capitalist economic growth, the end-goal of modernization. Lerner's work had a lasting impact on the field, and, though it has many challengers, many argue modernization continues to be the dominant perspective in the field today. While the terms and goals of international development were clearly defined according to the theory of modernization early on, from the 1970s onward the discourse around what development should do, and how it should be done, would become much less so (Kabeer, 1994; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Rogers & Hardt, 2002).

Two decades after the formal beginnings of international development it became clear that little *development* had actually taken place; rather, many countries in the area referred to as the Third World were actually worse off than they were before. The development field fractured as critical voices of the 1970s questioned the tenets of modernization and the institutional, top-down approach in which Western development experts identified solutions to local problems. Alternative development approaches began to gain traction and mass communication technologies were employed to reach a variety of objectives, some based on modernization (e.g. the 1975 SITE project), others based on participatory, localized approaches (e.g. the Mahaweli Community radio project). But while each new innovation was held up as *the key* to development, actual development outcomes rarely matched up against the supposed potential of the communication technology, whether it was radio, television, or, most recently, ICTs (Leye, 2009).

The 1990s brought a shift in focus on the use of broadcast media technologies to ICTs (Leye, 2009; Ogan et al., 2009). Supported by a discourse on the power of the Internet to democratize access to information, thereby closing the digital divide and empowering individuals, the focus on ICTs has led to a growing trend towards digitization within the development industry (Leye, 2009; Ogan et al., 2009; Spence, 2010). Like many past communication technology-based projects, a large number of ICT projects have operated on the assumption that by simply providing people in developing countries with access to ICTs their needs will be met, their individual lives will improve, and poor countries will be integrated into the global economy resulting in national development (Leye, 2009; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Steeves, 2014).

However, ICT based projects have faced broad critique for continuing problematic top down, one-way information structures in the development field; for incorporating gender biases that have further entrenched existing social issues; for sustaining "knowledge monopolies" that privilege western ways of knowing; and for ignoring important local contexts and needs (Innis, 2007; Kwami, Wolf-Monteiro & Steeves, 2011; Steeves, 2014). In Lee's (2011) study of "how different UN agencies conceptualized the relationship between women, gender, telecommunications and new ICTs," she found that while it is understood that a gendered divide in terms of technology consumption is prevalent, "the solution is to 'lift' women up by asking them to consume more technologies provided by the private sector," while little attention is paid to the lack of women in the production of such technologies, or to "why the private sector should be the primary party to develop technology," or to "how women's poverty is related to the privatization of telecommunications" (p. 525).

Projects that fail to explicitly consider gender inequality in terms of access and control over ICTs are damaging to women as they may perpetuate the biases behind such inequalities, resulting in the continuation of problematic practices and generating new negative impacts on women (Spence, 2010). As Hafkin (2002) has argued, "The assumption that a so-called gender-neutral information technology project will benefit an entire population regardless of gender is not grounded in reality, because of the impact of gender relations on technology and the societal constraints that women face in accessing and using information technology." Public policy and market regulation play an important role in how ICT projects in general (in terms of infrastructure, education, etc.), and development projects specifically, will impact women (Spence, 2010).

As noted by Gurumurthy in a 2004 Bridge Report, giving women access to and control over technology is a political act, and "Engendering ICT is not merely about the greater use of ICTs by women, but about *transforming the ICT system itself* to relate more to women and their needs" (emphasis in original). For ICT projects to really have a transformative effect on gender inequality and social systems, women must be supported in ways that allow them to control the production, design and use of ICTs: They must be understood "not simply as consumers," but must become equal participants in "the information society" itself (Spence, 2010, p. 71). As Lee (2011) argues, the:

> human development approach to new ICTs falls short on altering social and material relations. It may broaden the range of choices that poor people and developing countries have, but it does not transform the unbalanced power relations between developing countries and transnational corporations, between the global north and the global south and between the two genders (p. 526).

Despite critiques of earlier projects, the popularity of ICT use for international development has continued to grow (Ogan et al., 2009). Beyond supplying hardware to

developing regions, recent projects have worked to produce development oriented software to address a variety of issues: the mobile apps Esoko, iCow and Farmer's Friend aim to increase farmer productivity by linking farmers in Africa to agricultural information; Zimbabwe's Freedom Fone was developed to help NGOs spread important messages to rural populations; and Senegal's Jokko Initiative connects people in rural communities, bringing marginalized voices into community decision making processes. These mobile suites use voice, video, email, and SMS messages to deliver informational content to aid in development projects.

Beginning in 2005, a new kind of digital development came along: the use of online and mobile-phone based games. The UNWFP game *Food Force* was the first game designed specifically for humanitarian aid. Since then, digital games have been developed for use in a variety of international development capacities—from fundraising, to awareness raising, to, most recently, on-the-ground development work. Games, according to mainstream media, are sure to be the next big thing in development, and the number of games recently designed, along with the growing number of nonprofit organizations responsible for creating them, would make it seem the gamification of international development is in full swing (Sydell, 2013).

From where we stand currently, it remains to be seen if digital games will have the kind of broad, world changing impact scholars such as Gee (2003, 2005) and McGonigal (2010) claim they will. But, if and when they can, it would be at best naïve to assume they will be used to create a sort of world-saving-development-utopia that goes beyond the problematic approaches and biases of the international development industry to date. Thus, research that focuses only on the effectiveness of games in the

development industry is short sighted; rather, critical attention must be paid to the ideological frames and development narratives embedded in games, as well as the political economic implications of the production behind them to make clear how games are used to further specific development agendas and whose interests they serve (Bogost, 2006; Escobar, 1984; Wilkins, 1999; Wilkins & Enghel, 2013).

As an interest in games has made its way into an array of industries over the past decade, debates around what it means to "gamify" products, services, and industries have followed. The concept of gamification, defined by Deterding et al. (2011) as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts, has gained traction across a wide range of industry and social sectors, in areas as diverse as banking, organizational behavior and employee health, substance abuse prevention, and elementary school education (Bragg, 2003, 2007; Lee, 2012; Schoech, Boyas, Black & Lambert, 2013). In an educational context, games have been looked to as a way to reform traditional schooling systems across the globe, and the use of games as serious learning, assessment and behavior change tools has seen increasing interest as games are predicted to gain widespread use both inside and outside of traditional classrooms (Federation of American Scientists, 2006; Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine & Haywood, 2011; Lee & Hammer, 2011; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; Schoech, Boyas, Black & Lambert, 2013; United States Department of Education, 2010; Wastiau, Kearney & Van den Berghe, 2009).

The potential of digital games as educational and behavior change tools is, of course, pertinent to the development industry, which has long used mass communication technologies in its attempts to disseminate educational messages, expose people to new

ideas, and facilitate behavior change at the individual level (Lerner, 1958; Rao, 1963; Rogers, 1976a, 1976b, 1973 ; Schramm, 1964; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Although scholars have clearly pointed to the potential for learning within game environments (Gee, 2005; Shaffer, 2004), the potential for the transferability of those learned skills to other contexts outside of the game-world is less clear (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey & Boyle, 2012; Curtis & Lawson, 2002; Engenfeldt-Nielson, 2006, 2007; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; Squire, 2002, 2003).

And, despite much enthusiasm and positive theoretical support for games as sound learning tools, empirical support for these claims has, thus far, been mixed (Gee, 2003; Malone, 1980; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; McGonigal, 2010; Rosas, Nussbaum & Cumsille, 2003). Thus, the debate on whether games will prove to be effective in traditional learning contexts and/or for broader educational and behavior change purposes, including such projects within the international development industry, continues. Simultaneously, a more foundational disagreement over the boundaries of gamification itself is also at play: Does the simple application of game-mechanics and game-like elements (e.g., badges, progress bars, and point systems) to a non-game context qualify as "gamification"? Or is this process merely the "pointsification" of a non-game activity (Robertson, 2010)? If so, then what does gamification actually look like?

Rughinis (2013) argues that for the concept of gamification to in fact be tied to games, "it cannot consist solely of game mechanics, but it should also encourage gameplay," thus the mere application of point systems or progress bars that don't encourage actual gameplay are not part of the gamification process (p. 3). This

conceptualization moves gamification away from a simple system of applied game-mechanics and instead focuses on the expected outcomes of such a system: "we understand gamification as designing technology-with-intent, and therefore intent matters" (Rughinis, 2013, p. 4).

Gamification, in this context, is understood as a system of gameplay oriented towards a "productive purpose"; it is the "structuring and stimulating [of] *productive interaction* – that is, interaction that is ultimately evaluated with the productivity criteria of a non-game activity" (Rughinis, 2013 p. 4). In other words, a game is designed around a non-game related activity (such as health and fitness), and is structured specifically to stimulate certain interactions and out-of-game outcomes (such as self-motivation and daily exercise), and those outcomes (such as weight loss/aerobic ability) are evaluated against the criteria of the non-game activity (such as health and wellness indicators).

Building on this conceptualization, this study argues that the gamification of the international development industry can be understood as a process of "productive purpose," in which games are used to produce development-oriented results in non-game contexts. While the individual games used might fall under the definition of "serious games," as put forward by Deterding et al. (2011), the games taken together, along with the intent of the development industry in using them, makes evident a process of gamification in which gameplay is integrated into the system as a way to conduct or *do* development: games replace traditional development projects that would previously have been carried out in a non-game context, and the gameplay structures and stimulates productive interactions, the results of which are evaluated by traditional development criteria within a non-game context.

Thus, the conceptualization of gamification presented here focuses on the expected outcomes of such a system. The gamification of the development industry, then, is much more than "simple playification" or the use of "playful design" in development projects; rather, it represents a process in which gameplay is utilized with the intent of producing specific development outcomes (Deterding, 2011; Nicholson, 2012; Rughinis, 2013). Intent and productive purpose are not neutral concepts. Rather, behind the intent and purpose of each game is a specific organizational agenda and ideology, embedded into the game and its goals through the process of game design.

The idea that technological systems, devices, and artifacts are value laden is not new, or exclusive to games (Winner, 1977; Latour, 1986; Hughes, 1983; MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1985). But games are an especially pertinent area of study as game designers, through the production of software, are "in essence creating worldviews and worlds" (Flanagan, 2006, p. 493). Thus, research that is able to illuminate the worldviews and values embedded in games is needed, and it can be accomplished through critical textual analysis. Game studies scholars argue that such a textual, critically oriented, analysis of games is not only possible it is necessary (Bogost, 2006; Fernandez-Vara, 2015; Flanagan, 2009; Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2014). The meaning created both within games—"meaningful play"—and around them—"cultural significance"—lends itself to textual interpretation (Fernandez-Vara, 2015, p. 6), and the ethical and political values embedded in games by designers (whether intentional or not) necessitates a critical approach to these texts (Bogost, 2006; Flanagan, 2009; Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2014).

The work of Bogost (2011) points to the need for a critical examination of the ideological frames used within games that goes beyond the obvious text-based narrative

presented during gameplay. Games, argues Bogost (2006), also express rhetoric in their rules; they operate according to a "procedural rhetoric" that can be used to either reinforce or contest the ideological frames represented in the game's narratives (Bogost, 2006). Because "a game's reward system is a crucial mechanism for expressing the game's goals and values," understanding not just the aesthetic and narrative representations put forth in the game, but its procedural rhetoric as well, is necessary to understanding the worldview being presented through the game (Jenkins, 1998, p. 503).

An analysis of the ideological framing of development in digital games as well as the procedural rhetoric used in them is important not only from the perspective of game studies scholars, but is also necessary as a continued critique of the broader international development industry discourse (Escobar, 1984-85; Wilkins, 1999). Development-oriented games, like any other mediated development narrative, work within a broader development discourse to frame our understanding of the field both in terms of the pertinent issues that should be addressed by the development industry, as well as the possible/best solutions to them (Arce, 2003). This framing has important implications for the types of development projects carried out, the types of policies supported, and the kinds of solutions that gain acceptance (Hajer, 1995; Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007). As Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead argue (2007), "The struggles for interpretive power are not struggles to get the language and representations right for their own sake, but because they are a critical part in the determination of policy." Thus, a development-oriented game can, and should, be analyzed as one text within a broader development discourse.

But DDGs must also be understood as material products produced within a specific socio-historical and economic context (Fernandez-Vara, 2015). Such an approach is in line with Flanagan's (2006) understanding of the process of game design, which, she argues, includes, but goes beyond, the direct design of the game itself. In her view, game design "is presented as a wide category: design of company structures, the design of a technology or software architecture, collaborations, or the design of any kind of planned construction of computer-based artifacts (Flanagan, 2006, p. 495).

As the multi-billion dollar global digital games industry continues to grow at a rate unparalleled by the rest of the entertainment industry, it is necessary to consider the political economic implications of the production of DDGs, especially as smaller game developers and development organizations create products alongside large international bodies and private game corporations. Without attention to the asymmetrical structures of power at play in their design and production, DDGs risk replicating issues seen in earlier ICT projects, including the continuation of problematic top down, one-way information structures; the incorporation of gender biases that further entrench existing social issues; the sustainment of "knowledge monopolies" that privilege western ways of knowing; and the erasure of important local contexts and needs (Kwami, Wolf-Monteiro & Steeves, 2011). The uneven flows of images and capital produced by the complex processes of a globalized media industry, of which digital games are a large part, are important to analyze as they create "new configurations of power" and "produce new subject positions, new forms of oppression (and resistance), and new instruments of power/knowledge… that cut across political, national and racial boundaries in unexpected ways" (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 176).

Through the creation of development oriented games like those from the HTSM, organizations are adding a new text to the discourse *about* development— framing for players how development should be carried out, on whom it should focus, and what the end goal should look like. From a game studies perspective, video games are a perfect tool for generating and distributing such a message (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006). In creating the software for games, producers, designers, etc., construct realities for players, filled with the value systems, worldviews, and norms of the designer, whether embedded in the games intentionally or not (Flanagan, 2006).

Embedding ideologies in games works well as players are called on to take them up via the specific subject positions constructed through virtual play. These virtual subject positions create a subtle, "more flexible order where users of their own initiative adopt the identities required by the system" (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009, p. 193). Considered "*the* media of Empire" in the twenty-first century, games often work in favor of global hypercapitalism as digital gameplay "trains flexible personalities for flexible jobs, shapes subjects for militarized markets, and makes becoming a neoliberal subject fun" (Dyer-Witheford & De Peuter, 2009, p. xxix-xxx). By calling on players to take up certain subject positions within games, DDGs work as a form of governmentality, facilitating control from a distance (Dyer-Witheford & De Peuter, 2009). Games have the potential to "shape work, learning, health care and more," including the field of international development (Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2014, p. 3).

Jarrett (2014) contends that while people make choices in the digital spaces of games, those choices are inherently limited by, and work within, a capitalist system. The unpaid, immaterial labor of actors in a digital game space, while often not implicitly

economic, actively works to maintain a broader neoliberal market system and its values, norms, and behaviors (Jarrett, 2014). A feminist analysis of digital work and participation in DDGs is integral, then, to understanding how "nonproductive" labor in digital game spaces supports, reproduces, and creates social, cultural, and symbolic implications in both digital and offline societies (Jarrett, 2014; Terranova, 2000). Jarrett (2014) points to the mundane practices of posting Facebook updates, liking pictures, leaving reviews, etc., as similar to non-digital women's work in the "immaterial sphere" (such as socialization, communication, education, care, etc.) in terms of their ability to generate and maintain social stability, social relationships, and the "intellectual and creative commons" that connect users (p. 19). In other words, actions that take place in digital spaces have broad implications in terms of the reproduction of broader capitalist social relations, both online and off:

> 'Liking' something on Facebook may be an innocuous interpersonal activity, but linked to all the other moments where subjectivities inherent to the capitalist system are rewarded and celebrated, it becomes part of a powerful disciplining machinery specific to this historical moment (Jarrett, 2014, p. 24).

As social media games are used within the development industry, the ways in which they call on specific actors to do work, and the implications of such work, must be considered. In the realm of DDGs, such work often comes in the form of generating financial donations through gameplay, or by encouraging others to play/contribute. Often, would-be donors are called on to support projects aimed at empowering women. As Dingo (2012) argues, connecting financial donations to the concept of women's empowerment reinforces the 'megarhetoric' of empowerment: a mainstreamed, naturalized discourse, in which it is assumed that women's empowerment is equal to

women's individual financial security. By unlocking material support through gameplay and engaging with in-game donations and purchases, DDG players are able to assume they have empowered a poor woman in the Global South, and the player gains a sense of action and of personal empowerment along the way. Such a positioning of the game players supports a hierarchy of expertise, power, and agency, which rests with the women who have the access, resources, and skills to play DDGs, and which constructs them as most capable of directing and impacting the lives of women throughout the Global South (Kwami, Wolf-Monteiro & Steeves, 2011).

If the solution to women's empowerment is indeed individual financial support, there is little reason to consider broader political action once this support has been given. Dingo (2012) argues that approaches to empowerment that focus on financial exchange between individuals in the Global North and Global South reinforce "the notion of personal agency and monetary exchange over a broader feminist understanding of the transnational contexts that make donations, charity work, and development programs necessary in the first place" (p. 177). Thus, games that emphasize individual donations as key to women's empowerment and international development are deserving of critical attention.

Such an emphasis on private aid and individual empowerment in DDGs aligns nicely with a broader neoliberal development agenda that "reduces social change to entrepreneurship in a market-based system, and civic involvement and voice to clicktivism" (Wilkins & Enghel, 2013, p. 169). When the concept of individual empowerment is emphasized above all else, the constraints that social inequalities place on achieving individual success are erased, creating a depoliticized approach that

supports a "neoliberal project, in which market-based exchanges are assumed to be beneficial without serious critique" (Wilkins & Enghel, 2013, p. 170).

The purpose of this study is to understand how DDGs are used in development interventions aimed at 'empowering' women. Specifically, it works to understand the games created by the HTSM in order to highlight their development goals and intended outcomes, where their specific development narrative comes from, and what it means for the development industry. Because the HTSM has been able to gain broad mainstream appeal and significant institutional support, namely from USAID, it is an important site for considering how a discourse of women, gender, and empowerment is defined and used in connection with digital games, the newest in a long history of mass communication technologies taken up by the development industry.

Further, as the design and the production of DDGs brings together new markets and generates new industries, it is critical to understand the political economic relationships that have developed among private corporations, public institutions, and government organizations in making these games. Accordingly, this study asks the following research questions:

RQ1: How do the HTSM games fit into the broader Serious Games market?

RQ2: What kinds of public/private/governmental relationships were created in the making of the HTSM games?

RQ3: How did these relationships shape the games, including their goals, narratives, and use?

RQ4: How are women and girls represented and used in the HTSM games?

RQ4a: How are the development problems facing women and girls defined and represented?

RQ4b: How are the solutions to these problems defined and represented?

RQ5: How do the narratives of women and gender in the games disrupt or reinforce dominant development narratives already at play within the industry?

The next chapter, Chapter 3, outlines the methodology used in this study. In it, the research questions are attached to the specific methods used to work towards answering them. The construction of the study is detailed, and my position as a researcher is identified.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation presents a case study of the Half the Sky Movement (HTSM) games. It uses a variety of qualitative methods to analyze the individual games and the political economic implications of their production. The previous chapter made the case for the necessity and feasibility of both a critical textual analysis of games, grounded in game studies theory and tied to the role of discourse in the international development field, and a political economic approach to the study of game production. This chapter provides an explanation of the specific methods used to complete the case study.

This study combines critical textual analysis, qualitative in-depth interviews, and a political economic approach in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the HTSM's games and the development narratives embedded in them; the ways in which they are shaped by the design, funding, and production processes behind them; and the positioning and implication of these games within the development and Serious Games (SG) industries. To analyze the games as texts, this study uses ideological criticism to highlight the development narratives, ideologies, and value systems embedded in the individual HTSM games (Foss, 2009). I then employ a combination of ideological criticism and critical discourse analysis in order to highlight how the textual elements of the game function within a broader development industry discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Foss, 2009). The study then uses qualitative interviews with the individuals responsible for the conceptualization and design of the games, in order to understand how individual and organizational beliefs shape their production and use. Finally, a political economic

approach is used to highlight the role of industry relationships and structures in the production of these and future games.

Sample Pool

The research setting for this project is not tied to any one geographic location; rather, it is tied to the HTSM and the SG industry. The production of all four games created by the HTSM (one Facebook game, three mobile phone games) were examined in this study, but in-depth textual analysis was applied only to the two that deal directly with "empowering" women and girls (the Facebook-based HTSMG and the mobile-based game *Family Values*). The other two mobile games (*Worm Attack!* and *9 Minutes*), which are health-related and straightforward in their narratives and goals, are addressed more briefly. Interview participants for this study were purposively sampled based on the goals of the project, and interviews were limited to those directly involved with the HTSM games, as specifically detailed in the Interview Design section.

In order to understand the ideology and context behind the HTSM games, it was necessary to focus primarily on the individuals responsible for conceptualizing the games. While there are a variety of people who "touched" the games at some point—from social media marketers to the entire game design team—the focus of this study is on how the specific development narratives in these games came to be, and why. Thus, limiting the focus to those individuals in charge of conceptualization, design, and dissemination is key. These individuals are able to provide a deeper perspective on the production of the games than those involved at the periphery, or those who were simply assigned certain coding and design tasks once the game concept, narrative, rules and platform had already been established. The individuals focused on here are those

responsible for the decision to make HTSM games in the first place, those who decided how such games would be funded, structured, designed and delivered, those who decided what the games would and would not focus on, etc.

Prospective informants for this study were contacted through purposive and snowball sampling. Initial participants were identified from contacts listed on the websites of the organizations involved with the production and dissemination of the HTSM games. These organizations include a variety of nonprofit and commercial organizations (the HTSM; Games for Change; Show of Force), as well as individual contractors not affiliated, or no longer affiliated with, the organizations. Snowball sampling is a technique that involves making initial contact with an individual who meets the established criteria of the study, and asks them to refer additional informants (Heckathorn, 2007). Snowball sampling is useful in a study such as this, which requires a sample pool with specific knowledge. When relying on snowball sampling, particular importance is placed on the initial contact, as she will help guide the researcher towards additional informants. While many of the informants were purposively selected by the researcher previous to beginning the interview process, the snowball sampling process resulted in additional informants discovered through talking with interview participants.

Detailed information on interview design is discussed in the next section, Interview Design. But it is important to note here that the goal of these interviews is to understand the perspectives of those involved with the creation and dissemination of the HTSM games more fully. Thus, the goal limits the number of interview participants sought out. A small number of individuals were involved with the conception, design, and production of these games. Accordingly, this study focuses only on those individuals

in order to provide insight into the ideology/context from which these games came. This project included a total of six interviews.

Thanks to the popularity of the HTSM, digital games, and the trend towards TED Talk-style conferences and events, there are a handful of recorded interviews, speeches, and news stories with key individuals already in existence and publicly available. The data obtained through in-depth interviews has been supplemented with these conference videos, media interviews, and presentations. These additional data sources were analyzed before conducting interviews. They helped to inform interview questions, give background information so that interview questions could move beyond basic information on the project, and provided additional context for understanding the project, those working on it, and the thinking of participants at the time of the project as many of this supplemental material was created during or shortly after the project was completed.

A variety of organizational documents added an additional source of data. Following a political economic approach, documents including (but not limited to) financial information, evaluative reports, inter-organizational communication artifacts, and other business related content were included in this analysis.

Interview Design

In-depth interviews were conducted with those involved in the production and dissemination of the HTSM games. Because these individuals are spread across a range of organizations and are geographically situated throughout the U.S., these interviews took place over the phone, with some follow-up questions answered via email. All interviews were conducted by the investigator, which helps to ensure the holistic nature of the project. Discussions ranged from forty-five to sixty minutes. In some cases,

additional follow-up and/or clarification questions were asked via email. Prior to each interview, the investigator conducted background research on the organization at which the informant worked, on the informant's background generally, and on the informant's role in the HTSM games specifically. Having this information allowed the researcher to efficiently utilize the informant's time, and allowed the researcher to ask questions specific to the informant and her role in the games. For instance, knowing whether a person's background was in game design and her role in the technical production of the game, versus an informant with a background in international development who served as an adviser on the use of the games, helped the researcher efficiently approach individual interviews.

The interviews followed a similar format, in which the informant was asked about her professional background generally and her role in the HTSM games. These questions provided important information regarding the informant's role in the project, as well as providing insight into the informant's life world (McCracken, 1986). The second phase of the interview focused directly on the participant's experience with the games—her role in the process, her understanding of the games, her experience in making/using them, etc. These questions were designed to understand the specific processes that went into making and later disseminating the games. Further, these questions worked to tease out individual insights from the informant about the process, about the games, and about their use. Questions in this area were intended to get at an understanding of collaborative processes across organizations in creating and using the games. The purpose of this line of questioning was to ascertain what kinds of public/private/governmental relationships were created in the making of the HTSM games and how these relationships shaped the

games, including their goals, narratives, and use in order to address Research Questions 2 and 3 respectively.

The third phase of the interview was designed to get a sense of the informant's perspective on the HTSM games specifically, as well as the role and future of games in the development field more generally. Questions in this area probed the participants' feelings about the HTSM games and their use, as well as about the use of games in international development more broadly. The purpose of this line of questioning was to understand how the HTSM games fit into the broader Serious Games market in order to provide information towards addressing Research Question 1.

All interviews conducted for this study were audio recorded and verbatim transcripts were generated from them. Detailed notes were taken immediately at the conclusion of each interview, and again upon listening to the audio recordings. Video taped recordings of talks and interviews with key individuals were treated like interviews, with verbatim transcripts made of them and detailed notes taken upon watching/listening to them.

Data Collection and Analysis

Foss (2009) suggests a four-step process for conducting an ideological criticism of an artifact: "(1) identifying the presented elements of the artifact; (2) identifying the suggested elements linked to the presented elements; (3) formulating an ideology; and (4) identifying the functions served by the ideology" (p. 214). Using critical discourse analysis to further analyze the game as one communicative event in a discourse order (Fairclough, 1995), the analysis can get at a much more detailed, layered picture of the game's ideology, how it operates and in whose interest it does so. The process starts by analyzing

and categorizing observable features of the artifact in order to expose clues to its ideology. By highlighting the individual ideological signs within the games, I can then "[work] back to the often implicit ideology through the rhetorical content and form of the artifact" (Foss, 2009, p. 214).

The HTSM mobile phone games were obtained through personal contact with the HTSM. The games were emailed to me by the organization via a zip file and played on a game-compatible phone. Because the game *Family Values* was designed as a "choose your own adventure style game," playing the game just once or twice is not enough to understand the many potential narrative possibilities built into it. Therefore, I played the game enough times to work through the various potential outcomes, taking detailed notes along the way. The Facebook game was online and open to anyone with a Facebook account until it was shut down in March of 2016. My personal Facebook account was used to play the game through to its completion. Screen shots were taken throughout gameplay in order to accurately capture text, images, and other pertinent information. Sample screen shots from the game can be found in Appendix A (p. 253).

While playing the games, I focused on (and made ample notation of) the aesthetic features of the games, the textual elements, and the narrative structure. In this study, I was particularly interested in the ways in which issues of gender inequality, and solutions to them, were conceptualized and portrayed. Thus, particular attention was paid to the ways in which characters were gendered, and how that gendering impacted the role of characters in the games. The focus of the HTSM is on empowering women, thus it was pertinent to understand the role of characters identified as female in the game, the challenges they faced, and the solutions presented to those challenges. Because playing a

game is different than interacting with a static text object, for players are able to make decisions in the game that affect what happens next in the story, I also documented play structure.

During this phase of the process, I asked questions such as: What choices are the players able to make in the game? Is the player able to decide whether a choice makes the game subject happy or sad? Empowered or disempowered? What happens to a character based on a particular choice? Do certain choices generate a positive narrative? Do certain choices generate a negative narrative? This approach was used to answer Research Question 4, 4a, and 4b, which ask how women and girls are represented and used in the games, and how the development problems facing them, and the solutions to those problems are defined and represented.

In the second step of ideological criticism, the researcher "articulates ideas, references, themes, allusions or concepts that are suggested by the presented elements" (Foss, 2009, p. 216). Here I looked for ideas or concepts in the list of observable elements that I generated in step one. I then identified meanings found in these elements that point to particular ideological tenets (Foss, 2009, p. 216). As a third step I organized the observable and suggested elements into categories, which allowed me to look for "ideational clusters, themes, or ideas" that expose the ideology of the artifact (Foss, 2009, p. 217). Finally, links were drawn between the ideology of the game and the potential consequences of that ideology for those who engage with it via game play (Foss, 2009).

It is here, at Foss's final step – determining the function of this ideology as well as whose interests it serves – that I argue for an integration of critical discourse analysis, supported by qualitative interviews, and document analysis. Taken in isolation, the text of

the game could be analyzed according to Foss's first three steps, and generic assumptions about the functioning of the ideology and whose interests it serves could be made. However, if this text is analyzed as one communicative event in a discourse order (Fairclough, 1995), and that discourse is positioned within the context of the development industry, we can get at a much more detailed, layered picture of how the game's ideology operates and in whose interest it does so.

Using Fairclough's (1995) approach to critical discourse analysis, then, I analyzed the game text as the first piece of a three-part analysis that occurs at the micro, meso, and macro level. In Fairclough's approach, the text (the particular communicative event) is analyzed semiotically - language, visuals and sound effects are all part of the analysis. I chose, however, to employ Foss's ideological criticism to look at the game texts because its clear and detailed process helps to tease out the embedded ideology in such a dynamic cultural artifact (a game, with a range of aesthetic, textual, and play oriented elements) more fully. However, once the text has been analyzed using Foss' first three steps, I chose to integrate Fairclough's (1995) approach (which, indeed, calls for the researcher to make use of other methods in conducting analysis of a discourse).

The second step in Fairclough's approach calls for an analysis of discourse practices, which happens at the level of production and consumption. In this case, the focus is on the production of the game – how is it designed? Who is designing it? What are the institutional and organizational policies and practices at play when designing the game? How is the game production funded? How does that impact the practices of game production? Analyzing a communicative event, or text, alongside an analysis of discourse practices helps us to situate this text within a larger institutional order, which has

important implications for how the text is shaped and why (Fairclough, 1995). These questions are answered via document analysis and in-depth qualitative interviews, outlined below. This information helped provide a thorough response to Research Question 3, which asks how the relationships (created in the making of the HTSM games) shaped the games, including their goals, narratives, and use.

Fairclough's third step is an analysis at the sociocultural level, which takes into account an intertextual analysis, as well as the social and cultural context of the discourse. The ideology embedded within the text (the game itself) is part of a network of texts produced at the level of the specific organization, as well as within a broader industry of development organizations and institutions. Intertextual analysis allows the researcher to make visible not only the discourse being constructed across the HTSM organization – in the multiplicity of texts, including promotional videos, a documentary, a Facebook page, educational material, a website and games – but across the development industry more broadly. Further, a sociocultural analysis allows the researcher to consider the historical, cultural, political and social context of the industry, the power relations at play within it, and the connections between it and other institutions (financial, government, international, etc.). This approach worked to address Research Question 5, which asks whether the narratives of women and gender in the HTSM games disrupt or reinforce dominant development narratives already at play within the development industry.

While the aforementioned texts associated with the HTSM – the documentary, websites, promotional video, educational material – are part of the organizational discourse, additional documents including financial information, organizational

communication, policy reports, project evaluations, board information, etc., are necessary to the analysis of discourse practice within the organization. A political economic approach to document analysis is useful here as it gives researchers a way to evaluate documents based on four criteria: quality, authenticity, representativeness, and meaning (Scott, 1990). This kind of document analysis adds important layers of understanding, especially at the level of production and sociocultural practice, as it makes apparent important relationships between and across institutions.

Through organizational documents, the interdependency of institutions on one another becomes clear. These documents make evident who is funding whom and thus whose interests are at stake; which members serve on the boards of multiple stakeholder organizations; how policy decisions are made and where influence comes from; and, finally, they highlight a range of political, financial, and cultural relations that affect power dynamics within and beyond the organization. This information added additional information necessary to thoroughly answer Research Questions 1 and 2, which ask how the HTSM games fit into the broader Serious Games market, and what kinds of public/private/governmental relationships created in the making of the HTSM games, respectively.

Discourse analysis additionally allows researchers to understand the processes by which participants construct understandings of the world around them. Accordingly, it is used to analyze the interviews conducted with those involved with the production and dissemination of the Half the Sky Movement's digital games. The objective of discourse analysis is to discover how communication is constructed and to consider what it achieves and who or what is influential in the process (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The

study of discourse is dedicated to examining language as social practice (Candlin & Maley, 1997; Fairclough, 1995) that structures the social world (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999) through the construction of social order. While the researcher can derive meaning from the games (created for and disseminated to the public) through textual analysis, in-depth interviews are a tool through which the researcher can learn about the meaning making processes behind them (Gelsne, 2011). The qualitative interview is conducted in an attempt to understand the world from the subjects' point of view (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), allowing the interviewer to explore phenomena as they are experienced and interpreted by the interview participants (Englander, 2012).

The second part of this study is undertaken in an attempt to understand how the HTSM's games were conceptualized and designed: specifically, how development issues and solutions were defined by producers and then embedded in games through narratives and procedural rhetoric (i.e., game rules). Further, this study seeks to understand how relationships between institutions shaped and constrained these production processes and the artifacts produced through them. In-depth interviews give the researcher an understanding of the participants' (those associated with the conceptualization, production and dissemination of the HTSM's games) attitudes and behaviors in their own words (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). To understand these specific games, it is necessary to understand how the world, and specifically the field of development, is socially constructed, understood, and given meaning by the individuals responsible for creating them.

Understood as "a conversation with a purpose," (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), in-depth interviews are often more conversation than formal, structured interview. Using this

approach, researchers explore “a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 82). While it is of great importance for this process to remain nondirective, and not impose definitions, ideology, or assumptions on the interviewee (McCracken, 1986), this study does seek to answer specific questions. Thus, a semi-structured approach was taken, which helped ensure that key concepts/questions were addressed, while allowing the respondent to lead the discussion and make clear how the respondent sees, experiences, and navigates the world around her (McCracken, 1986).

These individual interviews work to highlight both the categories and logic by which the individual person sees the world (McCracken, 1988), as well as the organizational culture, and the categories and logic through which the organization frames the world. As explained by Lindlof and Taylor (2011), individual interviews can be used to highlight “how a group of people created a philosophy or cultural logic; how they apply this framework to situations, issues, or dilemmas; how they interpret texts according to the philosophy” (p. 174). Interviews, thus, allow researchers to gather information about things and processes that cannot be observed effectively by other means. Using individual narratives to understand organizational narratives is useful, in that:

> organizational narratives do not differ in significant ways from personal narrative. The key variance is that the stories told by organizational members make up a web of collective reality. Moreover, the organizations themselves are sources of stories that become embedded in – or problematic in relation to – the actions of the membership (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 182).

Indeed the HTSM is an organization built on storytelling: the success of the book was built off of the telling of the sad stories of others' problems, and the heroic stories of organizational solutions. According to Boje (1991), the storytelling organization becomes "'a collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense making and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory' (p. 106)" (as quoted in Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 182). Thus, such an organization is built on, and runs on, "stories told at multiple levels and through multiple symbolic forms. It is also through the use of narrative that organizations reach out to their external clients and constituencies in the ongoing effort to shape a favorable climate for their operations" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 182). Understanding the internal organizational stories, as told by individual participants in the organization, as well as the stories told to those outside of it—via the various media channels, most importantly here the games—is necessary to understand how the views of individual participants, as well as the cultural ideology, shapes the production and development narratives of these games.

Role of the Researcher

Soon after graduating from college, I embarked on a yearlong stay in Singapore as a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholar. It was during my time there, as I visited a number of Southeast Asian countries with my host Rotary Club and on my own, that I became interested in international development. After returning to the U.S., I decided to pursue a graduate degree tied to the fields of international and development communication. Around this time, a fellow Rotary Scholar, who had spent the year in Singapore with me, sent me a copy of Nicholas Kristof and Chery WuDunn's new book,

“Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.” The book had become a New York Times bestseller and my friend, a pre-med student who had also been impacted by her time with Rotary in Southeast Asia, felt I should read it. The book would become an important catalyst for directing my attention towards gender issues, and—at the time—I read it as an earnest and invigorating call to action.

Upon embarking on my journey to the University of Oregon to study with Dr. Leslie Steeves, I assumed I would complete my master’s degree and then seek out a career in the development industry, hopefully in a role that would allow me to work on issues facing women and girls. As I’m sure is the case for many graduate students, the two years I spent in the master’s program radically changed my understanding of “development” and the industry behind it. My focus shifted to the need for research on and critique of the industry and its processes, specifically around the role of new media technologies. As my master’s degree program came to a close, I realized it was only by pursuing a doctoral degree that I could continue to do the work that most interested me. Early on in my PhD program, during research for a class external to the SOJC, I happened upon a number of video games designed as development tools. I quickly discovered that little-to-no academic research had been done on their design or use, and I decided to investigate further.

As it so happened, it was around this time that Nicholas Kristof and Cheryl WuDunn took their best-selling book and turned it into a multi-platform phenomenon called The Half the Sky Movement (HTSM). A media sensation, the HTSM included a first-of-its-kind Facebook game, and a suite of mobile phone games to be launched in India, Kenya, and Tanzania. From there, I knew the path my research would take. Since

then, my research agenda has focused on the use of digital games in international development generally, and, with this project, on games created by the HTSM specifically.

As someone who has experienced the message put forth by Kristof and WuDunn as both a young, enthusiastic person eager to make a difference in the world, and as an academic scholar using a critical lens to examine the work within the historical and contemporary contexts of the international development industry, I understand personally both the HTSM's mainstream appeal and the great need for a critical analysis of it. Further, because of my own experiences and feelings toward the work (both positive and negative), I recognize the importance of maintaining a critical distance from the data and adhering to strict methodological discipline in my study of it.

Early on in my decision to research the use of games in international development, I knew I wanted to focus on the side of game production within the development industry, as opposed to studying game use by individuals in the developing world. This decision was based on several factors. One, I felt that my identity as an American graduate student with a background of study in development and international communication would give me some purchase in talking to those working in the development field. As I hoped would be the case, most were happy to talk with me about their experiences, the challenges they faced, and what they saw as necessary to the practice of using games. My ability to "speak the language of development" to a degree allowed me to form some credibility with the interviewees and helped in shaping the questions I had for them. Accessibility, in terms of geography, was also an important

factor in allowing me to reach out to a number of different participants on the industry side of the equation.

A core reason, however, that I chose this approach over the other, was that it allowed me to highlight issues within the industry itself that may not have been apparent if the focus were on individuals' interactions and experiences with the games. The development industry has continued its work for over six decades now. But many would argue that few places have truly experienced the benefits of development, and a substantial number have suffered negative consequences brought about by the project of international development. Thus, a continued study and critique of the industry itself remains important. Further, most of those in the target audience for the mobile phone games are poor women living in rural areas of India and Kenya. It was imperative for me to question whether taking up their time with interviews, and using their words and experiences to further my own research, would be more beneficial to them than research conducted on the development industry itself.

The gaming and development organizations conducted a variety of pre-tests and evaluations with the audiences who would be playing the games. While most of these were quantitative evaluations that looked at knowledge retention over time—rather than a qualitative approach that asked about players' experiences with the content of the game, which would have been the direction I would have considered—they were still useful in providing some insight into game use on-the-ground and their impacts, to a specific and limited degree, on players. Perhaps, in the end, it was my desire not to be another researcher parachuting into a community like Kibera—which is one site where G4C and the HTSM field-tested the mobile phone games—that drove my decision making process.

As I have come to the end of gathering my data and conducting this study, I stand by my decision and believe that the work has important points to make about the use of games in international development, points that are particularly meaningful to our understanding of the growth of the social good gaming sector, the relationship between it and the development field, and the framing of women and women's empowerment in the mainstream discourse—all of which have real implications for women and girls in the developing world.

My methodological approach to this study is grounded in the belief that good qualitative research should be rigorous yet flexible, interdisciplinary, and multi-perspective in nature (Mason, 1996). Such an approach results in an interpretative, critical, and self-reflexive method, which contributes to theory building (Lindolf & Taylor, 2011; Smythe & Van Dinh, 1983).

CHAPTER IV

THE SERIOUS GAMES MOVEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Digital Development Games (DDGs) constitute a niche section of a rapidly growing Serious Games (SG) industry. To understand the role and impact of DDGs, they must be analyzed as material objects created within a specific socio-historical and economic context (Fernandez-Vara, 2015). Thus, this chapter takes a political economic approach to analyze the rise of the SG industry and the role of DDGs within it. The chapter begins with an overview of the SG movement and industry.

First, the concept of SG is defined and contextualized within the larger video games industry. Next, the overlap between SG and the development industry is examined. In doing so, I address Research Question 1, which questions how the HTSM games fit into the broader SG market. Then I use data from qualitative in-depth interviews to illuminate the relationships across public, private, and governmental organizations, and across industries, that have been created in the making of the HTSM games. Further, I use these interviews to examine how these relationships shaped the design and production of the HTSM games, addressing Research Questions 2 and 3, respectively.

Serious Games, Development, and Social Change

The very first DDG, *Food Force*, was created by the UNWFP in 2005. Designed for children 12 and up, *Food Force* took players on a series of six virtual missions designed to teach them about the real-life obstacles faced by the UNWFP when working

to deliver food aid in the midst of humanitarian crises (Food Force, n.d.). Capitalizing on the popularity of video games, those at the UNWFP saw the game as a way to capture a youth audience while appeasing parents, who they believed would be happy to see their kids engaging with an educational game that proposed an alternative to the gratuitous violence and mindless entertainment of mainstream titles (U.N. Video Game, n.d.).

According to UNWFP spokesman Neil Gallagher (U.N. Video Game, n.d.), if you want to get your message across to young people, you have to go where the young people are: “Communicating with children today means using the latest technology.” And the latest technology was, and a decade later remains, video games. Early games like *Food Force*, were similar to other educational games out at the time: they were designed for use on desktop computers and were aimed at young students, often designed to be integrated into use in classroom spaces. But the past decade has seen tremendous growth in interest around the use of games for learning at all levels and in all spaces – from kids in a classroom to soldiers headed out to war.

The video game industry as a whole continues to be the fastest growing segment of the entertainment industry globally, but an expanding corner of the industry is eschewing the ‘entertainment’ descriptor for something more, something bigger, something *serious.* Unlike earlier edutainment and instructional learning games, which used some game characteristics to motivate players to learn facts and concepts through drill and practice activities, most so-called SG are designed to facilitate higher order thinking skills (Charsky, 2010; Van Eck, 2006). The SG Movement —which I am using here as a larger umbrella term that includes the genres of Serious Games, Persuasive Games, News Games, and Games for Change—supports the design of computer and

video games for non-entertainment purposes and has been taken up across a variety of industries (e.g., education, business, health care, military) (Becker, 2005; Charsky, 2010; Sawyer, 2006). Within the SGM is a sector of games focused specifically on social change. These games work to raise awareness about and draw attention to social issues, "transform players' intellectual views and real-world behaviors" around an issue, or present commentary on and generate new thinking about an issue (Schreiner, 2008, p. 12-13). And, according to those in the industry, SGs are going to be big.

A cursory look at recent news headlines (for examples, see Gudmundsen, 2006; Jensen, 2013; Neumann, 2013; Swallow, 2013; Sydell, 2013) Ted Talk videos (see McGonigal, 2010; McGonigal, 2012), or national conferences focused on SG (see Games for Change; The Serious Games Summit), it is clear that the usefulness of games for social change, and the inevitable growth of their use, is a certainty. In a 2010 Ted Talk, award-winning social game designer Jane McGonigal argued that an increase in gameplay from the current 3-billion hours per-week to a massive 21-billion hours per week was perhaps the only sure way to change our world and survive as a species on this planet.

In 2013, National Public Radio declared digital games the "next frontier" for advocacy and aid groups (Sydell, 2013). Soon after, Ken Weber (2014), the executive director of the multi-billion dollar commercial gaming company Zynga, argued that SG for social good and social change will soon be a staple in the gaming industry. And, in a recent webinar hosted by UNESCO and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), Asi Burak (2015), past president of the nonprofit Games for Change, declared that even though the current market for serious,

social good games is limited, what is being done "is so disruptive people are paying attention." And the "people paying attention" certainly include major players in the development industry, like USAID, the World Bank, and the United Nations, as the growth of DDGs outlined below will show.

It isn't surprising that the potential of serious, social change games to be used as educational and behavior change tools is of interest to the development industry, which, as outlined in Chapter 2, has long used mass communication technologies in its attempts to disseminate educational messages, expose people to new ideas, and facilitate behavior change at the individual level (Lerner, 1958; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Rao, 1963; Rogers, 1976, 1973; Schramm, 1964; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Since the release of *Food Force,* there have been at least 30 games designed specifically as tools for achieving development related goals (Fisher, 2015).

Millions of dollars have been spent, global campaigns have been rolled out, and entirely new organizations—created specifically to guide the production and use of such games—have been created. But to understand the use of SG in the development industry, it is necessary to first understand the history and use of SG more broadly. The next sub-section presents an examination of the research on SG as educational tools, highlighting their potential to create active and immersive learning environments, along with critique of their limitations. After that, a look at the Serious Game Movement and its growth as an industry is presented. This section outlines the origins, as well as the current state, of the SG industry broadly, before looking specifically at the overlap between it and the HTSM games. The final section in this chapter examines the complex relationships among public, private, and governmental organizations generated by the production of the

HTSM games and how these relationships shaped their production, including the games' goals, narratives, and use.

Serious Games and Serious Growth

In a 2013 keynote address at the Games for Change Festival (G4C Festival), game studies scholar Ian Bogost was critical of the dominant thinking about the SG Movement and the potential for games produced within the SG industry to promote real change. In preparing for his address at the 10th annual conference, he realized that for the last decade he, and others in the SG Movement world, had been saying the same basic thing. Everyone had been making an argument along the lines of this: "games have a unique power to depict and explain complexity, and…this power has the potential to positively impact the way that we think about and address complex social and political issues…" (Bogost, 2013). But in his address, Bogost (2013) asks why the same argument is being made ten years later.

On the screen behind him, Bogost points to a recent news headline for an article written about the G4C 2013 festival. It reads, "These video games won't rot your brain, they're changing the world." Bogost (2013) notes that, "if they were really changing the world, then a headline like this wouldn't be possible. If we were really succeeding at what we purport to be doing here, then the very idea of changing the world as a simple principle would have been revealed to be anathema to video games" (Bogost, 2013). Bogost argues that for the most part, the SG created over the last decade often aren't actually used for *gameplay* (i.e., there is little about them that makes them worthy of the title "game") and that most of them, in fact, do little of the complex, disruptive work

necessary to create change. More often, argues Bogost, SG work to uphold the dominant institutions and values already at play in society:

> Serious games seem largely to represent the goals of institutions, like military, government, corporate interest, education, and they're sort of institutional games. And actually when Games for Change started in 2004, that same sort of thing kind of applied to this organization too but it was focused on the nonprofit, social impact sector, rather than the governmental or corporate one.

A rare critical voice within the industry, Bogost argues that games created for institutions, not surprisingly, hold up the values and ideologies of those institutions—whether they are located in the private, public, or not-for-profit sector. Expecting SG to disrupt current structures of power and create change, then, is a naïve approach. From Bogost's perspective, the SGM has become more about profiting off of the *idea* of games, which are seen as hip, innovative, and radically different than older forms of media. This approach has come at the expense of making actual games.

Bogost (2013) argues that current SGs are "concepts at worst, and adornments at best". The Serious Game Movement, he says, has had its run. If we truly want to make good SG in the future, Bogost (2013) argues we should dismantle the whole idea of a SG industry and focus instead on making good games that happen to take up interesting topics and issues. We don't talk about movies for change, or books for change, or paintings for change, he points out, so why talk about games for change? He ends his address by saying that, "Maybe what we really want aren't serious games but earnest games, games that mean it…games that aren't just instrumental or opportunistic in their intentions" (Bogost, 2013).

In a later talk at the same festival Games For Change President Asi Burak (2014), smiled as he kindly disagreed with Bogost. "I love Ian," Burak said, but "the one thing

that I want to say is not only that I don't think that it's the end of what we're doing, I think it's the beginning." What is needed, according to Burak, is patience and more games.

As Engenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013) note, "The future of the gaming world seems more open now than it did even five years ago" (p. 1). The number of studies pointing to the persuasive and motivational qualities of SG has grown in recent years, with many arguing for the potential of games as learning tools (David & Watson, 2011; Gee, 2003; Aldrich, 2009; Gibson, 2006; Prensky, 2001; Shaffer, 2005; Squire, 2002) that can "support immersive, situated and learner-centered learning experiences" (Arnab et al., 2012, p. 159). And industries across the board are paying attention. By 2020, four years from now, scholars like Bogost might still be questioning how *game-like* SG are and how useful they are at creating real change. But they will be doing so in the face of what is projected to be a $5.4 billion industry.

A major driver of the SG industry has been the potential presented by games to create new spaces for learning, training, and behavior change. Unlike other learning mechanisms, digital games are able to create active, rather than passive, learning environments. As Arnab et al. (2012) note, many supporters see SG "as prime opportunities to practice key soft skills like problem solving, decision making, inquiry, multitasking, collaboration and creativity" (p. 159). SGs have been looked to as a way to reform traditional schooling systems across the globe, but their potential to be effective learning, assessment and behavior change tools has also generated great interest in corporate and military sectors for their possible training capacities (Federation of American Scientists, 2006; Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine & Haywood, 2011; Lee &

Hammer, 2011; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; Schoech, Boyas, Black & Lambert, 2013; United States Department of Education, 2010; Wastiau, Kearney & Van den Berghe, 2009). Although scholars have clearly pointed to the potential for learning within game environments (Gee, 2005; Shaffer, 2004), the potential for the transferability of those learned skills to other contexts outside of the game-world is less clear (Connolly, Boyle, MacArthur, Hainey & Boyle, 2012; Curtis & Lawson, 2002; Engenfeldt-Nielson, 2006, 2007; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; Squire, 2002, 2003). And empirical support for games as sound learning tools has, thus far, been mixed (Gee, 2003; Malone, 1980; McClarty, Orr, Frey, Dolan, Vassileva, McVay, 2012; McGonigal, 2010; Rosas, Nussbaum & Cumsille, 2003) and some remain skeptical of their use (Foster, Mishra & Kohler, 2010).

Though most agree SG show strong potential for use as learning tools, it is also acknowledged that they are not educational “magic bullets”, so to speak, as “inhibitors to uptake need to be recognized and addressed if the potential is to realised in formal education (Williamson 2009; Sanford et al. 2006” (error in original, Arnab et al., 2012, p. 160). In other words, there are obstacles to the successful use of SG as educational tools, regardless of the actual potential of SG themselves. Barriers to play, including issues of gender disparity, technological literacy, accessibility, motivation, cultural contexts, etc., all affect the uptake and effectiveness of games (Fisher, 2015). Nevertheless, even as debates on how to most effectively use SG (and, in smaller circles, whether to use them at all) continue, these games are becoming an important part of the global education and training market—a $2 trillion industry as of 2003 (Michael & Chen, 2006; Susi, Johanneson, & Backlund, 2007). And their reach certainly doesn’t end there. The next

section outlines the rise of the SGM and the industry beyond the context of traditional education.

Serious Games as Serious Business

The beginning of the SGM is often attributed to the 2002 release of the U.S. Army's free, downloadable video game *America's Army* (Gudmundsen, 2006; Susi, Johanneson & Backlund, 2007; Vargas, 2004). According to Ben Sawyer, co-founder of Digitalmill Inc. (a consulting company that produces market research on the gaming industry), and one of the organizers of the Serious Games Summit, *America's Army* "was the first successful and well-executed serious game that gained total public awareness" (Gudmundsen, 2006). The same year as the release of *America's Army,* the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "the nation's key non-partisan policy forum for tackling global issues through independent research and open dialogue to inform actionable ideas…," created the Serious Games Initiative under the Center's Science and Technology Innovation Program and declared a "Serious Games Day" (Wilson Center, n.d.. And in 2004, Digitalmill and the CMP Game Group held the Serious Games Summit in Washington, D.C.

The Serious Games Summit cofounder Ben Sawyer said that as games became an "everyday part of our culture," more and more organizations and industries were paying attention to them, "That's why this is becoming a major new sector within the games industry, and our mission is to grow that field" (Adams, 2004). The keynote speaker at the 2004 summit was Jim Dunnigan, an expert in military affairs who served on the technical advisory board at STRICOM, the U.S. Army's wargame development operation. It was the first stand-alone event for the Serious Games Summit, which had

previously been part of the annual Game Developers Conference in California. It was sponsorship from the Washington, D.C. based Serious Games Initiative that brought the event east.

That same year, MIT and the University of Wisconsin-Madison created the Education Arcade, which brought together a consortium of educators, game designers, publishers and policymakers and helped to sponsor a conference on games in education. In 2006, the Federation of American Scientists held a Summit on Educational Games, bringing together executives and developers from the video game industry, educational software publishers, researchers, teachers, military representatives, funding organizations, and government policy-makers to "explore how the United States can harness the powerful features of digital games for learning…" (Federation of American Scientists, 2006, p. 3.).

Although many argue the main catalyst for the Serious Game Movement was, as noted above, the popularity of the 2002 release of *America's Army,* Henry Jenkins, a well-known game studies scholar and member of the MIT team responsible for creating the Education Arcade, points to a variety of factors already at play, which both allowed for the popularity of that particular release, and catalyzed the surge in the SG industry. Those factors include: a generation that grew up playing (and who thus appreciated) video games and who were now old enough to make decisions on education and policy; a growing body of research on games as effective learning tools; a growth of games studies programs at colleges and universities with students who needed real-world experience designing and producing games; the fact that small start-up game design companies couldn't compete with the big entertainment stalwarts (so they decided to try something

new); and a passionate political debate on the protection of game content under the First Amendment (Jenkins, 2006). The intersection of these various factors, argues Jenkins, are what allowed for the rise of the SG Movement and the subsequent SG industry.

As Djaouti et al. (2011) note, games that could certainly be called *serious* had been around long before 2002, and the use of games for training professionals and broadcasting serious messages dates back to at least the 1950s. Yet it's only been recently that the interest in and production of serious games specifically has been enough to warrant such categorization. Djaouti et al. (2011) point to "the dominance of 'entertainment' games in the market, and the bad reputation from which they sometimes suffer" as one reason for the recent push in extracting and differentiating SG from the broader games market (p. 34). Re-categorizing and refocusing a segment of games as *serious* created a way for the U.S.-led SG Movement to separate itself and its games from the dominant, negative perception of video games (Djaouti et al., 2011).

Unlike other video game markets (such as those in Japan and Europe), the U.S. market often promoted games as children/youth entertainment, while simultaneously the violent content of many games spawned debates around the appropriateness of video games for children. Thus, "the U.S. video games market was the one that most needed to use a different label in order to be able to produce video games dealing with serious purposes and/or targeting an adult audience" (Djaouti et al., 2011, p. 17). Innovative U.S. game producers created the SG label to clearly identify a new type of video game. In doing so, they also created a new economic model to go along with it (Djaouti et al., 2011, p. 17).

Mainstream entertainment video games are produced for a mass audience. Individuals buy the mass-produced games at retail outlets, some of which are dedicated solely to the sale of such games. Most contemporary SG, however, are funded by individual clients who hire a development studio to create a game specific to their needs and goals (Djaouti et al., 2011, p. 17). The studio that creates the game is paid once for the production of the game, and the game is then used by the client however the client wants. Because "the game's success is no longer tied to its retail performance, we can identify that this different economic model is better suited to games dealing with serious purposes" (Djaouti et al., 2011, p. 17).

Thus, the SGM created not only a new type of game, but a new economic model, and a new market for that game as well. As of 2007, the SG market was estimated at $20 million (Susi, Johannesson & Backlund, 2007; van Eck, 2006). However, the number of SG suddenly surged in 2002 and 2003. And although there was a decline in the numbers from 2004 to 2006, 2007 brought tremendous growth that went far beyond the 2003 numbers (the year that had previously seen the most number of SG released). This growth set the tone for the following years. By 2010, the SG market had grown in value to just under $1.5 billion (Alvarez, Alvarez, Djaouti & Michaud, 2010; Djaouti et al., 2011). And, according to a report titled "Serious Game Market by Vertical," by 2020 the SG market is estimated to reach $5.4 billion. It should be noted here that as of February 2016, sales for the total digital games market reached $6.2 billion.

One country in particular is benefitting most from this growth: As of 2014, the SG market was "dominated, regionally, by North America," with the U.S. accounting for the

highest share of the SG market (54%) (Market Watch, 2015). For now, it appears that the U.S. specifically, and North America broadly, will continue to lead the SG market.

As it has grown, the SG Movement has brought together a wide range of industries and individuals. In a blog post after his keynote speech at the 2006 Serious Games Summit in Washington, D. C., Jenkins (2006) notes:

> the serious games movement is a powerful illustration of what Yochai Benkler has taught us about networked culture –the ways that it creates new and unexpected points of contact between commercial, amateur, nonprofit, educational, and governmental forces which are shaping the contemporary communications landscape.

New sources of funding for SG created an equally complex network. It wasn't long after those first summits that a variety of foundations, governmental agencies, non-profits and venture capitalists offered up money to be used in the development of SG, both to serve their own purposes and to support issues and causes outside of their arena. As Gudmundsen noted back in 2006, "Even universities are supporting development of serious games by permitting students to produce these games for academic credit."

SG are being integrated into a variety of industries, including military, government, education, corporate, and healthcare (Market Watch, 2015). The Serious Games Association, "the only international trade association serving the entire serious games industry," breaks the SG market down similarly, listing five key categories within the SG market: education, corporate games, games for good, games for health, and military and government simulations (Serious Games Association, n.d.). The incredible growth of these games is supported by a number of so called "major players": major corporate entities, mostly based in the U.S., including IBM Corp. (U.S.), Cisco Systems, Inc. (U.S.), Microsoft Corp. (U.S.), Nintendo Co. Ltd. (Japan), BreakAway Games

(U.S.), and Serious Game International (U.K.) (MarketsandMarkets, n.d.). The SG market report also includes two non-U.S. based companies on that list: Nintendo Co. Ltd. (Japan) and Serious Game International (U.K.). But the market area of particular interest to this study has received little attention thus far: games created for international development.

As stated previously, since the creation of the first DDG in 2005 by the UNWFP, other major and smaller development institutions have gotten on board, creating games to achieve a variety of development goals, with a variety of corporate, nonprofit, and governmental partners (Fisher, 2015). Some key examples are highlighted here. In 2006, UNICEF, Global Kids, "an innovative leader in using online games to promote global awareness and engaged citizenship" based in New York , and Gamelab, an independent game company, created an "innovative curriculum for engaging youth in the design, development and dissemination of high quality games that have the potential to educate their peers around the world (Play, n.d.). Funded by Microsoft, the project resulted in the production of *Ayiti: The Cost of Life,* an online game designed by members of the Global Kids Youth Leaders program, which was meant to show the obstacles to education facing those who live in poverty. The game was released alongside an associated curriculum for educators and is said to have been played by "hundreds of thousands of people" (Play, n.d.).

In 2010, award winning social-cause game designer Jane McGonigal teamed up with the World Bank Institute to create UrgentEVOKE, a "ten-week crash course in saving the world" (EVOKE, n.d.). The online game was aimed at youth in sub-Saharan Africa and sought to encourage the building of social networks and the advancement of

so called 21st-century skills. While almost 20,000 people registered to play the game, the majority of them were located in the U.S. and few (only 1,529) were located in the target area of sub-Saharan Africa (Fisher, 2015).

The UN Women Southern Africa Regional Office of UN Women commissioned the Kenya and South Africa based game design company Afroes to create *Moraba*, a mobile-phone game on gendered violence as part of their UNiTE campaign to End Violence Against Women and Girls in 2011. Along with their custom work for governmental and social agencies like UN Women, Afroes creates “gamification learning solutions for corporates and brands to deliver on business objectives to youth customers” (Afroes, n.d.).

While there have been an assortment of games created by various institutions for development purposes, none rivals the complex web of public, private, governmental partnerships generated by the making of the HTSM games. From Hollywood celebrities, to commercial gaming giants, to huge U.S. governmental buy-ins, the case of the HTSM epitomizes modern aid culture and the relationships across industries that define it. Starting with Games for Change (G4C), the nonprofit corporation in charge of leading the creation of the HTSM games, the next section looks at the making of the games, interweaving organizational backgrounds and individual histories to highlight the political economic implications of the production of the HTSM games, and the overlap among public, private, and governmental industries the process created. Using a variety of documents, artifacts, and qualitative interviews, this section analyzes the influence of these relationships on the games and explores what the games and their production mean for the development industry.

Making the Games: Games for Change and the HTSM

Games for Change (G4C) is a 501(c)3, nonprofit corporation located in New York City, New York. According to its mission statement, G4C is "Catalyzing Social Impact Through Digital Games" (G4C About, n.d.). To do this, they facilitate the creation and direct the distribution of so-called social impact games. According to the organization's website, they aim "to leverage entertainment and engagement for social good. To further grow the field, G4C convenes multiple stakeholders, highlights best practices, incubates games, and helps create and direct investment into new projects" (G4C About, n.d.). Founded in 2004, G4C has offered its planning and advising services on a range of projects, most notably in the creation of the Facebook and mobile phone games for the HTSM. Beyond their work with the HTSM, G4C is perhaps best known for their annual Games for Change Festival (G4C Festival), held, for the past two years, as part of the Tribeca Film Festival.

The "leading international event uniting 'games for change,'' the G4C Festival "celebrates the positive power of digital games," bringing together video game industry leaders, filmmakers, "indie rock stars," academics, politicians, neuroscientists, behaviorists, and more to discuss the potential of games for good (G4C Festival, n.d.). In 2013, the festival debuted The Marketplace, a space organized to facilitate business-to-business activity, which brought together game publishers, developers and service providers "working at the forefront of games for change" (G4C Marketplace, n.d.).

Organizations like G4C see that there is a ready and vibrant market for SG, and they are capitalizing on it. According to Asi Burak, G4C president from 2010-2015, it is the marketability, the "power of digital media," that makes digital games for social

change so appealing. “Why not,” Burak asks at the 2013 GSummit in San Francisco, “use the power of digital media to make the world a better place?” (Burak, 2013). Burak himself has been working towards this goal for some time. Prior to his leadership role at G4C, Burak co-founded Impact Games in 2006. Burak, along with co-founder Eric Brown, created Impact Games as a way to continue the work they had done as graduate students at Carnegie Mellon University’s Entertainment Technology Center.

While at Carnegie Mellon, Burak, a former captain in the Israeli army, and Brown, created an award winning game called PeaceMaker. According to the game’s website, PeaceMaker “challenges you to succeed as a leader where others have failed. Experience the joy of bringing peace to the Middle East or the agony of plunging the region into disaster…” (About PeaceMaker, n.d.). The game was inspired by real events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and asked players to take on the role of the Israeli Prime Minister or the Palestinian President in order to work towards a peace deal. With Impact Games, Burak and Brown continued work on PeaceMaker and went on to create an award winning platform called Play the News.

In 2010, Impact Games was bought up by Hybrid Learning Systems, a Pittsburgh based company whose clients have included the Defense Acquisition University (a corporate university of the United States Department of Defense) Procter & Gamble, and the University of Missouri. Brown stayed on at Hybrid Learning Systems, but Burak moved on to lead G4C. At the 2013 G4C Festival, Burak described the mission of G4C accordingly:

> The idea that if we are siting here and we say that games have this incredible power, and are quickly becoming the most dominant medium of our day, then there must be a way that we exercise some responsibility and use it in different ways than it’s used today. It doesn’t mean we’re going to replace the

> entertainment industry, it just means that how do we get this balance better and reach more people that we could help whether it's directly reaching *them* or reaching people in the West that could help *them*? This is to me the point of Games for Change" (Burak, 2014, italics added for emphasis).

While Burak doesn't specifically mention the role of the development industry, or describe games as development tools, it is clear that the type of social "good" and "change" he describes is tied to the work of the international development industry: Games should be used by those in the West to help *them*.

It was at G4C that Burak made what has been his biggest push towards harnessing the power of digital games for this type of "good." As the executive producer of the HTSM games, Burak was the man who "orchestrated partnerships with Zygna, Frima Studio, some of the world's leading NGOs, and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn" (About, Asi Burak, n.d.). When Burak came on as president in 2010, the HTSM had already been in talks with G4C about making a game, but it was under Burak's leadership that the project would come to fruition.

In 2007, Nicholas Kristof decided he was going to take a sabbatical to write a book about women and girls in the developing world, what would become "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide." When a film producer he was working with on another project heard about his plans, the producer immediately optioned the film rights for the future text (Interview E, 2016). According to a member of the HTSM team, "from the beginning, Nick was very aggressive and proactive about using media" for his projects, and his newest project would be no different (Interview E, 2016). Kristof had mentioned playing Free Rice and Save our Forest, social cause games out at the time, and knew he wanted to include games in his work (Interview E, 2016).

According to a member of the HTSM team, “I didn’t know anything about games at all. But at some point I went online to do some research and I came across Games for Change, and so I called them and said I’ve optioned this book and it’s going to be coming out in a year…we’re into exploring games, would you like to meet?” (Interview E, 2016). At the time, Alan Gershenfeld was the chairman of the board of G4C, and he asked Kristof to give a keynote address at the 2009 G4C Festival.

It was at that festival that the relationship between Burak, who would soon become the president of G4C, and Kristof would begin. After his conference address on the challenges facing women and girls globally, Kristof approached Burak and said, “I want to make a game” (Burak, 2013). Burak gave the following account of how the conversation went from there:

> Nick, why do you want to make a game about something like this? I mean the book and the TV series are filled with very tough issues, sex trafficking…domestic violence, rape, how can we make a game around something like that? And Nick had a very compelling, and very interesting vision. He said, “The reason I want you guys to make a game is because I want to reach beyond the converted. I’m writing in the New York Times, the people that read me are the same people that will turn on PBS and watch the TV series, are the same people that will go to a bookstore and will pick a nonfiction book. I want you guys to reach other people.” So the brief was very, very sharp. It was: I want to reach millions of people beyond the people that will care about those issues (Burak, 2013).

Although Kristof and WuDunn had already been in talks with G4C, the “regime change” at the organization presented a critical moment for the project: it was now up to the newcomers, Co-Presidents Asi Burak and Michele Byrd, to decide if the HTSM games were something they were willing to invest in (Interview F, 2016). And, according to a G4C team member, “when I say invest in it, it means that unlike any other projects that we have, this one required tons of efforts to raise the funding…It was just like,

nobody came to us and said, ‘Oh we have this budget so let’s make it’” (Interview F, 2016).

To take on the role of executive producer, as Kristof wanted, for such a large-scale project was understandably daunting for the growing nonprofit. But there was too much potential to say no: “Michelle Byrd, my partner, and myself [Burak] thought ‘It’s an amazing opportunity.’ It’s a high-profile project, it’s a part of a bigger story, bigger transmedia project, it’s at the heart of the mission of the organization, and we can use it almost like a demonstration project” (G4C13, 2014). If all went well, the games would not just be a boon for the HTSM, they would be a big win for G4C specifically, and for the broader SG Movement generally. Burak and G4C signed on. But the key to making the project happen was convincing funders to sign on as well.

According to a member of the HTSM team, when Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State in 2009:

> I knew that we needed to get USAID on board because girls are so central, girls’ and women’s empowerment and education and opportunity and all that is so central to Hillary Clinton was as First Lady and her work after that with Vital Voices, and so anyone who paid attention to this space knew that US foreign policy and USAID were really going to shift in the women and girls direction when Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State, and it did. (Interview E, 2016).

The team felt confident that this policy environment would help in their push to get others to support the HTSM.

As it turns out, much of the success of the project, in securing funders and building relationships with development organizations, would begin by happenstance, past connections, and friends of friends within the development industry. A member of the HTSM team, who was the key person in charge of fundraising, recalls:

> I happen to meet a guy at an event for World Bank who works for USAID and he said 'What are you doing here?'…it was, Nick Kristof was speaking at…the launch of the Nike Foundation's Girl Effect and he was speaking there and …I basically for the first number of months in fundraising I just kind of followed him around to these different events and collected cards from people and said 'We're developing this project, we're developing this project.' And so I met a guy in the elevator…and he gave me his card and he said, 'Well we're the biggest funder in international development in the world'. So…from getting that card…it was a number of years later but eventually we found our way to the right people and we proposed in the end new things we could make beyond the television series. (Interview E, 2016).

Building the coalition of funders would take three years and getting key organizations like the Ford Foundation and USAID on board was crucial to the future of the project. It was helpful that many within both the development industry and private foundations at the time were eager to bring more attention to projects that emphasized the empowerment of girls in the developing world. Better yet, this project was tying the empowerment of women and girls to an innovative new use of technology that would bring the message to millions of people who perhaps were not normally engaged with the issues. According to a member of the HTSM team:

> I think there was a real hunger in the environment that all these groups have been working in girls' issues in the developing world for anything that would help mainstream the conversation, mainstream the understanding of this research. And the sheer fact, I think, for a lot of people who read Half the Sky and then saw it on television the magnitude of these impressions and problems was shocking to people. So if you have been working on those issues, you know that, so you're just dying for other people to know it in the same way you do. (Interview E, 2016).

While development organizations had been working on issues facing women and girls for years, "it's not like people have always responded to the issue of women and girls with interest, in fact, what all these development people have been saying was that they were

speaking into the wind, like maternal mortality is rising, rising, rising and just not being able to get attention for it," said a member of the HTSM team (Interview E, 2016).

With their bestselling book on those very issues, Kristof and WuDunn had already proven that they knew how to tell the stories of women and girls in a way that would get people's attention. A member of the HTSM team credits this media savvy, the leadership of Hillary Clinton on similar issues, and the creation of a coalition of NGOs and other partners as the basis for the project's success. However, these very same conditions have implications for a variety of problematic issues brought up through the spotlighting of women and girls, and the partnerships across public/private sectors, all of which will be explored in detail below.

While four games eventually came out of the HTSM project, the ways in which they were funded and made have important differences. Thus, the analysis of the production of the games, and the games themselves, will be split into two segments: the Facebook game, titled *The Half the Sky Movement: The Game* (HTSMG), and the three mobile phone games. The design and production of both segments of the games paralleled one another, with overlaps and divergences that will be explored here. The next section analyzes the making of the HTMSG, which was the larger of the two projects in terms of the design and engineering of the game, the promotion of the project, and the number of funders and partners brought on board. An analysis of the production and use of the mobile games will conclude this chapter. A framework overview for the Facebook game, mobile games, Global Engagement Initiative (of which all of the games are a part) and a timeline of the HTSM are included as Appendices B-E (p. 263-267).

The Facebook Game

According to a member of the G4C team, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, "kind of got infected with the virus of 'Let's do games.' They thought about it as a cool way to reach young audiences, and also audiences…that would not necessarily watch the documentary, or read the New York Times…So it was really about reaching beyond the converted, that was always something that Nick was repeating as a mantra" (Interview F, 2016). Once Kristoff and WuDunn decided to make a game, "their expectations were rising and rising. They really wanted to reach millions of people," preferably somewhere in the somewhere in the range of 10 to 20 million, according to a G4C team member (Interview F, 2016).

The idea to also make mobile phone games to be used directly by audiences in the developing world was an one that G4C came up with early on in the project: "if it was up to them [Kristof and WuDunn] they wanted to do one big game," but the G4C team saw an opportunity in mobile games that they believed was worth chasing (Interview F, 2016). The production of games actually began with the mobile phone games (which will be explored in the following section), but for Kristof and WuDunn, the focus remained on the bigger picture. According to a member of the G4C team:

> what they [Kristof and WuDunn] cared about most is the audiences in the West. That's why the mobile games were not on their mind. It's not that they don't care for the audiences in Africa, in Kenya and India obviously. It's more about their thesis, the way they think about change is first of all focusing—that was the whole Half the Sky thesis—focus on people in the U.S. and Europe that could influence their government, that could contribute money…that's the whole way they think about it, and that's why they were focusing mostly on the Facebook game (Interview F, 2016).

But the decision to make the Facebook game a Facebook game, as opposed to using some other platform, was left up to G4C. The brief given to G4C by the HTSM was

basically to make a game that would reach millions of people, specifically people in the West, and preferably those not already familiar with the work of the HTSM.

The goal to make a big media product that would reach millions and bring the message of the oppression of women and girls globally to an audience not generally concerned with such issues was not unlike the previous work of the HTSM, from the book onwards. In a G4C conference keynote speech, Asi Burak referred to the HTSM as a pioneer in the field, not just because they are ambitious about social change, but because they are thinking about social change in a way others aren't: They're thinking about how to move social change into the mainstream, "like a blockbuster" (G4C13, 2014).

From the get-go, Kristof and WuDunn knew they wanted their games to go mainstream, and "The way Nick Kristof and Cheryl WuDunn think about it is, if we want to get to people, beyond the converted, we have to treat it like entertainment," said Burak (G4C13, 2014). One way to accomplish that was to use celebrities to sell their cause. In addition to an incredible number of celebrity appearances in the HTSM PBS documentary, and in testimonials on the HTSM website, Kristof and WuDunn knew they needed the help of celebrities to create buzz around the games. While the majority of the project's budget (60%) went to developing the Facebook game, the rest (40%) went to marketing it. First, they hired a press agent to stir up publicity and get Kristof, WuDunn, and the games, in front of audiences through popular vehicles like The Today Show.

Next, they used the money for launch events hosted by celebrities like Olivia Wilde and Maria Shriver. To Burak, it was "almost like we're launching a commercial product, entertainment product" (G4C13, 2014). Getting celebrities to engage with the

game beyond the parties was big too. A tweet from Ben Affleck, which came shortly after he had won his Oscar for *Argo*, was seen as a marker of mainstream success, and getting younger celebrities like Monique Coleman (best known for her role in Disney's *High School Musical*) to rep the game was key. But while celebrity endorsements were seen as important to getting the games in front of audiences, it was not the celebrities themselves, or the potential donations they might make, that the HTSM or G4C was concerned with. The aim was much broader.

The purpose of making the HTSMG was to reach people who had never heard about the book, who had never heard about the documentary, and who, perhaps, had never heard about these particular issues: "The idea was, it's a game about awareness. We're not going to teach you about the issue, we're trying to touch you and get you into the issue. But the idea was, we're reaching beyond the converted," said Burak (G4C13, 2014). Once they raised awareness, their goal was to get people to act through the game. Said Burak:

> If we got this awareness, if we touch people, can we get them to be digitally involved? But more than gameplay, can we get them to do some things in the digital world that are taking them from a player to an activist. And the next stage was to say, can we take digital to the real world? Can we do things in the game that will actually help people out there in real time? So it's almost like you're sitting in your living room, can you in one play help people out there? (G4C13, 2014).

Action and activism is conceived of here as gameplay that would unlock real-world donations from sponsors, generate in-game donations from individual players, and create engagement via Facebook with things including liking the game, posting about it, and inviting friends to play—all of which are in line with the forms of Digital Labor 2.0 described by Jarrett (2014) in Chapter 2.

In discussing the impact objectives of the HTSM games, Burak notes that they conceived of the audience for the game as a funnel: at its widest point, the game would "raise awareness and get the issues out there" (Burak, 2013). After that, the G4C team hoped a smaller percentage of the audience would convert from awareness to the kind of digital action and activism described above. According to Burak, one of the reasons Facebook was chosen as the platform for this game is because it makes this kind of digital engagement easy and accessible as it is social in nature, allowing those introduced to issues through the game to easily spread the word (Burak, 2013). Additionally, Facebook allowed G4C and the HTSM to build in virtual-to-real-world transactions and to target casual-gaming women – which will be discussed at length in a later section. Although the main focus in creating the HTSMG may have been awareness, their specific brand of digital action and activism is, in the words of Burak, key to seeing real change: "We wanted to reach the widest audience possible, but turn a small percentage into real activists, into hardcore activists that would really make a difference in the real world by donating money" (Burak, 2013).

Burak and G4C knew if they were going to grab players' attention and convince them to digitally engage, they were going to need a polished, commercial-level game. According to Burak, Kristof often asks, "Can we sell an NGO, or can we sell a cause, the way we sell a toothbrush? Can we do in the public space the same excellent marketing job that corporations are doing?" (Burak, 2013). If they were going to sell the HTSMG like a toothbrush, they were going to need a game that met commercial level standards, a game that could compete with the *Candy Crushe*s and *Farmville*s of the casual gaming world. As a member of the G4C team noted, it was important to work with a game design

company that was really experienced "because Facebook is a fairly nuanced platform, and also the audiences that play Facebook games have certain levels of expectations in terms of quality and polish in what they are looking for" (Interview A, 2016).

In a rare move, Facebook agreed to act as a sort of mentor for G4C and recommended they use a commercial developer to create the game; Facebook provided a list of six companies they thought could best do the job. G4C went with Frima Studio, Canada's largest independent gaming developer.

Founded in 2003, Frima has produced web games for "some of the biggest names in Hollywood," including Harry Potter and Looney Tunes (Frima, n.d.). Already a large and well established company at the time, Frima has since grown its business lines, acquiring other companies which have allowed it to reach and create entertainment products for new markets, such as advertising, television and movies, and for new technological platforms (Frima, n.d.). As the studio notes on its website, "Year after year, Frima continues to strike wide-scale partnerships with giants of the entertainment industry, such as Activision, Adobe, Disney, Electronic Arts, Hasbro, Microsoft, Nickelodeon, Sony, Square Enix, Ubisoft and Warner Bros" (Frima, n.d.).

Importantly, Luis Ubinas, the president of the Ford Foundation from 2008 to 2013, serves as the Lead Independent Director and Chair of the Nominating and Governance Committee for Entertainment Arts (EA), a Fortune 100 listed video game producer and client of Frima's since 2010. WuDunn credits Ubinas' understanding of gaming with giving him the foresight to supply the major funding for the HTSMG through his position with the Ford Foundation (Lamont Hill, 2013). Once the Ford Foundation made their initial investment in the project, others, like the UN Foundation

and Rockefeller Foundation, came on board. But having Ubinas, with his ties to both one of the world's largest gaming companies (fourth largest by revenue in 2014), and to a major philanthropic foundation, was important to giving the project power and validity in both the donor realm and in the gaming world. Such financial support by Ubinas also has important implications for the decision to choose Frima as the HTSMG's developer. Though my interviews did not provide confirmation as to why Frima was chosen to develop the game, beyond citing the company's experience with social games, the overlap in personal interests and ties should not be discounted.

Once Frima was on board to make the HTSMG, G4C was able to go to online commercial gaming giant Zygna and say, "This game has a chance" (Burak, 2013). The hope was that if Zygna believed in the viability of G4C's product, they would be willing to provide further guidance on its development and distribution. The relationship between Zygna and G4C quickly evolved from a simple mentor/mentee situation, to Zygna actively working to distribute the game. In an unprecedented move, Zygna added the HTSMG to its ZBar—a scrolling game icon bar seen while playing any Zygna game—a move that brought in 10,000 new players a day (Burak, 2013; G4C13, 2014). Thanks to the HTSM's professional marketing campaign and the help from Zygna, one month after its release the game's Facebook page had brought in 1,487,306 views, and 547,511 people had installed the game. But Burak says the launch of the game almost didn't happen.

One month before the scheduled launch, nervous funders "looked at the game and were scared to death because it was filled with such sensitive issues and it looked like a Disney game…" (Burak, 2013). It took additional, last minute effort to make sure all of

the stakeholders were on board. The stakeholders were numerous. First, there were the funders. When Kristof came to G4C with the idea for a game, he came without funders. Burak notes that convincing funders to get behind a Facebook game took up a big part of the three years they spent working on the HTSMG project (Burak, 2013). In the end, major support for developing the HTSMG was provided by the Ford Foundation, Zygna.org, the Rockefeller Foundation, Intel Corporation, the United Nations Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Next, there were the matching contributors. Johnson & Johnson and the Pearson Foundation contributed half a million dollars in donations to be built into the game. These donations became part of the digital action/activism Burak referred to earlier: by playing the game for 30 minutes, players would unlock a free book and a free surgery paid for by the donations from these contributors. Thus, even players who opted not to donate money themselves would effectively be taking some sort of "real world," beyond the game action. Finally, there were the nonprofit and NGO partners. These were the organizations that were sought out not only for their advice on designing game content (i.e., storylines, character details, solutions, etc.), but were beneficiaries of the donations as well. Eighty percent of the money raised by the game was set to go directly to the game's seven NGO partners: The Fistula Foundation, Gems, Heifer International, ONE, Room to Read, and World Vision.

When it came to choosing the best NGO partners for the game, the list had already been narrowed down substantially. According to Burak:

> There is already an established coalition of 30+ non-profits that are part of the Half the Sky Movement. Many of those are some of the world's leading organizations in women and girls' issues and solutions. Out of this list we chose a selection that covers all the topics featured in the game: women's health, gender-

> based violence, sex trafficking, economic empowerment and education (Huval, 2013).

Thus the NGOs best equipped to speak to the problems facing women and girls around the world, as well as the solutions to those problems, had already been established by Kristof and WuDunn in the writing of the original book and the founding of the HTSM. In an interview with HuffPost Live, Kristof said it was difficult to choose which NGOs to work with as there are so many doing great things. In the end, he said, “we wanted to balance those issues that came up in the gameplay that we feel confidence in, that would do something that viewers could relate to. And, so for example, in the U.S., we also wanted to have a U.S. component, so we chose GEMS, which works on the issue of sex trafficking right here in New York” (Lamont Hill, 2013).

The narrative of the gameplay itself, then, was a guiding factor in choosing which NGOs would benefit from the game. Kristof and WuDunn knew they wanted certain issues to come up in gameplay (issues taken from the book that players could relate to and that the HTSM felt confidence in), and so the list of benefactors was narrowed based on narrative. The themes and issues in the game took primacy, and choosing organizations that could speak directly to each of the themes incorporated into the games followed.

But beyond their relevance in terms of knowledge on the particular issue, there was another criterion the organizations had to meet. They had to be excited about games. Said Burak:

> The other dimension was the organizations’ capacity and enthusiasm around new media and exploration. They are beneficiaries, but it also demanded their time and effort as content experts and partners. Working with them was an incredible

> learning experience, and their feedback was crucial to get this to the finish line (Huval, 2013).

Getting the seven NGOs the HTSM chose on board was a must. According to Kristof:

> We really think that the most important issue right now worldwide is empowering women, getting girls educated, bringing them out of the margins, into the formal labor force, into the center of society, and this addresses so many issues around the world from global poverty on. And that's what the Half the Sky book was about, that's what the Half the Sky PBS documentary was about, and now that's what the Half the Sky Facebook game is about (Lamont Hill, 2013).

As noted above, the NGOs chosen as partners for the game are seen as "leading organizations in women and girls' issues and solutions," and having their names and logos in and behind the game "brought this project credibility, and outreach" (Burak, 2013). If the game was going to focus on empowering women and girls, the producers felt it needed to create an in-game relationship with these leading organizations. Burak says these relationships also brought multiple perspectives to the game (Burak, 2013). Although it was at times difficult to manage so many perspectives and expectations (as noted, such conflict almost put the game launch behind schedule), Burak personally "learned so much from the process of just hearing from all those partners and each one with its own sensitivities but also its own ambition and its own vision for it" (Burak, 2013).

As Kristof has repeatedly said, the goal of the game project was to reach "beyond the converted"—to target audiences not already familiar with the issues, people who hadn't read the book or watched the documentary, to reach the unreached. As a member of the G4C team noted, "through the games, they are perceived as a place where we would have the opportunity to reach all classes of different audiences, including global audiences" (Interview A, 2016). As the world's top social media site, and the most

popular venue for casual/social gaming, creating a Facebook game was an obvious choice. Kristof emphasizes the point that a Facebook game is "a very low barrier way to expose yourself to the issues" (Lamont Hill, 2013). A game on a social media site, on which many people are already comfortable, creates an opportunity for engagement with low commitment (in terms of time, money, energy, etc.) on the side of the player.

As Amy Neumann (2013), the director of the digital marketing company Advance Ohio and the founder of Good Plus Tech, a blog on social-good marketing and smart technology said, "The beauty of combining gaming with social good is that it's easy to engage people without requiring any change in behavior or large time or money commitment. Since it flows in the course of a fun game someone is already playing, it's quick, simple, and sharable." As Kristof said, "it's meant to be educational, but it's also meant to be fun" (Lamont Hill, 2013). Social-good-through-gaming becomes a space of low resistance, one built around easy accessibility, and sharability, and one that doesn't demand too much of the player, yet allows her to engage with so-called 'social good' throughout her day.

Aaron Sherinian, the vice president of communications and public relations at the United Nations Foundation, one of the in-game partners, said of the Facebook game, " the beauty is that you've got this force for good that's taking place where people have said 'social good's part of what I do every day, it's not an extra in my life, it's not the frosting, social good is the cake, the thing that drives me, whether it be something I do on my lunch break or whether it's something I do at the end of the day when I'm sharing with my friends'" (Lamont Hill, 2013).

The main ways the game allows players to 'do' social good are through the ability to unlock sponsored donations via gameplay and the in-game donation mechanics. According to one of the game's designers, "we wanted to see what we could do in terms of pushing the media in Facebook" (Interview A, 2016). The G4C team wanted to see if there was a way to take the already available Facebook feature that allows for in-game purchases, "but instead of using it as just…so that people can buy stuff in games as they normally did, but it will convert to donations that people would make on behalf of different organizations that we've worked with on the subject matter, so they would get matching donations" (Interview A, 2016).

This new feature has been dubbed 'direct virtual to real-life translation' as the same items that are seen in the game (books, surgeries, goats) are given to women in the real world thanks to sponsored and player donations. For instance, players see game characters learning to read and unlock book donations by spending a certain amount of time in the game. Players see game characters profit from buying a goat and are then given the opportunity to make a donation to Heifer International to supply a real woman with a real goat.

Sheryl WuDunn points to this as the "social impact element" of the game, "You aren't playing just for fun, you actually can have an impact" (Lamont Hill, 2013). She notes that the themes and content of the game's storyline, which she says are based on the themes and content from the Half the Sky book, directly connect to real world organizations like the UN Foundation, and that for every journey the character takes in the game "we have mapped that quest to a cause and to partners, and hopefully supported by real money, and that's never been done before" (Lamont Hill, 2013).

The storylines in the game were designed in such a way as to facilitate specific actions by player, to generate direct support for particular organizations and projects deemed most worthy by the HTSM. As Asi Burak, then president of Games for Change, said about the game's potential for social impact:

> this is a game where you can actually make a change. And there are $500,000 that were given by sponsors that players in this game can actually unlock. So the whole idea that even if you don't spend your own money, you can kind of make a difference, and this money goes to the nonprofits, it's a big deal. So, you ask why would you come? Come for the fun but you know actually in 30 minutes you can already trigger a book donation or surgery donation (Lamont Hill, 2013).

A member of the G4C team notes that the game also gives players the opportunity to explore the issues and get involved beyond the in-game donations. If players find they are interested in some of the issues in the game, "we would depart and give moments and say, 'Hey there are opportunities in your community, you can go find out more information here" (Interview A, 2016). The G4C team member said these moments for learning were intentionally sequenced into the gameplay so that players would be given an opportunity to learn more or engage with an issue after learning about the issue through the game's storyline.

As WuDunn notes, the game introduces players to terms and issues they might not have encountered before: "Maybe they'll learn the term fistula," she says, "maybe they'll learn the term microfinance or microlending, there are a lot of things they might pick up that they wouldn't ordinarily learn in *Grand Theft Auto*" (Lamont Hill, 2013). Players can choose to stay inside the game and expose themselves to information that way, or click on links to the partner organizations to learn more. Of course, there is also the hope that the game will inspire players to learn more on their own time, to conduct their own

research on issues and organizations they've been introduced to, to create community groups and movements (as Kristof says the book has inspired many to do).

The goal is for people to realize this—the issues facing women and girls—is "all of our problem and its all of our opportunity" to solve it (Lamont Hill, 2013). WuDunn thinks that "many more Americans, many more people around the world need to join in and to create a movement to bring about real change" and she hopes that games are a way to reach more numbers of people (Lamont Hill, 2013).

In the majority of interviews with the various actors (from the HTSM, G4C, etc.) and articles about the game, the focus is on the power of in-game donations (whether sponsored or personal) as a source of change. The educational component is not negated, but the virtual to real-life-translations (or transactions) are held up as driving the most meaningful impact of the game, for players and for potential beneficiaries. When Burak says they hope to turn a small percentage of players into "real activists, into hardcore activists that would really make a difference in the real world by donating," he gives us an idea of the importance placed on material transactions between those in the West (the term used by G4C in describing their target audience with this game) and *them* (Burak, 2013).

As Kristof says, "just by virtue of playing, the gameplay blurs lines between what's happening in the virtual world and what's happening in the real world, so you collect books in the virtual world and real book will go in the hands of a real girl somewhere, and how cool is that?" (Lamont Hill, 2013). By making a game for Facebook, the HTSM has been able to not only access a broad audience, but has been able to create a game that turns play-time into labor-time, generating material support for

women in the developing world via the work of NGOs. Concepts of digital labor time, material transactions, and empowerment will be explored at length in a later section.

What's really important about this game though, according to WuDunn, is that "we've actually married the problems with the solutions, so you can actually see that there are great organizations that are working on trying to solve these problems, and they are, and they're partnering here in this game…" (Lamont Hill, 2013). The game presents to players what have been determined by the HTSM to be the most salient issues facing women and girls, as well as the best solutions to solving those issues. Focusing on empowering, educating, and bringing women and girls "out of the margins, into the formal labor force," is seen by Kristof and the HTSM as the most important thing to do right now, at a global level (Lamont Hill, 2013). The problems and their solutions are laid out for players through the game's storylines. Creating these storylines was a complex, time consuming, collaborative process that involved G4C, the HTSM, the game's funders, and the partner NGOs.

When designing any project, G4C employs an eight-step methodology. The methodology is based on a series of questions, and the answers to those questions serve as guiding principles in designing the game. The questions (or themes) are centered around (1) the game's audience (who is it designed for?), (2) context (When and how is it played?), (3) impact (What is the goal?), (4) platform (What is the right technology?), (5) sustainability (Understanding the financials), (6) gameplay (What is the design?), (7) execution (From concept launch and beyond), and (8) assessment (How to measure success). According to a member of the G4C team, the "idea is to really evaluate, become very familiar with your audience, understand their needs, work with partners that are

most within those audiences, so that you can get feedback from them through the design process" (Interview A, 2016). The audiences and their needs are often defined by the organizations credited with knowing them best, in this case the in-game NGO partners.

The in-game partner NGOs were seen as experts who could help to guide the design process in order to create a product that would best tackle the desired issues. This approach has implications for the both segments of games (Facebook and mobile), but this section will continue to focus on the Facebook game specifically. The game designers were able to "sink in very deeply on the issues through a network of partners who we had as subject matter expertise and helping us to cut across the language and how to explain some of these issues. And really digging down to the answers of various causes of some of these issues" (Interview A, 2016).

The pre-production process for developing the game's storyline took approximately six to seven months. Forty percent of the total project budget was allotted to game production, and G4C didn't want to "just pay them [the game developers] for their time," they wanted to make sure they had a concrete concept before handing things over. One of the team members from G4C said, "It was a lot of due diligence but then in the end, we were able to move together very quickly through the development process with the actual developers. So basically, early on, they did some art design for us and just helped us with layouts difference ways, visuals for the arc" (Interview A, 2016). G4C was in control of creating the game in the sense of narrative – what would happen, to whom, and why—and their process was guided by the NGO subject matter experts.

G4C also knew that ultimately they had to get approvals from a number of partners, including the game's funders (Interview A, 2016). As noted earlier, with just a

month left before their launch date, it was unclear whether this approval would be given. In designing the game, it was necessary to constantly consider how the funding partners would take what was put in front of them: “we had to…present it in a way that it was going to make sense to people and people would sign off on it” (Interview A, 2016). Creating a narrative that would bring in enough of the necessary information, tackle sensitive subjects, and drive impact (the game’s ultimate goal) was challenging for the G4C team.

The Facebook game was very much written directly for a Western, and specifically U.S. audience, “who have different opinions and sensitivities culturally to some of the topics which we were covering which include domestic violence, genital mutilation, and pregnancy health, and things that are actually very taboo in other countries” (Interview A, 2016). Figuring out how to bring these issues into a game was an important step. In an interview with PBS, a reporter asked Burak, “How is it possible for something as lighthearted as a game to convey such serious subjects as genital mutilation and child prostitution?” (Huval, 2013). For Burak it is all a matter of perception, both in terms of games and in terms of issues. Although the mainstream perception as of now may be that games are “lighthearted” vehicles for entertainment, Burak feels it is only a matter of time until games “evolve and diversify” and are easily able to “address such a range of topics, tastes, and ages” (Huval, 2013). Just as it took time for nonfiction books, graphic novels, and documentaries to become accepted conduits for addressing serious issues, so will it be for games.

But the issues addressed in the HTSMG are certainly serious, and the game is being played now, while games are still seen primarily as modes of entertainment. To that

end, the HTSM and G4C took a strategic approach that mirrors that of the *Half the Sky* book. To address the issues of perception around tough and troubling issues in the game, Burak said:

> We made some deliberate design choices. For instance, focusing on the solutions and progress more than the oppression and challenges…The game begins with a woman who decides to take a stand and improve her situation. Mainly economically and socially. That experience 'opens her eyes,' and she is then able to help other women and girls around her, and travel to other countries. The issues become more difficult once we feel the player has more capacity to handle them in that context (Huval, 2013).

The focus on solutions is taken directly from the Half the Sky book and documentary, which emphasize specific paths towards change that can be taken both by the individuals experiencing the issue, as well as by the audience member reading/watching that experience play out. As Kristof noted:

> I think…the field [of development/women's issues] tends to scare people away as being kind of depressing, so I think what we've tried to do is create something that is very accessible and also something that without sugar coating the problems also accentuates the chance to make a difference, the chance that there can be a different and more positive outcome, and we hope that that essentially lowers the barriers so that people can become more aware of things and want to jump in and make a difference (Lamont Hill, 2013).

There was also an important balance between "cramming information in there" so the game could be educational, and "making it fun," said Kristof (Lamont Hill, 2013). WuDunn said that the game is "a starting point, so there isn't anything that's going to be particularly offensive or hard to discuss in the game, but it's a starting point, because it actually…leads to real world action" (Lamont Hill, 2013). By marrying solutions to problems, as WuDunn described it, the game is meant to create for players a sense of optimism and hope—a sense that while these issues are happening, and are troubling,

there are ways to solve them. And, most importantly, the game should give players the sense that they are working to help solve those issues simply by playing the game.

As a member of the G4C team noted, "Nick Kristof had very successfully conveyed a lot of information that was incredibly personal and in some ways horrific through the storytelling [of the book] and so we knew that we wanted storytelling to be one of the stronger elements or features in the game" (Interview A, 2016). By making the game character driven and narrative focused, G4C worked to create a way for players to step into and interact with the types of stories presented in the Half the Sky's earlier work, the book and documentary. Another challenge was the number of issues the team wanted to bring into the game:

> It wasn't just about teaching women to lead, we also had like 33 other topics that we wanted to cover. For that, we decided we wanted to make it module based so that we can focus on each one of these as an individual story. And that we would have these modules play out over a timeline or a story arc that would move the character from a place of oppression and not really having a lot of choice and we specifically emphasized there was the wrong choice, and moving to a place of opportunity and having the ability to see across choices and make decisions that are important (Interview A, 2016).

By using smaller, mini stories in individual modules that tied together through the main character Radhika's journey, the team was able to create a story arc that moved "from oppression to opportunity"; it was, according to one team member, "a way of saying 'This is a global story, this is the way that we can take these stories of in some cases very sad things and move it towards a place where people feel like they are engaging with something that's building'" (Interview A, 2016). The team decided on an "adventurous theme" that would grow across the storytelling modules (Interview A, 2016). Once they had that, it was necessary to figure out how to incorporate the other

important elements into the game, such as the donation and additional information (on NGO in-game partner) elements.

Throughout the design process, G4C checked-in with partner organizations “in the field” on game details like hairstyles, costuming, and character names (Interview A, 2016). With G4C in the lead, the game was designed “through that process of working with partners, working with the subject matter experts in order to continue evolving again from those impact goals, the audience needs, and the context of use, and going back and continuing to kind of tracking the design against those things” (Interview A, 2016). When the first prototype finally came together, the G4C team was sure everyone was going to think it was just as amazing as they did. But, said a member of the G4C team, “We showed it to people and people were like, ‘Ahh it’s not that amazing’” (Interview A, 2016). Said a member of the G4C team, “With most game projects, we don’t have the opportunity to make changes, or we haven’t at least worked on projects where we had the opportunity to make changes to the games after the fact. But the one we did was the Facebook game” (Interview A, 2016). After getting feedback from funders and NGO partners on their prototype, G4C realized they still had work to do.

The G4C team decided that what was missing was a strong First-time User Experience (FTUE). An FTUE considers the entry point to the game for new players: What do they experience in the first five minutes of the game, and how will those first minutes impact the rest of their gameplay? The game could begin by giving the player instructions, letting them customize their character, throwing them straight into action, etc. The G4C decided they needed to really shore up these first few minutes.

Going back and reconfiguring the opening also "kind of backed us up to forcing ourselves to simplify," said a G4C team member (Interview A, 2016). The team realized they had storylines that didn't actually go anywhere, they had different pieces that were playing back together, they had stories or issues that didn't make sense or were introduced at "awkward moments" (Interview A, 2016). So, according to one G4C team member:

> We went through and looked at pacing in terms of how the overall story arc felt from start to finish, 'Okay if we introduced this topic…then this is incredibly depressing, and this is not something that someone can engage with. We have to then distance another topic of that same tone and according to how often people …experience things (Interview A, 2016).

In the case of the HTSMG, the G4C team was trying to "make these designs not just be engaging and fun…but also respond to audiences' needs and be able to convey information and to drive impact in some way" (Interview A, 2016).

While the original timeline had called for the game to be launched in conjunction with the PBS documentary in the fall of 2012, the "funding and production time-lines of both projects did not merge" (Huval, 2013). But by March 4, 2013, International Women's Day (which was also the re-broadcast of night two of the documentary) the game was ready. The launch of the game brought an "unprecedented" 547 million press impressions from print, online and televised media (Impact, 2013, p. 2), and the game launch was covered by media outlets around the globe including The New York Times, The Guardian, Forbes, Huffington Post, TechCrunch, and the Los Angeles Times.

Kristof and WuDunn promoted the game on the Today Show and CNN's Piers Morgan. And mainstream media outlets had lots of praise to give. MSNBC's The Cycle

said "It's not just a game, you can actually create change by playing this" (Impact, 2013, p. 2). The Los Angeles Times noted that, "The game keeps things light but meaningful with the potential to engage 2 to 5 million women" (Impact, 2013, p. 2). And on CNN's Piers Morgan Show, it was said that "The future of advocacy may well be gaming" (Impact, 2013, p. 2). On March 6, just a few days after the game launch, the HTSM, in collaboration with Show of Force and the digital agency KBS+, hosted a 24 hour gameplay fundraising marathon—the "Halfathon"—which "aimed to maximize impact in a very short period of time" (Impact, 2013, p. 7). The event brought in 10,000 players from over 20 countries and raised $9,500 in donations. Although there are more than 2,000 games on Facebook at any given time, the HTSMG became the #9 emerging game on the social media site within two weeks of its launch.

In October of 2013, six months after the Facebook game was released, an impact report documented the milestones reached by the game: the game had seen 2,795,100 total unique visitors; it had gained 1,100,000 players; and $160,000 worth of surgeries and 250,000 books had been unlocked, for a total of $447,700 in total donations (Impact, 2013). The report notes that 300 million people play Facebook games monthly, but unlike most gaming platforms, the average Facebook game player is a 39-year-old woman. HTSMG players were 80 percent female, and 48.3 percent of them were between the ages of 18-34. The top playing country was the U.S., followed by Turkey, Brazil, Philippines, and Argentina.

From the very first day, the G4C and HTSM teams were receiving positive feedback from players. As Burak noted in an interview with HuffPost Live on March 4th, 2013:

> I wanted to say that some of the interesting feedback that is coming in, so we launched today but the game was kind of in a beta soft launch the last two weeks and some of the early comments are about parents playing with their kids, so either they play on the same computer, or they actually exchange views from afar, but many parents wrote to us and said 'I'm showing my kids how I donate to a cause and what does it mean to make a difference' (Lamont Hill, 2013).

The interview's host, Lamont Hill (2013), seemed convinced of the game's potential for impact when he noted that parents were "modeling activism…modeling engagement…modeling philanthropy, all of this stuff matters." In a later interview, Burak emphasized that, "Most players are so unaware [of the issues] that they come back and report that it opened their eyes to those issues" (Huval, 2013). From playing the game, players weren't only getting a better understanding of the topic, "but also the solution and the non-profit organization that is connected" (Huval, 2013).

Players, most of whom were women in the U.S. between the ages of 18-34, were being introduced to the issues and given the direct solutions to them all in the span of 14-minute game sessions. Many of these women used their time playing to teach their children both about the problems facing women, and about the joys of giving back. Said Burak, players "tell us incredible stories of parents and kids playing together and how the parents use the game to instill values of social responsibility and giving" (Huval, 2013).

As game player Loretta Ishida noted on Facebook, "My 7 year old daughter has watched me play and asks questions about why girls can't easily go to school in countries like Afghanistan – good conversation starter" (Ishida, Facebook post, 2016). On Twitter, @jriessman said, "I've been able to teach my daughter about issues abt which she was never aware. Thank you @Half" (Twitter post, 2016). One blogger even recommended the game as a great way to teach kids about international travel (Facebook post, 2016).

Most of all players loved how easy it was to do good: unlocking donations through gameplay made them feel like they were making a real difference, and it made them feel empowered. And they could do it in a short amount of time, without investing their own money. As @janiey_x recounted on Twitter, "I donated a book (for free!) to @RoomtoRead by playing for a short period of time. So empowering." (Facebook post, 2016). Fans on Twitter called the game "an easy and fun way to create change," a way to make a "real difference," a game that "Empowers Women & Donates to Charity," a "great way to make money for social causes," and "something you can do right now…to help real-world women" (Facebook post, 2016). One player, @piscesmermaid85, posted a screen shot from the game that read, "You've reached the rank of community advocate!" with the tweet text, "What I achieved last night before bed," (Twitter post, 2016).

Players felt they were making a real impact, and they were happy to find doing so took minimal effort. Empowering women was something that could be accomplished before bed. On Facebook, player Andy Hannam, who got to play the beta version of the game pre-launch, wondered if this kind of impact could be real. Her Facebook post reads:

> Hi guys. Is this for real??? Did I really just do this??? I've read all about the movement, etc. but by me playing a game, a school really receives one book??? Even if I don't have actual money to donate, myself? Sorry for being so skeptical, but it seems too good to be true. If this is the case…I guarantee you on March 4th, I will be spreading the word about this game (Facebook post, 2016).

Celebrities like Naomi Campbell were "Proud to support @Half the game to empower women and girls," and on International Women's Day, the HTSMG was named one of five ways to get involved (Facebook post, 2016). Most players loved being able to unlock donations for free because, as Erin Cromer said, "Those make me feel like I can

help even if I don't have a ton of money to spare!" (Facebook post, 2016). A few noted how much they learned from playing. On Facebook, Beth Danesco said she liked the game because, "Need to think strategically: get this to get that to get this. Makes it interesting and is a slight window into how complex many women's lives are" (Facebook post, 2016).

In another post, Suzanne Reymer said, "I think I liked getting the girl out of the brothel quest best so far. IT showed the complexity of the problem – uncaring relatives, police corruption, etc." (Facebook post, 2016). For Jessica D. Holman, the game was about "Unlocking donations by playing, and reminding myself how much help others need in the world" (Facebook post, 2016). Miranda Woosley loved unlocking the donations and getting real world facts, but she also loved "watching this family grow, I love watching my 'husband' go from not sure about what I'm trying to do to being apart of it and encouraging to move ahead" (Facebook post, 2016). For Anna Haywood it was all about, "The goat quest because I love animals" (Facebook post, 2016). For Miriam Rheingold-Fuller, the impact of playing wasn't about *actually* saving anyone, but simply about feeling better through gameplay. As she noted in her Facebook post on her favorite in-game quest, saving the girl from the brothel:

> It was my favorite because those chapters in the book affected me so much. I wanted to help every girl and woman whose stories were told, but I really wanted to go out and rescue every single girl in every brothel and give her shelter and education and love and safety. I know that I didn't actually rescue anyone in the game, but…I don't know, I just felt better afterwards (Facebook post, 2016).

Not long after its release, the game was once again in fundraising mode. Because they dedicated most of their budget to the initial development and launch of the game, there was little money available for creating additional content later on, or for addressing

problems that arose post-launch. So the incredible rush of players that came initially slowed quite quickly and, without new content to draw them in, petered out. Burak also notes that the HTSMG was late to the Facebook-game party: had the release come two or three years earlier, when games like *Farmville* were all the rage, perhaps they would have seen stronger participation. On reflection, he wonders if perhaps they should have skipped the social media platform all together.

While the HTSMG Facebook page brought in substantial views, there was only a 35 percent acceptance rate of the Facebook permissions necessary to install and play the game. If it had been just a web game, instead of a Facebook-based games, Burak expects they would have had more players.

In April of 2013 the game was launched in a second version, French, and there were plans for making translations of the game in Hindi and Swahili to expand the game's reach into India and Kenya. Neither version was ever made.

In the end, those who were involved with making the Facebook game see it as a success, at least in some regards. According to a member of the G4C team:

> I think we had, let's say modest success with the Facebook game, and some parameters, like press attention, maybe great success. And some parameters like did we reach 20 million people? No, we reached 1.4 or 1.3 million. So again, with the ambitious expectations, people, you know, someone like Nick and Sheryl, they wanted to see maybe 10 or 20 million people playing it. So I think the Facebook game was a success and I think that you could replicate it with the right partners. (Interview F, 2016).

But those at G4C also realize that raising lots of awareness about your game doesn't necessarily translate to lots of people playing your game. While the game acted as great fodder for stories in the press about the HTSM and its project, those who were interested in the HTSM project and its issues weren't necessarily interested in actually playing the

game. If you really want to convert "eyeballs" to players, you have to target people who are already playing games. According to a member of the G4C team:

> Our best success was working with Zynga, because…it's like their eyeballs are already on the mobile or on Facebook, looking for games, okay. So it's people, like going back to Nick's thesis, in many times it's people that…don't care at all about the issue but they want to find a new game…So that was the best way to get to players, while all the other methods didn't convert necessarily to the end, because if you think about it, if you care about the issue, but you are 35 years old, you never played games, you read about it in the New York Times, it takes a lot to get you to download something on Facebook, while someone who is already in Facebook playing games it takes very little to get him to play a game (Interview F, 2016).

While partnering with industry giant Zynga was essential to the success of the game, at least in terms of getting people to actually *play* the game, some of the other partnerships created through the project were less effective. According to a G4C team member:

> We were very ambitious with the number of NGO partners. If I had to do it again …maybe I would have taken one, maybe one partner, maybe two or three, but seven NGOs? That was crazy. And the problem started when some of them, not all of them, some of them started to raise questions, and they're not people that are used to playing games. Some of them were very conservative. Again, you can't get everybody satisfied and especially with something that has so much visibility (Interview F, 2016).

A G4C team member pointed to the disconnect between game developers and those working on the international development side as part of the reason for these issues. A theme that would continue throughout the production of the mobile phone games was a sense that whoever was on the other side (gamers/developers or developers/gamers) just didn't get what the other was trying to do. A G4C team member described the hesitation on the side of the NGOs and funders:

> They started to really panic…that there is going to be a backlash, and there was none of it, you know people took it very positively…But what happened was that

> a lot of those so-called beta testers for the NGOs or for some of the funders, I'm not going to mention names, again it wasn't necessarily a lot of them, it was like a group, let's say three or four that start to freak out, and their beta testers played the game. So again, most of them they don't know, they definitely don't know Facebook games, they don't know the conventions, and they didn't play for long, let's say 15 minutes, okay? So they see the beginning and they are like, 'Oh my god, this game is teaching people that the problems could all go away by collecting mangoes!' that women's empowerment is basically, you go, you fight with your husband, and as easy as going out and collecting mangoes and it's all good. And, you know, I don't think that was the message. (Interview F, 2016).

While fun in-game puzzles that asked players to essentially connect-the-dots and see how many mangoes they could get in an allotted period of time may have seemed out of line with the seriousness of the game content to the NGOs and funders, such tactics were perfectly in line with social media gaming conventions, which are often built on things like collecting multiple items in quick succession. Beyond that, the G4C team was trying to make the content something that people could find the positive in. As one G4C team member said:

> I also think that it's much better than the opposite, you know, that we are portraying, what the documentary got backlash on, or some of the writings of Kristof, that it's all dark and gloomy. I mean, we actually want to give a much more uplifting, positive and empowering experience that you could do things to change your circumstance. And it's also very, it's almost like an impossible balance to give someone empowerment and the ability to change while showing you 'but it's difficult.' I mean, you know, it's a very, very illusive balance. (Interview F, 2016).

As evidenced in the social media responses highlighted above, the players at least felt that G4C got the balance right, although most of those players only saw a very small portion of the game. The G4C team invested a lot of time and effort into designing a game that could last for weeks, because the common wisdom at the time was that players were looking for a game that would go on that long. But, according to a G4C team member, "what happened is that most people were looking for a very short experience

and only thousands…maybe dozens of thousands…finished the whole thing" (Interview F, 2016).

Additionally, although turning players into "hardcore activists" through individual donations was a strong initial goal of the project, once Pearson Foundation and Johnson & Johnson decided to sponsor $500,000 in donations the pressure to generate individual donations was a lot less (Interview F, 2016). In the end, only about 10 percent of total in-game donations came from individual players. The rest came from the sponsored donations that were unlocked through game play. A G4C team member attributed some of this to the fact that while the U.S. was the top playing country, the majority of players outside of the U.S.:

> were from Turkey, Brazil, or the Philippines, which is completely aligned with the countries that play Facebook games…and for those guys, it was, the donation wasn't necessarily the easiest, something easy to do in Egypt for example. So that was also interesting that we had a much more global audience. And it was good for the game. It wasn't good for the donation. (Interview F, 2016).

Whether the HTSMG got people to play out the whole game or just the first few minutes, whether they were convinced to donate their own money or simply unlocked sponsored donations, whether they ever logged in to Facebook or not, the game got the name of the HTSM, and a basic sense of their goal to "turn oppression into opportunity" out to millions of people. Kristof and WuDunn may not have gotten the 10 to 20 million players they hoped for, but they got over 1 million, and based on press impressions, hype around the game allowed them to reach many more.

According to a member of the HTSM team, the project did something much bigger than getting people to play a game:

> I think that the project overall did contribute to a new understanding, a greater, wider understanding of what women and girls in the developing world face. And I

> do think that it helps this conversation…has been a rebirth of…there is no doubt that a rebirth of international feminism…sort of, I don't want to say rebirth, it's not like it ever died, but reenergizing of the international feminism and you have Emma Watson taking the year off from making movies to devote herself to the HeForShe campaign for UN Women…but then I think we are on to a new phase of feminism and I think the Half the Sky contributed to that (Interview E, 2016).

Whether this new phase of feminism is in fact good for women in the developing world will be discussed in the next two chapters. The following section of this chapter outlines the design and production of the mobile games, highlighting the relationship between the HTSM and one of the world's largest development agencies, USAID.

The Mobile Games

While Kristof and WuDunn were thinking big—one game that could reach millions of people—members of the G4C team saw an opportunity to go small. At the same time that G4C was working on the HTSM project, a high-up member of the G4C team was consulting on a project with USAID in Jordan. While working on that project, G4C learned about, "an Indian team that did this ground breaking work [with mobile phone games] around 2005" (Interview F, 2016). The G4C team members were inspired by their work.

Simultaneously, the HTSM was already meeting with USAID, pitching to them the idea of a transmedia project that would involve one big game that would reach millions of people. The USAID team in Jordan knew about the HTSM pitch, and encouraged the G4C team to "go and pitch the mobile phone games…rather than pitch the games aimed at Westerners, because it makes much more sense to USAID to fund mobile games" (Interview F, 2016). According to a G4C team member, "It wasn't hard to convince Nick and Sheryl because it was very appealing, the idea that you can do those

mobile phone games very cheaply. They were just concerned that these would distract us [from the Facebook game]" (Interview F, 2016).

Those at USAID were excited about the possibility of using games, and over time, gave the HTSM two grants: one to develop and produce the mobile phone games, and another, in 2014, to enhance distribution of the games and the rest of the HTSM's media (including the documentary) in India and Kenya.

The focus of the first grant was to use the HTSM to help established NGO projects. The funds were to be used to develop and produce the mobile phone games and put them in-country, to create educational short videos to be used by NGOs, and to help partner NGOs with media and communication (Interview F, 2016). The grant was managed by FHI 360, a USAID sub-contractor, through the funding mechanism of USAID's C-Change project, as explained below.

The second grant was referred to as an "innovation grant" that gives private companies the ability to manage their own program without an implementing partner. The focus of the second grant was to take all of the media products of the HTSM, including the long-form documentary, the Facebook game, the mobile games, the educational videos, and the discussion guides, and attach them to national scale projects in India and Kenya. Managed by Show of Force, the production company responsible for making the Half the Sky documentary, this second grant was a way to further make use of the material already created by the HTSM (the documentary, website, Facebook game) and the original USAID grant (the mobile phone games, short educational videos).

As this study is interested in the production of the HTSM games, the focus here is primarily on the first grant, however a discussion of the goals of the second grant, which

made use of the games, is included at the end of the this chapter, and outcomes of the second grant are included with the rest of the discussion in Chapter 5. The following section analyzes the process of game design, specifically highlighting how the relationships between USAID, FHI 360, G4C, and the HTSM shaped the games' goals and narratives.

According to a member of the FHI 360 team (whose role will be further explained below), the HTSM's goal in approaching USAID was to find a way to repackage their existing content in order to further its reach:

> They [the HTSM] went to USAID and said 'we'd like to do more with this' and, so that's when they met with the head of gender, under the Secretary Clinton gender was a big issue…and basically they sold them on the concept of doing more with this, of them getting more money to take the program and make it useful for NGOs and make it useful in community settings. That was the premise of it, 'let's see if we can repackage some of it.' (Interview C, 2016).

According to the FHI 360 team member, this emphasis on "retrofitting" content created "a very odd marriage" between the organizations (Interview C, 2016). The HTSM already had their book out, they were in the midst of producing the TV series for PBS, and now they were "looking for a way to expand it, get some more mileage out of the TV program. They had that, they had funding for that, that was a go and they wanted to see it go beyond what it was" (Interview C, 2016).

It was determined that Show of Force, the production company creating the PBS special, would take content created for the TV series and repurpose it into videos for NGOs that would "work out there in development" (Interview C, 2016). Next, Games for Change "came into the whole mix and said we can do some games too for the NGOs, so they became a package" (Interview C, 2016). According to a member of the FHI 360 team, this kind of ad-hoc collaging of projects and partners isn't unusual: "A lot of times

this happens…this is the underbelly of development, this is where someone goes to the government with an idea and the government wants to fund it but they need a mechanism to do it" (Interview C, 2016). In September 2013, USAID decided to use the C-Change program as that mechanism.

The C-Change program was a "large Washington based…centrally funded mechanism that also had country buy-ins and different research and other communication-related activities associated with it" (Interview B, 2016). C-Change—which was implemented by FHI 360, a nonprofit human development organization headquartered in Durham, North Carolina, that serves more than 70 countries and all U.S. states and territories—was a USAID-funded project created to "improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social and behavior change communication (SBCC) across development sectors" (C-Change, n.d.). C-Change worked throughout the developing world to scale-up best practices in SBCC projects, strengthen capacity in SBCC, generate and disseminate knowledge about SBCC, and to integrate SBCC within wider development agendas (C-Change, n.d.).

One of the goals of C-Change was to "strengthen the capacity of local and regional organizations to plan, implement, and manage programs, thus ensuring sustained local knowledge and skills" (C-Change, n.d.). The main areas of focus within the C-Change program were family planning and reproductive health, HIV prevention, malaria prevention and control, and water, sanitation and hygiene. C-Change's motto is to create "Innovative approaches to social and behavior change communication" (C-Change, n.d.). Using mobile phone games to bring health and gender messages to audiences presented just such an innovative approach and made for a compelling proposal for USAID.

FHI 360 was USAID's global contract for communication as they had the technical knowledge necessary to create messaging (Interview C, 2016). So, it was up to FHI 360 to lead the messaging for the HTSM games, using C-Change as the funding mechanism for the project (Interview C, 2016). According to a member of the FHI 360 team, the new Half the Sky project was something:

> that they [USAID] really wanted to make work within this—the contractual mechanism [C-Change] that we are operating. And I think in part that's because FHI 360 through the C-Change Project really did a lot of innovative behavior change communication work and applied a very systematic evidence based approach to communication. So I think there was you know part of it handling the funding and making sure that it was you know administered as needed to be but also being able to provide that technical support in that grounding and the different countries' realities (Interview B, 2016).

When the HTSM became part of the C-Change project, it was "specifically to develop materials for NGOs based on the contents from it [the HTSM], so it was editing pieces of the Half the Sky program and also developing four games that were based on different topics" (Interview C, 2016). In the end, 13 short videos and three mobile-phone games were made. The videos were produced by Show of Force, and the games were produced by G4C. Understanding the role the games would play, how long they would take to be developed, and how they would be field-tested took up a substantial amount of time, approximately one year and six months (Interview C, 2016).

The timeline for creating the games kept shifting, especially as the relationship with the first game developer G4C chose deteriorated. According to a member of the FHI 360 team, "The people that they [G4C] had picked to develop the game wasted a lot of their time and money…They were six or eight months into it, we had to change subcontractors to get it done" (Interview C, 2016). After encountering problems with the first game developer, a company based in India, G4C took the project to the game

developer Mudlark, out of the U.K., and game publisher E-Line Media, which is based and the U.S. and co-founded by former Chairman of the Board at G4C, Alan Gershenfeld.

When the HTSM, who had already been talking with G4C, approached USAID about expanding the scope of their project by working with NGOs, Kristof and WuDunn still had one big game on their mind. As noted earlier, it was members of the G4C team, inspired by the work of tne India-based game developer VMQ and going on the advice of a USAID team in Jordan, who thought of making mobile games. Further, after the HTSM met with USAID and began to establish goals around working with NGOs and their audiences, it became clear to the G4C team that a Facebook game would create substantial barriers to working with those in the developing world. It's important to note again here that the two project segments—the Facebook game and mobile games—were happening somewhat in parallel. As a member of the G4C team noted, "development wasn't happening from the start to finish line in parallel, but imagine all of these things are out of the gate and happening" (Interview A, 2016).

When Kristof and WuDunn started thinking about a game project initially, they knew they wanted to reach audiences on a global scale. And the G4C team believed a Facebook game was the best way to accomplish this. However, "when it came to reaching some of the target audiences in those hard to reach places where they may not have reliable access to Internet or technology, or they may not have Facebook accounts or access to Facebook" the one big game approach was not going to be sufficient (Interview A, 2016).

They realized that if they wanted to reach audiences who were themselves dealing with the issues presented in the HTSM, they were going to need a different kind of game. According to a member of the G4C team:

> After we had built the Facebook game initially, which was intended for Western audiences, was intended for U.S. audiences, we chose a different technology in a different platform, and a different approach for that game…We had the opportunity to reach global audiences through that [Facebook], so we start that out as a global platform. But in the end, when we did some evaluations with our partners through USAID in India and Kenya, again during the early pre-production concept phasing process, we realized that the Facebook game was not likely to be highly used by those audiences because of a number of barriers (Interview A, 2016).

Those barriers included literacy, both in the traditional and technological sense, and access to the necessary technology. Next, they realized that the:

> [Facebook game] content itself was very much written for a Western audience who have much different opinions and sensitivities culturally to some of the topics which we are covering which include domestic violence, genital mutilation, and pregnancy health, and things that are actually very taboo in other countries (Interview A, 2016).

The Facebook game "was intended for Western audiences, for US audiences," (Interview A, 2016), but they also needed games that would "reach the hardest to reach" to fulfill the mission of their partnership with USAID.

"Early on," said a G4C team member, "we realized that if we wanted to do big things with audiences with this content, which was the objective of some funding that we had from USAID," they were going to need more than a Facebook game (Interview A, 2016). They decided to develop games for mobile phones, specifically for Java devices.

The goal of the project, according to an FHI 360 team member, was to work with on-the-ground NGOs, "looking at how they deploy media and technology," and layer these new materials (the HTSM games and videos) onto the existing programs in order to

make them more effective (Interview D, 2016). The project would work with NGOs that already had a gender program and that "had suitable implementation techniques for us [FHI 360] to embed media tools" (Interview D, 2016). It was determined by FHI 360 that they would use the new media tools to "engage an audience for anywhere from 8 to 10 weeks" (Interview D, 2016). The NGOs would meet with participants once a week and would go through each topic presented in the games and video material. Determining which NGOs would be worked with created tension between FHI 360 and the HTSM.

According to a member of the FHI 360 team, choosing the specific NGOs "was very complex because Half the Sky came in with NGOs that they were working with already. They had like a Half the Sky consortium" (Interview C, 2016). Under C-Change, FHI 360 had certain priorities already in place, specifically focusing on family planning and reproductive health, HIV prevention, malaria prevention and control, and water, sanitation and hygiene. But, "one of the complicating factors," in working with the HTSM was that "they had money from some NGOs and from UNICEF that they were also applying," to the project (Interview C, 2016).

According to an FHI 360 team member, "it was never clear cut, okay, where the money was coming from," and these multiple sources of funding led to clashes in priorities that made the project "very complex" (Interview C, 2016). For instance, because of outside funding already secured by the HTSM, one of the mobile phone games created, *Worm Attack!,* was totally out of line with C-Change's "package of health priority issues," but it was made anyways (Interview C, 2016). More details on this decision making process will be given in the upcoming section on individual games.

At the start of the project, the participants at the partner NGOs were given a pre-test interview and questionnaire. After approximately 10 weeks, there was a post-test evaluation to determine impact. One of the main goals of C-Change was to design a "rigorous evaluation of using both the videos and the games in a community setting to see if using these interventions was better than not using them" (Interview C, 2016). Developing a system of rigorous testing and evaluation for the games was a priority for those at USAID and FHI 360. For instance, on the FHI 360 website it is stated that at the organization, "We study, test and evaluate. We gather evidence and generate reliable data. The result? A deep understanding of the people and communities we serve and the interventions most likely to deliver the greatest impact" (FHI 360, n.d.). This approach is perhaps best encapsulated by the company's tagline: "The science of improving lives." (FHI 360, n.d.). The groundwork for the project began in July of 2014 and wrapped up in December of 2015, with final post-testing analysis and evaluations taking place through January 2016, the results of which will be discussed later.

The design of content for the games was done in partnership between FHI 360 and G4C. It was, as one FHI 360 team member put it, "a cumulative process" (Interview C, 2016). The grant for funding the project went from USAID to FHI 360, who managed the project, and G4C was "sub-granted" to make the games (Interview E, 2016). USAID was the only funding stakeholder for this project and "it was a pretty standard relationship between the client and the grantee to create that content" (Interview E, 2016). Thus, G4C was in charge of overseeing the actual development of the games, but FHI 360 guided the production of in-game narratives and messaging.

Unlike the production of the Facebook game, which involved multiple stakeholders, the relationship between USAID and the HTSM was “pretty straightforward” (Interview E, 2016). According to a HTSM team member:

> When you get money to make a film and make a television show and it gets funding from the board foundation you let them know what you’re doing and you let them know the objective you set out to reach…but you don’t involve them much on the new show or the filmmaking. But here with USAID we very much involved them…like they’ve read the script. They had input on the scripts. They had input on the graphics, that kind of thing (Interview E, 2016).

In determining content for the mobile games, “a lot of it stemmed from what C-Change saw as an information gap that existed in their [NGOs] program, a lot of it was done to bolster other NGOs on the ground work…a lot of it was designed around improving their project effectiveness…it was an informational gap within the areas that their [NGOs] focused” (Interview D, 2016). The games, then, were seen by FHI 360 as a way to add communication effectiveness to existing programs and to fill in information gaps in those programs. The games would be just one component of a set of activities including the HTSM videos and discussion sections. The project focus was on individual and community level behavioral and attitudinal change, using the full curriculum to reinforce specific messages (Interview D, 2016).

Many meetings took place with USAID, FHI 360 and G4C to determine the issues and storylines to be embedded in games. USAID and FHI 360 agreed that one game would focus on family planning, and, according to an FHI 360 team member, “we really wanted to talk about gender and come up with a way to deal with gender issues” (Interview D, 2016). Before the actual game design commenced, the technical side of the messaging—which included what would and would not be focused on, what would and would not work in addressing issues, etc.—was determined. According to a member of

the FHI 360 team in discussing how the messages in the pregnancy health game *9 Minutes* were conceptualized:

> USAID was very open, it was very funny, they were very open to the game, but they were very technical about it…they were all public health nerds, we're all public health nerds at the end of it, so we wanted to make sure everything…can you get this message in and can you get that message in and my whole career as a health communicator I've been fighting people you can't get every message in and you have to let it go. Can you show everything in the nine months? But they [USAID] liked it and they liked the idea and they bough into it, but we truly had to tweak what were those things that popped up each month, but they liked the concept there.

Although conceptualizing content for the games was a collaborative process between USAID, FHI 360 and G4C, where "everyone was giving their input and trying to build their perspective in there…ultimately USAID had, because they were paying for the game, had the final say. I mean it was their money" (Interview C, 2016).

The one exception to all of this was the development of *Worm Attack!* While the other two games, *9 Minutes* and *Family Values*, were designed based on the goals and priorities of USAID and C-Change, *Worm Attack!* was specifically created because of funding from the nonprofit DeWorm The World that the HTSM movement had already secured previous to establishing their relationship with USAID. It was the HTSM who pitched *Worm Attack!* as one of the games to be developed and insisted on creating it, even though the mission of DeWorm The World and the game based on its work was, according to an FHI 360 team member, "outside of the purview of some of our work which was…in the population and reproductive health division of USAID" (Interview B, 2016). Deworming was not a health issue FHI 360, or their division of USAID was concerned with and, according to an FHI 360 team member:

> we would not have developed a game on de-worming because that was not a health issue, frankly, that was the priority in our package of priority health issues, but they had gotten some money. One of the complicating factors was they had money from some NGOs and from UNICEF that they were also applying…They had some money from them and they definitely had to do a game on that and that was just not one of our priorities and it actually ended up not being a big priority for them because it never got great distribution of that game.

Regardless, the deworming game was nonnegotiable. Unlike the other two games, which were conceptualized collaboratively with USAID and FHI 360, it was left solely to G4C to design the game about anti-worm interventions. For all of the games, however, it was up to the G4C team, and the game developer, Mudlark, to take the agreed upon issues and storylines and translate them into the actual games. The G4C team once again relied on their eight-step methodology to accomplish this, and their process involved a lot of on-the-ground testing with potential audiences. For instance, to make *Worm Attack!*, G4C wanted to make DeWorm the World's deworming pill intervention into something exciting and relevant for kids. As a member of the G4C team said:

> the idea is that through taking deworming pills, which is a very simple intervention in a lot of the developing world because they are provided for free by organizations, that it's a very good intervention for kids but they don't know about it or they are not sure what kind of pill this is. So we wanted to make the concept of taking these pills for deworming familiar and fun for these kids (Interview A, 2016).

Members of the G4C team went and worked alongside DeWorm The World in India and Kenya to learn more about the intervention. Through this process they "really started to understand how these kids look at media, what their preferences in media are, really getting down, working with organizations that were either community or youth based that had access to those audiences" (Interview A, 2016). The team worked through DeWorm The World to "really survey and evaluate and understand" not only media

preferences, but also “technological capabilities” (Interview A, 2016). As a G4C team member said, “We in the States are very sophisticated with technology and our understanding of devices and tools and Internet is obviously more sophisticated and other audiences, for example, aren’t literate, right?” (Interview A, 2016). So a team from G4C went and “we immersed ourselves in them, we learned from them, we learned what their taste and preferences were in terms of graphics and styles. And then with that we built our first game,” *Worm Attack!* (Interview A, 2016).

Next, the team conducted similar activities with women’s groups and pregnant mothers, again to learn about their media preferences and technological capabilities, in order to create the pregnancy health game *9 Minutes.* They found an organization implementing interventions on pregnancy health through community health centers, but, according to a G4C team member, “at the time their interventions were just basically tented templates, and they were…not very successful at conveying the information both because they had illiterate audiences and because they just weren’t very interesting. And so people just didn’t fell compelled to look at them” (Interview A, 2016).

The team decided to build this information into a game as a way to make the information more “palatable and interesting” (Interview A, 2016). They also decided to make the game very visual to help overcome the literacy barrier. Once it had been created, the game was installed in the different health clinics of partner NGOs in India.

The final game created in the series was *Family Values*, a choose-your-own-adventure style game designed to target “gender norms and…to address behavioral determinants related to keeping girls in school” (Interview B, 2016). The focus of *Family Values,* according to an FHI 360 team member, was to deal specifically with the

normative determinants around girls' education, marriage, and child bearing (Interview B, 2016). A member of the FHI 360 team said the *Family Values* game was a very interesting one to make, "because that took a lot of testing and thinking and they [G4C] were very creative in the way they did that" (Interview C, 2016). An FHI 360 team member noted that conceptualizing that game was:

> really trying to figure out an empowering dynamic, and I thought Games for Change really was creative with the way they put that out there because it was a hard one….We talked a lot about what it should be and they came up with that positive kind of feisty girl character that wasn't too feisty, she couldn't be, not in the cultures that she was in and where it was going to go, but making the families make the choices and making the people playing the games make the choices was very important (Interview C, 2016).

The G4C team worked with NGO partners in the field during the conceptual phase of each of the games. And, according to a G4C team member, this work was key to getting the games right:

> We engaged with them, with getting feedback on playabilities and usability, the amounts of texts, the language, the translations. A lot of stuff we cannot validate ourselves. I can look at Hindi text that doesn't make any sense to me…so I had to rely on our partners and the networks that were set up in the fields (Interview A, 2016).

However, in creating the games they were also very much building off of what Kristof and WuDunn had already done with the *Half the Sky* book and documentary. As said by a G4C team member:

> We have a lot of subject matter course material from our partners on the documentary side. We have been using photos, and like award winning footage that was breaking on the floor for us to take. So we had a lot of great stuff to draw from in terms of visuals, but then when it comes to the actual content, 'Does this make sense?...Is this too casual?' And that's where again we worked with translators in the field, we worked with subject matter experts in the field (Interview A, 2016).

The HTSM already had the content there and ready to be repurposed and repackaged, it was just a matter of figuring out how it should be repurposed and to what end. The pre-made material was especially pertinent in creating the 13 educational videos, which were made by Show of Force, the same team that made the Half the Sky documentary for PBS. A "small discussion guide" was also created along with the games to be integrated as part of NGO community activities (Interview B, 2016).

As noted earlier, the games were one part of a broader curriculum designed for use in a pre-established network of NGOs who would incorporate the games into programs "that had interpersonal communication or other community level activities around the same topic" (Interview B, 2016). According to a member of the G4C team, the games were really useful, to a degree: "I can tell you about the mobile games that…there was a lot of positive on the side of the acceptance of people, especially younger generations, in some cases people were even more motivated to join a discussion group at a non-profit [because of the games]" (Interview F, 2016). But, as a member of the G4C team noted, implementing the games didn't come without obstacles:

> At the same time, in the negative side, the challenges of the accessibility of technology are still high, you know? Like, especially when you are not talking about consumer facing, when you're talking about those NGO discussion groups that really work with people that are very poor or in some cases they are illiterate. The barrier was still high. We got them devices, they didn't have enough of them. In some cases they were stolen. So my point is, we're still ahead of the curve in the sense that, yeah technology is improving, internet access is improving, but it's still not a plug-and-play thing to do, even when you work with the NGO, even when you train them. I mean, I went personally to India and Kenya and I sat with the NGO people, I trained them, our gaming companies in-country helped them, it's still a big deal…again, it's ironic because it's so much better than a brochure, but you know, it's not as easy as handing people brochures, you know, that they might throw away after five minutes, but it's much easier to give it to them. (Interview F, 2016).

For those on the development side, however, there was never the expectation that games could successfully be "plug-and-play" tools; they were useful as part of a broader program, but were not expected to be able to stand alone. As a member of the FHI 360 team said, "I think from our perspective, we certainly think you know it's not that the games were not valuable tools, but they're not sufficient in and of themselves in addressing the larger side of you know issues that they were supposed to target because you know you really do need a more comprehensive approach in our view" (Interview B, 2016).

The games were seen more so as one channel within a larger program. And it was the channel, not the message being carried through the channel, that was new. According to a member of the FHI 360 team, what was being said in the games was "not so very different from what we've been saying for the past five years," the games just created a new way to get the same message out to audiences (Interview D, 2016). For games to really work, "you really have to have six or seven impressions or times to play with the game to really have messages resonate and, you know, the content resonate," said a member of the FHI 360 team (Interview B, 2016). Further:

> the things that require behavior change really do require more than just information provision. And so that's what some of the…games did try to address attitudes and some of the, you know, more normative issues. But you also want some sort of engagement and…dialogue around the different communication pieces that you're working with. And so, you know, individual one-on-one gaming it's great, but it…lacked some of that community engagement. Now, I think when it's paired with some of those other, other types of behavior change activities it certainly can be a powerful tool (Interview B, 2016).

But all of those working within FHI 360 interviewed who were interviewed for this study agreed that "in order to have a lasting impact, it [the intervention] needs to go beyond the short little game" (Interview D, 2016).

In many of the interviews conducted with those from the FHI 360 team, the games were framed as conversation starters—they presented a new way to bring up sensitive topics and allowed people to engage with them in a way that was more removed than a face-to-face conversation. Further, the games gave NGOs a certain cache and credibility. One FHI 360 team member noted that having polished media to offer up, like the short videos and the games, helped give community health workers in India more authority with their audiences: the games and short videos "almost validates what they're saying, makes it more authoritative, people have more respect for what they're saying" (Interview D, 2016).

Simply having such well made media was credited with adding "more authority to their voice" and giving them a certain sway over audiences who otherwise might have seen the health workers as uneducated (Interview D, 2016). In the eyes of those working in development, the games were seen as useful tools to use along with a variety of others. But, like all tools, games have certain uses and certain limitations. As one member of the FHI 360 team said:

> to me, a tool is not anything that can be used by itself. This is what I kept arguing with, and it's like yes, you might get some [games] picked up [through independent downloads], but generally NGOs don't have tools and that's why we need you guys…people like us could develop good tools that people can use because they don't have that, and that's what I kept arguing. You go anywhere in the developing world where you have NGOs trying to do stuff, they don't have good tools. They make crappy stuff that they never have enough budget, and to have something like this is a goldmine…So to have videos, to have stuff available is something that is incredible, but it's not something people are just going to pick up and use. You have to have discussion, you have to have interaction with it, interaction with the kids, so it's really hard to tell somebody your tool, by itself, isn't going to change the world (Interview C, 2016).

This conceptualization of games as tools vs. games as independent-world changers came up multiple times. On both sides of the aisle, with the international

developers (USAID and FHI 36) on one side and the game developers (the HTSM and G4C) on the other, there was a general sense that the other group just didn't "get it". According to a member of the FHI 360 team, "At the end of the day, and this is a big point to make, gamers and film makers do not make great people in development…and you can quote me on that one. Their hearts are in the right place, but a film nor a game equals development" (Interview C, 2016).

This divide over what is development and how it can best be accomplished became a source of tension between the two groups. While one FHI 360 team member had great respect for the work being done by G4C, saying "I do really think the gaming people really felt like they could make a difference," there was a sense that the goal of those in the HTSM was more to grow their brand than to bring about real change. A lengthy quote from a member of the FHI 360 team illustrates this divide:

> I think the Half the Sky people were more interested in the money at the end of the day, which is very disappointing. A film doesn't save people. Yes, it's a beautiful documentary and I'm so glad Nick Kristof discovered development when he wrote his book, but you know people have been working on this for 50 years. We brought beautiful actors and actresses out there to visit poor people, but that's not going to save the world, okay? And they thought they were going to save the world with this thing and I kept saying, it's not an intervention. It's absolutely a tool, but it's not an intervention. And they didn't get that. (Interview C, 2016).

This divide between the developers and those behind the HTSM led to personal fights, which, according to a member of the FHI 360 team, got ugly:

> I was the villain many times trying to explain to them that you can't take a video out to a village, these things don't translate, and so you have to put them in different contexts, and so there was a lot of backing and forthing of who was smart and who wasn't, and who knew what…at one point I would get yelled at and was told 'Well, you don't have an academy award,' and I'm like no, I don't. (Interview C, 2016).

In the eyes of a member of the FHI 360 team, “they [the HTSM] were more interested in who was giving them money than what was going to be the outcome of that money” (Interview C, 2016). But those in FHI 360 felt they had to be careful in how they handled the HTSM team, as the HTSM had gained the support of USAID. According to an FHI 360 team member, “I also had over my head an understanding that this needed…they had the Secretary of Gender there and this was somewhat political, and I had to handle them carefully and not test them too much, excuse my language” (Interview C, 2016).

On the side of the game developers, similar frustrations came from dealing with the realities of working with NGOs in the field. A member of the G4C team noted that in trying to work with field experts on content:

> So we worked with partners in the field who we could get very quickly…get feedback from our audiences. And in some cases not so quickly, right? We would send something out and say ‘Hey, can we get feedback?’ and we hear back maybe two weeks later because they did not have a session or something was cancelled or they forgot the printouts or, you know, whatever (Interview A, 2016).

While those on the gaming side valued this sort of feedback and understood it was necessary to getting the games right, it certainly extended their production timeline.

Another G4C team member, talking specifically about working with NGOs on the making of the Facebook game (not on working with FHI 360 and USAID, but rather with the seven partner NGOs listed in the earlier section), said:

> I have to admit that I found sometimes people working in development a bit, how would I say it politely? They are kind of…they believe they know what is true. They believe they know what could be patronizing or condescending. While when you took it sometimes to the NGO on the ground…not the headquarters in the US, they have no problem with the content. Do you know what I mean? And I think in many cases, we even developed the content with them and they didn’t have a problem with representation of the Indian people or the Indian women. They didn’t say anything about it…but the NGO on the global level was kind of saying

> 'Oh, this is going to start this or this is going to offend, or you know (Interview F, 2016).

A member of the G4C team noted that while you need to make sure you are doing things correctly, if you shy away from things because you are afraid of criticism you might end up getting nothing done at all: "if they [Nick and Sheryl] all the time were afraid of reporting…I mean they have a lot of criticism, they have a lot of criticism that sounds like what comes from those NGOs in the global level" (Interview F, 2016).

Those on the development side pointed out that, while most in the game production world are used to working with the newest technologies, on designing games to be bigger and better than what came before, the limitations posed by the relevant technology for those in the target audience created some difficulties. According to an FHI 360 team member:

> The problem with development in games is that you can do really wonderful games, but you are talking about technology that is sort of behind when you are doing this stuff in development. So the phones you are doing stuff for are so much less developed than the phones you are doing cool games for here. It's hard to get people to scale down all the cool stuff, which it has to do to make it accessible (Interview C, 2016).

It was also acknowledged by those on the development side that there is a disconnect in the development world in terms of understanding the potential of games. According to a member of the FHI 360 team, many projects in the developing world that are supported by big contractors based in the U.S. fail to consider mobile technology as a relevant tool at all. There exists a large gap within the development world between those development organizations and NGOs that are using mobile technology—for instance, using text messaging to keep community health workers easily in touch with rural

clinics—and those who are not. An FHI 360 team member outlined the experience of this divide in thinking digitally:

> I get in these meetings and I will say, 'Why aren't we using mobile technology?' and I have all these young kids who are the assistants on the project nodding their heads and the old people are like are you kidding? And it's like, come on guys! My kids taught me this, you know? It's like none of them have Twitter accounts, none of them even look at it…None of them know how to use that technology so they assume nobody does and people still argue with you about reaching people in the developing countries and using phones. There is still an old mindset in some circles…it seems so obvious, but it's not. (Interview C, 2016).

But according to a member of the FHI 360 team, mobile phone games do have a place because the generations development is trying to reach "grew up digitally…it's a different mindset. Games are…it's not about playing games, it's a digital mindset" (Interview C, 2016).

That being said, those on the development side also noted major limitations that impact the use of mobile technology at the local level, especially around gender. While the number of mobile phones in the developing world is already vast, and continues to grow, a member of the FHI 360 team noted:

> even though you have certain statistics and certain information, you know, that leads you to believe that women are accessing phones and are able to…have…the phone literacy to be able to play these games—and they were the primary audience of many of these [HTSM] games—…in practical terms, at least in India…it's difficult, you know, often the phones are owned by the men…women, they have very limited access to it, they're not accustomed…outside of urban areas to playing games (Interview B, 2016).

Gender equity and technology use, and the differences between rural and urban populations were key concerns regarding the usefulness of games to future projects. Other major concerns included issues of cost, the shelf life of games, as well as the shelf life of the specific mobile technology they're developed for, and the limitations of games as stand-alone tools, as discussed earlier. As one FHI 360 team member said, "My big

sticking point is how expensive they are and how short term they are. You develop for a Java phone, and then no one is using the Java phone. You develop apps and then they don't work on the Chinese phones, which is 90 percent of all developing countries" (Interview D, 2016).

Another member of the FHI 360 team referred to the cost barrier of developing games as "enormous" (Interview B, 2016). The difficulty of creating games that could be programmed in multiple languages, or for transcultural audiences, was also raised: "In a country like India, you've got like eight plus languages. We've got it [the game] in two. It's pretty limiting" (Interview D, 2016).

Some saw in-country development of games as a potential fix for some of these problems. As one member of the FHI 360 team said:

> I think there are a lot of really strong local groups that are developing games probably in a more cost effective way because they're being done on the ground. And I think there is a lot of innovation happening right now around working with communities to co-design games, and I think that's really interesting and you know if I have to do this again that would be the approach I would take. You know to really make sure that you're resonating with your audience and you're developing something that's interesting for them to play. (Interview B, 2016).

Another FHI 360 team member had similar feelings. In response to a question about working with in-country game developers, instead of the large, corporate, Western-based game developers in this project, the team member responded, "I think if I were to do it again it would be very different…Like so often it's the Indian companies that know the Indian area, and the Kenyan companies that know the Kenyan area" (Interview D, 2016).

The team member emphasized that, in the future, these projects should be done in a "more collaborative manner" and that, "doing the heavy lifting," in terms of game

production, "in India or Kenya would obviously be a lot cheaper," easing the enormous budget barrier that comes with game related projects (Interview D, 2016). But, the same team member also noted that "gaming is kind of a new area, maybe it hasn't evolved to that degree as other media and communication technologies have…maybe they [many developing countries] just don't have the capacity or the know how just yet," to produce games (Interview D, 2016).

According to a member of the G4C team, there is a lot of opportunity in using mobile games on the ground: "I think there's a huge opportunity because they're pretty cheap to make, so you can make a portfolio," (Interview F, 2016). But there are still substantial challenges, "you need to find the way to work with the NGOs. You need to find a way to work with the technology challenges. So for example, we never covered all the phones. We never invested in the budget…we covered a few models but it wasn't like a commercial company goes and makes their game fit every device in the market" (Interview F, 2016).

According to a G4C team member, if they had been able to cover more phones, it would have been easier to work with the NGOs because they wouldn't have to rely on the HTSM to supply devices that would work with the games. Working with the in-country app stores and telecommunications operators also presented challenges. According to a member of the G4C team, "At times, especially in the first grant, it was very, very bumpy. We got, for example, to a contract phase and then suddenly we didn't hear from them anymore. It was a very tough process, especially when you are not in-country" (Interview F, 2016).

Some of those issues were solved during the second grant by working with a telecommunication company in India that already had those relationships established. But selling the project based on its social good merits didn't get them far with companies in the countries where the mobile games were actually being used. According to a G4C team member:

> they [the in-country app and telecomm companies] don't have the awareness that I found with some corporations in the West. You know, it wasn't like 'Oh great, you know we'll do it for social good and we'll get the press.' It didn't work like this, so it was very hard to get them to do something special like feature you, like stuff that we got from Facebook. We could even crack Facebook here, which are really tough on that, but we couldn't crack, for example, Safaricom [a leading mobile communication company in Kenya]" (Interview F, 2016).

From those on both the gaming and international development side it was clear that, as a member of the FHI 360 team said, the approach to using mobile games in development "needs to evolve if we want to see it work long term and be effective" (Interview D, 2016).

In a way the use of games evolved from the first grant, which looked to work directly with NGOs, tying the games directly to the work already being done by specific organizations, to the second grant, which sought to scale-up the project to a national level. The second grant, called The HTSM Global Engagement Initiative (HTSM Initiative) "was a public-private partnership designed to challenge harmful gender norms and deliver key messages around gender inequality and women's empowerment" (Final Report, 2016, p. 18). The grant proposal was written and led by Show of Force, who was then responsible for carrying out and managing the project.

The grant "leveraged private sector resources and USAID support to increase reach and introduce innovative, effective approaches to persistent development

challenges. The 2.5 year initiative in India and Kenya was designed to foster individual, community, and national scale dialogue and actions around gender equality" (Final Report, 2016, p. 18). The second project brought together the funders and gaming studios behind the Facebook game, new backers, and USAID: Frima Studios, the Ford Foundation, Fremantle Media, the United Nations Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, Intel, Johnson and Jonson, and Pearson Foundation were all brought in as supporters of the initiative. Show of Force was able to leverage $2,791,375 in non-U.S. Government funds over the two and a half year period in order to carry out the project (Final Report, 2016). The project also benefitted from in-kind donations by major media outlets in India and Kenya.

The goals of the HTSM Initiative were to increase public dialogue on key gender-related issues, by promoting "localized campaigns that fostered public dialogue through offline and online engagement, as well as distributed and marketed a variety of existing and new transmedia tools—including segments of the four-hour documentary, 25 short educational videos, a Facebook game, three mobile games (feature phones) and 20 applications (Android based)" (p. 19). It also sought to increase the capacity of NGO partners, change attitudes and behaviors around key-gender related concerns, and "encourage policymakers, business leaders, and influencers to advocate for institutional changes to support gender equality" (p. 19).

The HTSM Initiative brought together all of the existing media from the HTSM, including the Facebook and mobile phone games, and added on the Android-based apps, which are available for download through the Google App store. The apps take storylines directly from the Facebook game and distill them into individual modules that can be

"downloaded, consumed and discarded, or downloaded, shared and discarded very easily" (Interview A, 2016). The "Beads of Fortune, Economic Empowerment" app is a useful example of the ways in which the apps build off of the Facebook game. In this story, the character's (Radhika in the Indian version, Nadira in the Kenyan version) "friend invites her to start a business selling beaded garments. Nadira [Radhika] agrees and the two collect old clothing that was left behind at the school. At the market, Nadira sells out of the beaded garments. She learns her friend cannot keep up with all of their new requests and they decide to train more women to support the garment business" (Final Report, 2016, p. 25). As will be evidenced in the next chapter, we see this exact storyline play out in the Facebook game.

The other apps are: "Ladies Night, Women's Empowerment," which focuses on a group of women joining together to get a micro-loan; "Football Feud, Family Planning," which involves hosting a community discussion on family planning; "Gift of Knowledge, Early Education," which focuses on ensuring young girls have books for school; and "Race in the Streets, Gender Based Violence," which involves bringing a rapist to justice, are all taken directly from the Facebook game.

A big difference between the apps and the mobile phone games is that they use voice-over audio to bridge literacy issues, and are available for download from the Google App store, making them available to phone users who have moved beyond the Java devices and who are not participants of NGO programs. The apps were created so that people "with limited amounts of data" could easily access them, and the voice-overs were included "because we wanted to be able to reach audiences that wouldn't have 100% literacy" (Interview A, 2016).

The HTSM Initiative worked to meet the project's four objectives—improving public dialogue on specific gender-related concerns, building the capacity of NGO partners, fostering attitudinal and behavioral changes on key gender-related issues, and generating support for policy changes around gender equality—by using all of the HTSM's media tools (the documentary, short educational videos, Facebook game, mobile phone games, apps, and discussion guide). There were national broadcasts of the HTSM documentary (the film was aired 56 times in the two countries) and national marketing events to promote the media tools. NGO staff were trained to use and distribute the media tools, and a Campus Ambassadors Program (CAP) was formed to get young people, typically between the ages of 15-25, involved in the movement, inspiring them to "kick-start their own initiatives within their communities" (Final Report, 2016, p. 13).

The HTSM Initiative took advantage of several existing networks to spread its game content. Using the MIRA Channel, "an integrated mobile phone channel that provides health information to women living in rural communities and connects them with public health services using mobile phones," the HTSM Initiative, "successfully tapped into a network of over 41,100 people," creating new audiences for the mobile games (Final Report, 2016, p. 51).

The distribution of the games was further supported by the Government of Haryana and Nokia, which disseminated the games through "19 Nokia centers/stores in Mewat, and led to over 5,000 game play sessions and validated games as effective behavior change tools" (Final Report, 2016, p. 51). In Kenya, the local mobile distributor "deployed a youth-driven Mobiv8tor program, which deployed youth into the community to promote and showcase the mobile games, acting as youth ambassadors and mobile

motivators who host gaming sessions within a grassroots campaign" (Final Report, 2016, p. 51).

The Final Report (2016) notes that while there was great demand from NGOs for the media products (61 NGOs or civil society organizations requested the curriculum) there were also "many requests for additional technical support in rolling this out, which was beyond the scope of the intervention" (Final Report, 2016, p. 52). Regardless, the number of requests for the HTSM tools indicates that "there is demand for this type of product, and that it is having an impact on local discussion of women's empowerment" (Final Report, 2016, p. 56).

Additionally, the HTSM Initiative created two country-specific campaigns that were tied to the HTSM program. In India, the initiative launched the Frame Her Right campaign, which "pushed for India's Censor Board to develop a more gender-sensitive film certification system" (Final Report, 2016, p. 13). The HTSM Initiative served in an advisory role to the Censor Board on revising the country's rating system, and helped generate policy recommendations.

In Kenya, the Wezesha Dada Inua Jamii campaign focused on convincing media outlets to "increase positive stories and coverage on women and girls" (Final Report, 2016, p. 13). The campaign partnered with local broadcasters and radio stations to air the HTSM documentary, and to "push out locally developed short stories highlighting the gender-specific challenges and efforts to combat these constraints within Kenya" (Final Report, 2016, p. 13). The HTSM documentary was aired 49 times in Kenya and it is estimated that the HTSM media content reached 8,453,000 Kenyans in less than six months. The initiative also facilitated a gender-sensitivity workshop for media

representatives, and encouraged the production of locally produced pieces on gender issues.

According to the final report, the initiative was strategic in selecting media outlets to partner with, rather than simply disseminating information "as far and wide as possible," and they worked to (Final Report, 2016, p. 21). Additionally, they worked to "foster a two-way conversation whenever possible," rather than "feed only HTSM content to a larger audience," in order to change "who was always doing the 'talking,'" and foster "critical buy-in" by communities (p. 21). Interestingly, the initiative was predicated on Show of Force and the HTSM's belief that mass communication technologies and media channels have not often been made use of in development projects:

> Media is accessible and has an influencing role in almost every society in the world, with the majority of the world's population engaging with it every day. Despite this, BCC [Behavior Change Communication] initiatives within international development have typically shied away from using new and creative technologies and media outlets…However, with the recent explosion of and interest in media technologies around the world, it is important that development practitioners explore these media outlets as increasingly cost-effective opportunities to increase reach and impact efforts (17-18).

In that regard, "the [HTSM] team wanted to work with the more traditional development practitioners to demonstrate the power of media and technology in 'doing development'" (p. 21).

The next chapter, which presents a textual analysis of the Facebook and mobile phone games, highlights specifically the type of development these games *do*. By bringing together critical textual analysis and procedural rhetoric, as discussed in Chapter 3, this analysis makes clear the development ideology embedded in the games' narratives

and rules and discusses the implications of such an approach to development on women and girls.

CHAPTER V

PLAYING WITH EMPOWERMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE HTSM GAMES

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the HTSM Facebook game, *Half the Sky Movement: The Game,* and the mobile phone game *Family Values.* Using the critical textual analysis techniques detailed in Chapter 3, I highlight how women and girls are represented and used in the HTSM games (RQ4), how the problems facing women and girls are defined and represented (RQ4a), and how the solutions to those problems are defined and represented (RQ4b). Further, I analyze how the narratives of women and gender in the games reinforce dominant development narratives already at play within the industry (RQ5). The chapter begins with an analysis of the Facebook game, followed by an analysis of the mobile phone game. The final section in the chapter provides a discussion of both games in the context of a broader development industry discourse around women's empowerment and 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics'.

Half the Sky Movement: The Game

A promotional video for the *Half the Sky Movement: The Game* (HTSMG), which was launched on Facebook in March of 2013, invites those watching to, "Join the global movement to empower women and girls…Play a groundbreaking game and make a real-world impact," (Game Trailer, 2013). After four months, the game—which claims to be the first social media game to introduce direct virtual to real-life translation via in-game donations and social action opportunities (Frima, n.d.)—had reached one million players, and mainstream media outlets were hailing video games as the new frontier for activism and social change (Sydell, 2013).

The HTSMG game aims to bring development related issues to a mainstream audience, one unfamiliar with the previous work of Kristof and WuDunn and the issues they highlight in their book and documentary. The HTSMG was programmed in English and French for play on desktop and laptop computers and was conceptualized as an awareness and fundraising tool to support the HTSM in its mission to "empower women and girls around the world," (Half the Sky Movement: The Game, 2012). Developed by Frima (the largest Canadian-owned commercial gaming studio), the HTSMG is meant to target a mainstream, social-media savvy audience in an attempt to educate players about the challenges faced by women and girls around the globe. The game presents players with "real-world challenges," and invites them to "become part of the solution" through issue-specific actions that support the HTSM's nonprofit partners (Half the Sky Movement: The Game, 2012).

Players are introduced to a series of female characters who must negotiate difficult situations brought about by poverty and gender inequality. The goal is for players to "recruit more people into this global movement" as they take Radhika, the main character, on "a journey from oppression to opportunity," (Half the Sky Trailer, 2014). While reaching the widest number of players possible was key, the ultimate goal is to turn "a small percentage into real activists, into hardcore activists," in order to really make a difference in the world (Burak, 2013). It is by donating money through the game that players can make a real impact (Burak, 2013).

The game is divided into a series of what I will call chapters. Each chapter is set in a different location. The game begins in India, where the player is introduced to the main character Radhika. As the player progresses through the game, new chapters are

unlocked and Radhika travels from her home in India to Kenya, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and finally the US. As she travels she is introduced to a new women and the issues they face. In each new location, Radhika is tasked with helping her new friends address a particular issue. While the player can choose to take Radhika back to India, or to the other locations that have been unlocked, she cannot travel forward in the game until she has "unlocked" the next location.

Unlocking locations is done via a complicated series of factors, including play-time and wait time, task completion, in-game donations, and in-game purchases. The game is set up so that after a minimal amount of play, the player must either pay (via an in-game donation or in-game purchase) to keep playing, or wait 24-hours before continuing. As the game progresses, the player has to complete various tasks—some involving built in "mini games," which mimic casual-games like *Candy Crush*, and ask players to connect a row of similar game pieces together; others involve making narrative choices that determine the actions of characters in the game—before being able to move forward and unlock new game-scenarios and chapters.

Based on my own experience playing the game, I found that, regardless of wait-time in-between sessions, it was often necessary to make in-game purchases (i.e., paying $2.00-$5.00 to buy necessary energy points, or Hope Bonds) to continue game play and move the game forward. Thus, while the game appears to be free to play, only the first chapter can really be played without making in-game donations or purchases.

At any time throughout the game, the player can give a One-Click Gift. These gifts can be accessed at any point in the game, not only in relation to a specific play incident, as is the case for the more direct virtual-to-real-life translations outlined earlier.

One Click Gifts include things like a $5 donation to the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, a "public-private partnership to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and preserve the environment by creating a global market for clean cooking solutions. Because cooking shouldn't kill." Other gifts include a $10 donation to Heifer International to help empower "communities to create sustainable and healthy livelihoods"; a $25 donation to World Vision, a Christian charity that focuses on helping communities "reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice"; a $5 gift to GirlUp, which gives "American girls the chance to become global leaders," by "raising awareness and funds to support the United Nations programs that help some of the world's hardest to reach adolescent girls"; a $10 donation to the Fistula Foundation to help "end the suffering caused by the childbirth injury of obstetric fistula"; a $10 donation to Room to Read, which "transforms the lives of children by focusing on literacy and other gender equity in education," and in doing so supports "girls to finish secondary school" and a $5 donation to GEMS, "the only organization in New York State specifically designed to support girls and young women who have suffered from commercial sexual exploitation and domestic traffic."

The player moves through the game by navigating around a cartoon map. The first map depicts what is meant to be a rural area in India. There are small huts, a school, a hospital, trees, and an airport—the "gateway to the world." The game begins with an introduction to Radhika, a woman from India, clothed in a pink and orange sari. The player quickly learns that Radhika is unable to afford medicine for her sick child and needs to find a way to earn money. As the player takes Radhika on her "journey from oppression to opportunity" she encounters a development narrative of self-help and

economic empowerment. Radhika must find ways to earn money and support herself, whether by selling mangoes in the market, applying for a microcredit loan, buying a goat, or starting a small business selling the goat's milk.

The player does get the chance to see Radhika pursue non-economic activities in this first chapter, including time spent working on her reading skills with her children, her efforts to volunteer at a local clinic, and her decision to join a women's empowerment group. But the emphasis in the gameplay remains on Radhika securing a loan and starting a small business. For instance, even though the women in the empowerment group say they value the precious time they have together, it becomes clear that the purpose of the group is to secure a microloan. It is up to Radhika, and you as the player controlling her, to find ways to earn money and change her life situation.

In each chapter, there are tasks that must be completed in order for the game to progress. The main tasks in the first chapter include "The empowerment group," "Start a small business," and "Get a room!" Each task is made up of several steps that must be completed. The first steps of "The empowerment group" task involve choosing for Radhika to take the time to meet up with the group, and getting the necessary number of members to join in order to be eligible for a microloan.

Once Radhika has joined the group, she meets with the lender in his office. He informs Radhika that they only lend to groups of six, so she should work to get more women involved. A pop-up message gives the player some options for securing additional members for the group: "When you need a friend," the in-game message reads, "either wait for the game to provide one, pay to hire one, or invite a Facebook friend. You have one free friend. Click to recruit."

Once the player has secured enough members, by using the free friend, purchasing, or recruiting one, she is able to send Radhika in to finalize the loan. Once everyone is signed up and the loan is secured, an in-game message reads " Just a signature away from a life of opportunity." The opening moments of the game emphasize economic empowerment as the first step in moving forward on the journey from "oppression to opportunity," and group microloans are presented as the best route for securing such empowerment.

In the next scene, Radhika and two of the other empowerment group members are once again with the lender in his office. Radhika (via a text box at the bottom of the screen) says "With this money, I can start making money with our livestock business." Once the task has been completed and Radhika has received her loan, a message box pops up that reads, "Radhika joined a group to help empower women…You can now support a real-world empowerment group." By giving $13.00 to GirlUp via an in-game donation, the player can activate what the game designers refer to as a "virtual-real-life translation" and earn +80 in-game money points, which are then used to further gameplay. Now that the player has learned about the usefulness of empowerment groups in securing a loan and making money, she can provide the same opportunity for a similar group, somewhere out there.

The next task, made up of seven steps, is called "Start a small business." Step 1 requires the player to lead Radhika to purchase a pregnant goat from a woman at the market. After Radhika has purchased her goat, a message box pops up that reads, "Give a gift to change a life. Radhika's goat will feed her family and help her community…You can change a community with the gift of a real goat!" In donating $10.00 to Heifer

International, the player can once again take “real-life” action and receive +100 game points.

Additional steps in this task include selling the goat’s milk, feeding the goat hay, and making sure the goat has a healthy pregnancy. In Step 5, the player finds out the goat has birthed a healthy kid. A message reads “Congratulations! The kid is energetic and healthy. Selling it will go a long way toward repaying your loan.” “By selling milk often, you’ll refund your loan in no time.”

The money Radhika received from her loan has allowed her to start a profitable small business, a step-forward in her individual journey. Although the player is only two steps in, she’s already seen Radhika leave the confines of her home to join a women’s empowerment group, secure a microloan through her affiliation with the group, generate a small business by using her loan, and make a profit that can be put toward loan payments. Based on this section of gameplay, microlending via women’s empowerment groups appears to be an efficient cycle indeed.

The next task is called “Get a room.” A message box pops up that reads, “With the money you make [from selling the goat’s milk and the kid], why not improve the house?” To continue on and unlock the next level, the player must complete the task of helping Radhika add a room on to her home.

In the next scene, Radhika has a conversation with her husband about the renovation. Radhika says to her husband (via text bubbles), “Banhu my love? We should add an extra room to the house. We never could afford it before, but now…” Banhu, who was smiling and standing straight, leans forward, squints one eye, and with an accusatory look asks “Have you really earned that much money?” The next screen has a text box on

the bottom that reads, “Should I tell him I have money?” The player can choose between option a) “We can pool our money” and option b) “My business makes money.”

Throughout the game, these “choice” boxes are set up in such a way to make it appear the player is making decisions on where the storyline will go next. However, it seems that regardless of which option the player chooses, a similar outcome takes place immediately, or the storyline is quickly rerouted and moves back to the outcome that would have taken place if the other option had been chosen. Thus, while the game gives the illusion of player choice, the narrative is, for the most part, predetermined.

Banhu responds to Radhika by saying, “I never expected this my darling! I am so proud of what you have done for us!” Next, Radhika says (via text box at the bottom of the screen), “True. I have the money. Then ***I*** will pay for the permit.” A message box pops up that reads “Congratulations! Get a Room! – Step 1 of 3. Banhu will just love having a bigger house. Time to get a permit.” Radhika makes her way back to the loan office to buy the permit.

As she is about to purchase the loan a text box (at the bottom of the screen) says, “I never thought this day would come!” At this point, it became necessary to make an in-game purchase of $5.00 worth of game coins in order to complete the task. If the player decides not to make the purchase, a message box reads, “Are you sure? Are you sure you want to go back to the world map? You will lose any energy spent.” The player can then choose to cancel this move, buy the necessary coins, and continue on in the task, or confirm the choice to leave and return to the world map. If the player chooses to return to the world map, she must wait before she is able to continue to move the game forward.

In this section, we see that Radhika's first priority after securing a loan and starting a small business is to put her finances toward material acquisition by increasing the size of her home. The player sees that Radhika is able to confidently stand up to her husband, and make an important household decision because of her recent income, which has made her husband proud. Once again, financial gain has empowered Radhika and continues to move her forward in her journey. It is at this point that the player also encounters an important part of gameplay dynamics – the need to pay-to-play becomes apparent.

Once Radhika has started earning enough money to add onto her house, her time is freed up to start helping other women in her community. While volunteering at a local clinic she meets a young woman who is very sick and could use some help. Radhika takes her some goat's milk and offers to keep her company for a while. The young woman responds by saying "I could use a friend like you!" and Radhika promises to visit often. On her next visit, Radhika senses the young woman is upset and the player must choose whether to "Question her" or "Walk away."

If the player chooses "Question her," the young girl responds by saying, "It's my mother. She's arranged for me to marry a man. I have to do it, but I don't feel ready…" The girl continues on, "He wants me to move in with him. What choice do I have? My parents can't afford to take care of me." Radhika responds in a thought box at the bottom of the screen that reads, "She's so young. She should be able to decide when to marry." The player is given two choices: "Offer her coins," or "Consider other options."

If the player chooses, "Consider other options," Radhika responds by telling the girl "I met a group. They helped me get a loan to start my own business." The girl replies,

"If I can bring in some money, my mother may feel less pressure to marry me off." A thought box at the bottom of the screen reads: "Next group meeting, I will bring her" along with a button that says "Complete Quest." After pressing the "Complete Quest" button, a message screen pops up: "Congratulations! Delay marriage for girl – Step 1 of 5. Malika needs your help. You invited her to the next group meeting."

The player begins to learn that financial gain can empower women in a variety of situations. If financial pressure is the reason this young girl is married off so early, then financial gain on the part of the girl can help mitigate this pressure and delay her marriage. By securing a loan and starting her own profitable business, this girl might be able to change the mind of her mother, who is said to hold the decision making power here.

The player receives health, security, and education points for inviting the player to the women's empowerment group, generating her own financial gain within the game. The player is also presented with a "real-world action" opportunity, this time not related to giving a donation. A message box pops up that reads "Take action to change your world". The message shows a picture from the previous game scene with the words "Radhika helped delay an early marriage," above it. Next to it is a picture of "real girls" in school uniforms, who are presumably in a schoolyard in Africa, playing jump rope. Above their heads it reads, "You discovered a real world fact!" and below the picture, "Every day, 200 million people in areas of conflict are kept safe by UN peace keepers." The player is given the option to share this fact on her Facebook page, or to choose "No thanks." Sharing these sorts of facts throughout the game is a way for players to share the information and message of the Half the Sky Movement with their social media friends.

In the following scene, we find out that Malika, the young girl who is working to delay her marriage, is attending her fifth women's empowerment group meeting. Malika says, "Well, I couldn't miss today's meeting. I want to hear about collecting and selling seeds." A box at the bottom of the screen reads, "These meetings are really helping her. She's learning to make money for herself." The only action button presented to the player is "Attend Meeting," however there is a small icon in the top right corner of the box that shows a woman walking out of the door. The player can leave the scene by pushing this button, or continue on by choosing "Attend Meeting."

After the player presses "Attend Meeting," Radhika says she knows where there are seeds in the forest and that she and Malika can get started there. A box at the bottom of the screen then reads, "Even the mightiest forest started with a single seed," which is perhaps a metaphor for growing personal wealth and empowerment from meager beginnings.

The player is again given one action button option, "Complete Quest." This completes step 2 of 5 in the task "Delay marriage for a girl." In the next scene, the player learns that Malika has collected a variety of seeds and Radhika wants to reward her by giving her a gift. "Radhika, thank you for everything!" Malika responds, "My seed collection is growing and I've begun selling them!" Malika continues by saying, "My contribution to the family hasn't gone unnoticed. My mother has postponed the wedding!"

The player is presented with another successful example of mircolending and small business ownership. Malika has learned to make money for herself, and, like Radhika, her financial gain has given her some decision making power within her family.

A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "What should I suggest regarding my gift?" The player is presented with two action buttons: "Treat yourself," or "Invest the extra money." If the player chooses "Treat yourself," Malika responds by saying, "Funny you would say that: I've been thinking of taking classes to help me grow my business." A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "Classes? Interesting. Maybe I should check them out," and the player is presented with a "Complete Quest" action button.

In the following scene, Malika is in a classroom. She tells Radhika she has some news to share with her: "I'm learning to use a computer. It makes it so easy to keep track of the money and make calculations!" A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "Wow. With a computer she can track her inventory and customers," and two action buttons are presented, "Ask her about her business" or "Learn from Malika."

If the player chooses "Learn from Malika," Malika responds by saying "At this rate, I can start saving more." A text box at the bottom reads, "Malika will have more options now," and the player is presented with a "Complete Quest" button. Pressing "Complete Quest" finishes out this task and a pop up message reads "Congratulations! Delay marriage for girl – Step 5 of 5. Malika is doing great. Let's call this a day."

Technology use is presented as a way to generate further financial gain, and further financial gain leads to additional life choices. After this task is completed, the next chapter is unlocked and the player can finally take Radhika to the airport so she can continue on with the next leg of her journey from "oppression to opportunity."

In Chapter 2, the player joins Radhika as she travels to her next destination: Kenya. Radhika quickly learns about the threat of malaria and the importance of bed nets after being "eaten alive by mosquitos" on her first night. Radhika is asked to help the

nurses at a local clinic decide if they should sell the clinic's supply of mosquito nets, or give them away for free to local women and children and risk them being sold on the black market.

One nurse argues that if they sell the nets at a low price, "we increase their value in peoples' eyes! So they won't just end up as fishing nets…" Her colleague is horrified by this plan, "What? And risk more infections because some people can't afford it? Adhama, where's your heart?" The player is presented with a choice: "Lives are at stake, here. Maybe we should give free nets to the women and children that need them most, and sell the rest?" The player can then choose "Sell Them," or "Give to Women and Kids."

If the player chooses to give them away the nurses agree that there are some young mothers who can barely afford to buy food for their children, let alone nets, so giving them away is the right thing to do. But, the scene ends with a text box at the bottom of the screen that reads, "I just hope they don't end up being re-sold on the black market…" And in the following scene, in which Radhika comes back to the clinic with more nets, another message at the bottom of the screen reads, "After all the work it took to acquire these nets, I'd hate to see someone sell theirs or use it as a fishing net." The player is given only one action button option, "Distribute."

In this introduction to Kenya, both Radhika and the player learn that malaria is a major problem in the country, and bed nets a necessary precaution. They also learn that those in need of such nets—poor women and children—may not fully understand their value and might sell them on the black market. Even though one of the nurses admonishes the other for having no heart, Radhika herself worries the nets might end up

being sold. The game doesn't discuss why someone might do this (e.g., to afford food or other necessities) but rather presents the risk alone, focusing on a potentially "bad" or "wrong" decision that the person in need might for herself.

Next Radhika must decide if the final net should be given to the pregnant sister of one of the nurses, or kept at the hospital for the children there. After completing this final step of the Bed Net Campaign, the player is asked to give $10 to "Give a net and save a life!" One wonders, however, if players might question the effectiveness of such a donation after much of the conversation on bed nets focused on those who received them turning around and selling them on the black market.

The next task involves reopening a local school for girls. Radhika must help to gather wood and find volunteers to help her rebuild the structure, and she must convince a teacher, now working in the market, to return. Throughout the game, it is necessary at times to return to a previous chapter, in this case India, in order to earn additional energy points to keep the game moving forward. Upon returning to India, Radhika works on the additions to her home, which she says will allow her children to have their own bedroom.

Once this task is complete, a "Take Action to Change Your World" box pops up with a message that reads: "You discovered a real-world fact! How do we tackle poverty, disease and conflict? The Half the Sky Movement show that women are the solution." This same "fact" is presented often throughout the game, popping up after a variety of tasks.

Next, Radhika meets with the leader of the women's empowerment group, who informs her that a) there are similar groups all over the world and they should help one

another and b) the clinic is out of HIV medicine and Radhika should go find some. Radhika and the group leader head back to Kenya to complete the task.

In Kenya, Radhika and her companion head straight to the clinic where the nurses tell them the medicine won't be in until the next day. "That's not a problem," says Radhika, "We're enjoying the beautiful sights and fashion! I love that colorful beadwork!" A pop-up message welcomes the travelers to Kenya and shares with them some important information, including the fact that the country is home to nearly 20 million women, and that "an unmarried woman can be 'head of the household' just like a man." It also highlights the wildlife reserves, beaches and "fair weather," and notes that "One trip to Kenya and you'll never forget your first lion!" If players weren't already planning a trip to Kenya, perhaps they are now. One of the nurses offers to let Radhika stay in her home. She tells her to head there to settle in and that her daughter will be around to help her.

Radhika meets the daughter, who seems upset. Upon questioning her, Radhika finds out the young girl is HIV positive, but her parents do not know this. Radhika comforts her by saying there are better treatments out there these days. The girl tells Radhika that HIV "is not just a disease, it's a curse. Everyone pities you. I just want to die…" Radhika wants to show the girl that "it's not as bleak as she thinks," and tells her, "You can still lead a normal life. Do something. Show the village you have value!"

According to Radhika, the girl is capable of changing her situation—by doing "something" she can prove to those around her that she is valuable, much as Radhika did earlier on, and thus gain some control over her current situation. Players learn that HIV is

an issue facing young women in Kenya, and that those infected suffer not only physically, but socially as well.

Once again, players are presented with the idea that empowerment comes through proving to others that you have value. While this scenario doesn't explicitly point to financial gain as key to proving value, it would be a fair connection for players to make based on the previous examples in the game, in which women gained control through microloans and small business start-ups.

After talking with the girl, a "Take Action to Change your World" box pops up that informs players of the 8 million HIV positive people worldwide that are currently lacking the treatment they need. The accompanying picture shows a presumably African woman smiling and holding her young baby. After this, the player finds out she has "reached the rank of Leader." If she keeps on, she will soon become a Community Change Maker.

Radhika heads back to India, where she must help a young woman who wants to leave the women's empowerment group because of her husband's abusive behavior. A text box reads, "He hurt her again. This can't continue." The player is give two action options, "Go to the police!" or "You need to leave him." Radhika tells the girl that the police can protect her, and she accompanies her to the police station. The officer doesn't want to take them seriously, so the player is given two action options, "Bribe" or "Wait until they act."

If Radhika tries to bribe the officer, he scoffs and says she'll need more money than that. A text box reads, " Is a bribe really the best solution?" and the player is given two actions, "Bribe more" or "Wait until they act." After bribing him once more, Radhika

says “I hate having to bribe him…but it worked.” From this, the player learns that police (who are all men in the case of the game) are unwilling to protect women, unless bribed.

Next Radhika must gather a group of women to find the husband, who is hiding from the police. Once he is found and arrested, his wife says, “ I know I should feel safer, but I still love him…” The police officer says he sees “these guys all the time. They never change. You’d be better off leaving him.” In a text box at the bottom of the screen, Radhika says, “I hope she considers leaving him, but I know it’s so much more complicated…”

Here, the player is presented with a nuanced look at the complexities of domestic violence—the wife knows what’s happening is wrong, but she finds it difficult to leave the man she loves. The player is then shown a “Take Action to Change your World” message with a real-world fact that reads, “Thousands of women suffer from poverty and injustice and many never get the chance to fulfill their potential.” Money and justice are presented to the player as things that must be present for women to fulfill their personal potential. At a women’s empowerment group meeting, Radhika tells the young woman not to worry, her husband will “have to answer to our husbands and brothers, who aren’t afraid to stand up to him.”

Radhika heads to the clinic to volunteer, and ends up helping the doctor and nurse successfully perform a fistula surgery. The player is then shown a “Give a Gift to Change a Life” screen that reads, “You can now transform a real life with a gift towards a surgery!” The player is asked to donate $250 to the Fistula Foundation. An explanation of fistula surgeries, its causes and effects, is not given in-game, but a player can find out more information about the Fistula Foundation through the donation screen.

Next it's back to Kenya, where Radhika and one of the nurses decide to organize a community event after a local football match to talk about family planning and birth control pills. The women make posters and convince a male community leader to bring in a respected athlete to the talk. Even so, they receive pushback from a local woman who doesn't want to be lectured and who says people who talk about these things end up confusing everyone—Radhika responds by saying, "I didn't expect this much resistance. And from a woman?"

Radhika and the nurse end up fleeing because they learn there is an angry group coming and they might be in danger. The event doesn't take place. The first example of non-financially motivated community organizing for social change is unsuccessful.

Radhika finishes rebuilding the school with the help of others in the community. Next she and the teacher must convince the male community leader that a computer is important for the school. He asks what's wrong with good ol' books? But the women insist on the usefulness of a computer, which the kids end up loving. Radhika is impressed by how much can be done with computer skills and hopes to learn herself so she can expand her business. Once again, computers are presented as positive tools for education and financial empowerment.

Next, Radhika heads off to Vietnam (Chapter 3), where the main focus is on buying back a girl who has been forced into sex work by her aunt. An, a concerned community member, asks Radhika to help her find the missing girl. Radhika has concerns about getting involved, but she helps An go and question the girl's mother. Once it's obvious the mother was involved, they enlist the help of a police officer. They find the girl in the aunt's brothel and offer to buy her back, but not before the aunt points out that

the other police officers are frequent visitors. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “No wonder the brothel hasn’t been shut down…An must pay for the girl so we can take her away from all this.” Through a real-world fact, the player learns that “Sex traffic disenfranchises its victims who are often left powerless by the criminal justice system.”

Radhika decides An should care for the girl, as they can’t trust her mother. This completes the final step of “The missing girl” task. While a pop-up message tells the player “Congratulations!” for completing this task, it also points out that “Getting out of the brothel is only half of the solution. She needs support.”

Radhika then helps An’s daughter get a bike, by trading things in the market and with others in the community, so she can get to school more easily. This task moves the player up to the role of Community Advocate. Radhika gives some seeds to the mother of the trafficking victim in exchange for an old bike frame. The mother says she will plant the seeds with her daughter and then they can make money selling the produce in the market.

Here, the player is introduced to the issue of sex trafficking, to the fact that family members can be responsible for selling young girls into sex work, and that police officers frequent brothels that keep sex trafficking going. In the exchange between Suong’s mother and Radhika, they also learn that this woman is eager for some other form of economic activity.

Hang, An’s daughter, is excited to receive the completed bicycle, but thinks she should use it to help her mother get to the market. When An says the bike must be used to get to school, Hang argues that school costs too much and its better for her to help her

mother at home. An insists the bike will be used for school. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads "She may need a little push, but she'll go to school."

Here, the priority is placed on education over economic activity – An's mother feels it is more important, more valuable, for her daughter to go to school, even though her daughter wants to help her mother earn more money.

For $50, the player is given the option to "give a bike to a real girl who wants to attend school!" The donation will go to Room to Read, an organization that focuses on increasing literacy through programs that transform "primary schools into child-friendly learning environments" (Room to Read, n.d.). While they have established libraries, constructed schools, and published and distributed books, it's unclear if Room to Read actually does anything with bicycles, or if the idea of bicycles simply fit the storyline better, and thus was brought into the virtual-to-real life translation moment for narrative purposes.

Radhika learns that the girl she helped rescue from the brothel is considering going back because she is so addicted to the drugs they gave her to keep her pliant. An is at a loss of what to do. Radhika tells An about the group meetings she attends back in India, and suggests starting similar meetings at a local community center. If only they had a community center, or the money to build one, frets An. Radhika responds by saying "Where there's a will there's a way!"

Radhika and An then meet two men and ask for their help in building a community center. The men say they don't work for free, but they would work for some fishing nets. Radhika offers to hand sew the nets because, as text box at the bottom of the

screen reads, “I just keep thinking about those helpless girls. I have no excuse not to help them!”

Radhika heads to the market where she asks an old woman if she has something to use to weave fishing nets. The woman responds by saying, “ Nets? I weave beautiful nets. Don’t expect yours to be better than mine.” “We’ll see about that,” responds Radhika. It’s an interesting moment in the game. While all along there has been a focus on women advancing themselves by producing and selling goods, we see Radhika challenge this woman, rather than support her by buying nets directly from her. Unintentionally or not, it points to the direct competition between women that evolves when they face each other in the marketplace, especially when the offerings there are limited to those products and services deemed acceptable for women—work involving weaving, gardening, gathering, etc.

The fishermen are impressed by Radhika’s nets, “Lady, you weren’t kidding!” and make good on their offer to help her build the community center. Once it’s completed, it’s time to hold the first group meeting. Suong, the young girl who has been rescued from the brothel, is nervous and stand-offish. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “She has no reason to trust anyone…Being forced into this life by her own mother has changed her forever.” The mother apologizes to her daughter and hopes that one day she will be able to forgive her. The daughter responds by saying, “It’s like a nightmare that never ends. You abandoned me…” A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “Could anyone forgive their own mother for something so terrible?” and gives the player two action options, “ Reason with Mother,” or “Comfort Suong.”

If the player chooses to comfort the young girl, An assures her they built the center to keep her safe and healthy, but a text box explains to the player that it will take time, and many meetings, to get her to trust again. The player is then given the chance to "Help a real survivor to overcome sexual exploitation!" by donating $20 to GEMS. The player learns that the road to recovery for victims of sex trafficking is a long one, and that community support is necessary.

Next, Radhika helps An and Soung's mother gather condoms to distribute in the brothel. To get the condoms, Radhika must travel back to Kenya and ask her friend at the clinic if she can spare some boxes. When the nurse pushes back, wondering if giving them to women in a brothel is really the best use for them, Radhika reminds her of all the help she's given to the community. The nurse agrees that they could spare a few boxes. Rather than demonizing sex work, this moment in the game focuses on protecting the women who participate in it.

Back in Vietnam, Radhika and Suong meet with an ex-police officer who promises to help get them into the brothel. An says they'll need someone the brothel owner can trust if they're going to convince her to use the condoms. The ex-police officer admits that, when he was on duty, he used to visit the owner from time to time and the owner bribed him in order to gain protection. He went because all the other officers did, and he continued to go until he found out he was HIV positive. Now that he and his wife are sick, he wants to do something to help. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "He's not better than the brothel owner. And we're going with him?!" An responds by saying, "We can't let our opinions get in the way. We may not be able to close the place down, but we can at least help the girls." A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "I

hope someday this hellish practice will end. Meanwhile we can at least prevent disease from spreading…" and the player is given one action button, "Complete Test".

Once Radhika has helped get Suong to a safe place, she learns she is needed somewhere else – Afghanistan. Najiba, a woman dressed in a purple burqa, has come to Vietnam because she has heard about the great work Radhika has been doing, and wants her to come and help empower the women of her country. Najiba says, "I want women in my community to join forces – to realize that we share similar goals." A text box at the bottom of the screen notes that while there is "so much conflict" in Afghanistan, Radhika and her family must be brave. As the player reaches Afghanistan she learns that 15 million women live in the country, 300 to 400 midwives are trained annually to help reduce maternal mortality rates, and that "Visitors appreciate the multi-ethnic society that has served as a crossroads for diverse ethnic groups for centuries."

Radhika's first task is to help Najiba, start a newspaper that will focus on women's stories. Najiba tells Radhika that it is hard for women's voices to be heard in the country and that, "the Taliban left many scars on our rights…women were even denied education." Najiba pleads with Radhika to go meet some of her friends and "Listen to our stories. You will see there is hope, inshallah."

Radhika travels around the village, going into women's homes, to ask them to tell their stories. First, she meets a young girl named who has stopped going to school after being attacked by a gang of boys who threw acid in her face and permanently blinded her in one eye. The young woman says that the boys "hate girls like us going to school." The young woman is concerned that telling her story will bring her more trouble. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads "I guess we can change the names when we write the

article…but is it worth the risk?" and the player can choose to "Tell her story" or "Don't tell her story". If the player chooses, "Tell her story," Radhika promises the woman that she will remain anonymous and safe.

Next Radhika meets Fareshta, who is eager to tell her story. Fareshta shares that she was attacked and raped by some men on the street: "I survived, but I caused my family great shame…I should feel blessed to be alive. Some women are killed for bringing this kind of shame on their family." Fareshta admits that while she doesn't hate her family, she is confused and doesn't know what she could have done to prevent the attack.

Next Radhika meets a young widow who rarely leaves home because she knows her late husband would not approve of her going out unaccompanied. She tells Radhika that, "The war has been hard on us. My husband…he was killed. And, well, I can't…go anywhere." The player can then choose to tell the woman to "Go out!" or ask "Why not?" If the player chooses "Go out!" the woman says it isn't so simple, she could get hurt if she went out unescorted. Radhika convinces the women to share their stories, which are compiled into the first issue of the paper. The player learns about the ways in which women are oppressed in Afghanistan (e.g., violent attacks, kept from moving about on their own) as well as the desire they have to share their stories to help other women.

A "Take Action to Change Your World" message box pops up with a "real-world fact" that reads "Every day, 200 million people in areas of conflict are kept safe by UN peacekeepers." The player has now reached the level of Community Activist. Next, the player gets to choose if Radhika will sell the paper to the women, or give it to them for free. If the player chooses to give it away for free to the first woman, Radhika remarks

that they won't be able to afford to continue publishing the paper if they keep giving it away. Radhika returns to the young widow's home to hear more of her stories. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "I love listening to her. She has strong ties to her culture, yet she believes that some traditions could change for the better." Radhika obviously admires this trait in her new friend—being able to maintain cultural ties while "changing for the better" is seen as a positive attribute.

Najiba and Radhika travel together to convince Tahira, the victim of the acid attack, to return to school. The girl mentions that her uniform was badly burned during the attack, so Radhika offers to sew a new one for her. The girl isn't certain she will go back to school, but she says she will think about it, which Radhika and Najiba take as a small victory, a step forward. The next "Take Action to Change Your World" screen pops up, with a "real world fact" that tells the story of Malala Yousafzai, who was "shot in the head by the Taliban for promoting girls' education." This is the only real-world fact in the game that refers to a specific person and a specific incident.

Radhika's next task is to convince the young widow to switch over to an electric cook stove in order to save herself from the thick smoke created while cooking. Radhika must work to convince everyone, including her host Najiba and the male community leader, that electric cook stoves will be better for the community and the environment. Each of them asks what's wrong with the way they cook? What's wrong with traditional stoves? Radhika tells Najiba that "It will become harder and harder to find wood in the area to fuel your stoves. What then?"

Najiba and Radhika then surprise the young widow with a new cookstove after buying fuel at the market. Najiba says, "Radhika is right, Wazhma. Traditional stoves

have been causing a lot of health problems around here." The player is then given the chance to "Give a Gift to Change a Life" by giving "a clean cookstove to a family" for $20.00.

Radhika heads back to India for some much needed time with her family and friends. While there she works to finish the remodel of her home, and to pay back the loan she took out. She is able to earn some additional money by spreading the manure from her goats around the mango trees. This helps the mangoes grow big and juicy, and she is able to sell them in the market and acquire another goat. The player is presented with a "Give a Gift to Change a Life" opportunity in which she can "help a real woman improve her business" by giving $120 to Heifer International. Upgrading the barn is part of the task called "Step up your business." Now that she has extra animals, it's time to make the barn bigger, which she does with the help of friends. She also helps out at the local clinic, where she gathers medical supplies for a mobile clinic that will travel to rural areas.

The nurse at the clinic thanks her and says, "Before you go, I have to ask you something. You've got a unique reputation…People say you travel a lot, making big money, helping people. What drives you?" A text box at the bottom of the screen asks "What's my motivation?" The player can choose "Where I come from" or "Where I'm going". Radhika replies, "Not long ago, I was hungry. And my children went barefoot. Hard work and sacrifice was the only solution." The nurse says that the clinic needs even more help and a text screen at the bottom reads "Maybe I need to return to helping the people in MY community." The player is then presented with a "Give a Gift to Change a

Life Opportunity." For $250 the player can "transform a real life with a gift towards a surgery!"

In this scene, Radhika doesn't deny the nurse's assumption that she is making "big money" by helping people, although we as the player have not seen this directly. Regardless, the player learns that Radhika's individual hard work and sacrifice was "the only solution," the only way for her to move forward on her journey and earn the "big money" the nurse speaks of. The player also learns about the high cost (relative to other donations) of supporting a potentially life saving surgery.

Next, Radhika learns that a young girl has been raped. When the police won't step in, she goes to the women's empowerment group. Angry that the police are doing nothing while the violence against women continues, the women declare, "This is unacceptable. We need to take this to the streets to protest." Another woman adds, "Not just us. Men too. We need to show people that the community will not stand for such acts." The women decide they need to take action and "fill the streets with their courage." The player is required to gather people together by buying or recruiting friends to join in the game. After everyone is recruited, the police officer apologizes for doubting Radhika. "The rapists were found guilty because you spoke up and reported the crime," he says. Radhika responds by saying, "It's not me. The crowd in the streets did it. The important thing is: we did it for the girl."

In this scene, the player is once again privy to the disregard by the police for women who are victims of violence. She also sees, however, a successful example of a group of people coming together to demand change. The difference in the group on this occasion is that it is specifically made up of men and women.

Next, Radhika decides to help her friend start a new business beading clothing. The player can choose between two action buttons, " Part of the profits" or "It's our business." If they player chooses "Part of the profits," the friend responds by saying, "Part of the profits? Radhika, I want us to run the business together!" She says they will run the business together and split the profits. Radhika decides it sounds promising and considers using beading styles she saw in Kenya in their new venture. It is another moment where there is the illusion of choice, but the game has already determined what Radhika will ultimately do.

Radhika buys old clothes that were left at the school. The women decide that, once they get better at beading, they can even sell their clothes in Kenya where their style is less common. The women then decide that there is enough demand that they can create jobs for their friends. They decide to buy a warehouse to use as a space for their business, and they ask friends from the women's empowerment group to come and work for them. The player can then "Give a Gift to Change a Life" by spending $25 to provide a woman with job training. The emphasis, once again, is on growing a small business, and providing business skills to women in the real world. Like her other start-ups, Radhika's new business venture is a success and grows quickly.

At this point in the game, Radhika's husband convinces her she should run for local office. She has done such great work helping the women of their village, and the world, and he is sure she could do a better job than the man currently in office. Radhika is nervous, but decides to put her name in. As she says, "Well I *did* hone my leadership skills. Perhaps I could run at Panchayat at the village level first…" This completes step 1

of 7 in the “Get elected!” task, which reads, “Having political power will help you make things move!”

To begin to empower herself, Radhika first needed to create a source of income. Once that was done, she was able to reach out, help others, travel, and gain respect for her work. This experience has given her the credibility to run for office, a step she needs to take to really “make things move!” When Radhika goes to register, the man working in the office (the same man who is the loan officer) says, “That’s a big undertaking – especially for a woman!” Radhika responds, “There is a lot we can improve in the region: economic conditions, education, eliminating sex trafficking…” The man tells her, “the current representative may feel…threatened.” Radhika decides she needs to gather support from the women in her empowerment group, who all rally around her decision to run.

Her friend with whom she runs the beading business, however, is a bit worried this will disrupt their investment. Radhika says not to worry, “one thing will always remain: our partnership. What would you say if I gave you a goat kid?” The friend responds with, “A young goat kid? Soon I’ll be as busy as you, Radhika! Mabye I’ll run for office too?” Radhika says, “Hah! For now, it’s one kid. If it works for you, I might let you manage my farm. See how strong our partnership is!” “You always know what’s right, Radhika,” says the friend, “I think you will do great for our region. I’ll help you.”

Regardless of what else she’s doing in life, Radhika will not let her business ventures fail. Radhika’s business savvy and willingness to share the wealth has convinced her friend of her political acumen. But Radhika makes sure to let the less experienced girl

know that she has a long way to go before she's at Radhika's level – if the girl proves herself, Radhika will consider giving her more power. A strong "partnership" indeed.

The teacher at the school asks Radhika, "As a female leader, what would be your priorities?" The player can choose between "Economy," "Education," or "Security". If the player chooses "Economy," Radhika says, "By backing micro-finance and mirco-saving initiatives, we can give everyone the opportunity I was given." The teacher responds by saying, "If economic conditions improve, everyone benefits. Interesting. You can count on me." Radhika is pleased that the woman likes her vision, and she hopes the rest of her campaign will go as well. The idea that micro-finance is the key to empowerment and progress is reinforced once again in this scene. We've seen it work for Radhika, so it will certainly work for all the rest. It is financial growth that will make conditions better for all in this scenario.

Upon returning home, Radhika is met by three strange men who've let themselves in. The man dressed in an official uniform, wearing dark sunglasses, says "You know, bad things can happen when you getting [sic] involved in other people's business…" They tell her to drop out of the race. The player is able to choose whether Radhika should "Act Scared" or "Threaten them Back". If the player chooses to stand up to them, Radhika says that she and the others who support her cannot be scared off. She then goes to gather more support for her campaign, as she knows this is the only way she will be able to push back against such intimidation. With the support of her community behind her, Radhika wins the election. Another example of power through community organization.

As she is sworn in, she is asked to give a speech. “Not too long ago, I struggled to afford food and medical treatment for my sick daughter-like many of my neighbors. I vow to change things for our children so that they can to [sic] lead this community toward a brighter future!” Radhika says she thinks her speech went well and contemplates giving more of them. The player is given a real world fact that says millions of girls worldwide still struggle to go to school or see a doctor.

She is then off again, back to Afghanistan to use her political know-how to help the women there. The leader of the empowerment group in India asks Radhika to go and “speak on their behalf about property rights for women. The women are speaking out!” They decide to organize a campaign with fliers. This completes step 1 of 7 in the “Equality by law” task. Radhika says, “If this works, it will be the first time I’ve had a hand in enacting political change on a global level…” She also notes that it will make her a better representative back in India. She then goes around to rally support for the vote, and the women are receptive.

The male community leader is not convinced, however. He chides Radhika for her dress and says her husband would not approve. Although Radhika gets support from local women, the law doesn’t pass. Najiba says, “Radhika..the law didn’t pass. You have to realize how complex this issue is…People cannot agree on progress vs. traditions.” A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “We…we failed…How?...I thought we had everyone’s support. Is it possible I’m living in my own bubble?” This completes step 6 of 7 in the “Equality by law” task, which reads, “Sadly, it didn’t pan out. It goes to prove that there’s much more work to do…” A “Take Action to Change Your World” box with

a real world fact pops up that reads, “Even in the United States, there are no laws guaranteeing equal pay for women.”

The player learns that political change is slow going, especially when it comes to matters of tradition. Even though Radhika has gained political power and gathered support from the women in the community, it wasn’t enough. The final step in this task is to agree to trade wood for phones from a man in Kenya so the Afghan women can use the cell phones to feel more secure.

Radhika returns home and goes to collect another building permit. She says she is going to build the house her family has always dreamed of. While home, Radhika is met by a young woman from the U.S., who tells her about an organization that fights sex-trafficking in America. Radhika is surprised to hear that women there also face this terrible problem, and she is open to helping. But first, she must stop off at the United Nations, where she has been asked to give a speech.

The player learns that the USA is home to nearly 160 million women and is a “world leader in educational attainment for women. Many enjoy the diverse landscapes, from busy metropolitan cities to vast cornfields. One trip to America and you’ll never forget its colossal skyscrapers and sprawling shopping malls!” Radhika addresses the crowd at the United Nations by saying:

> My name is Radhika. I was invited to speak before you because you felt I was important, that I had something to say. I am a modest woman, but I ‘do’ have something to say. Like every wife on this planet. Every mother. Every woman. What we have to say is quite simple: equality, security, education, freedom must rise from the pages of the books that promise them. These values must become realities that instill justice in the heart of all of us, man and woman alike. I have traveled far and wide, and I have witnessed oppression. It is everywhere. I have seen it extinguish the flame of hope! We are too defeated by contempt and injustice. We must make the world better for our children!

After the speech finishes, a text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “ But along with oppression, I’ve seen opportunity. The solutions are within our reach. Let’s focus on…” The player can then choose between two action buttons, “Healthier Women,” or “Smarter Women”. If the player chooses “Smarter Women,” Radhika continues:

> Young girls drop out of school or are taken out, eliminating any opportunity for them to thrive. We cannot hope for a better future if only half of us are educated! But I have also met the angels who are making a difference. Women and men working toward a better future. Lighting up the torches of dignity and handing them to the community. Organizations that are helping…But there is still work to be done…Until equality has been erased! I want my daughter Aditi to grow up in a world where she has opportunities to grow and contribute!

A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, “A world where she can…” The player is given two action buttons, “Bring Change” or “Be Herself”. If the player chooses “Bring Change,” Radhika continues, “Her fate, like that of millions of girls, depends on all of us holding the sky together.” This is the end of “The big speech,” task, which will “echo through time, and across the world!”

The player is then given the opportunity to become a “Half the Sky Community Ambassador!” by contributing $9 to Girl Up. Radhika’s speech prioritizes the voices of “all women,” all of whom have similar goals— equality, security, education, freedom— which must be secured through “the pages of the books that promise them,” ostensibly meaning the letter of the law. Radhika emphasizes that men and women must work towards a better future, and that the work won’t be done until equality is erased. She also prioritizes girls’ education, as there is no hope for a better future if “only half of us are educated!”

Radhika’s American friend then takes her to the drop-in center where she provides resources to victims of sex trafficking. When Radhika arrives they are preparing

a room for a new girl, Crystal, and her baby. Crystal has left her boyfriend, 'Handsome' Jake, who is also the baby's father. In a text screen at the bottom of the page Radhika asks, "Was her pimp also her boyfriend?" The American girl explains that "it's the same old story": the man acts sweet and makes promises, the girl falls in love and doesn't realize how controlling he is, and then it's too late. Radhika meets Crystal who says her pimp told her that if the police caught her they would "mess me up worse than he does."

Crystal doesn't trust that the police, or anyone would want to help her, and she tells Radhika how hard it is to start over with no money and nowhere to go. Radhika assures her the women at the center are there to help. The American friend then brings in a cop to talk with Radhika. He tells her that, "American girls – especially runaways – face this kind of reality more than people want to recognize," and that many of these girls "rely on their captors just to survive."

Radhika suggests they renovate a nearby apartment to make more room in the shelter, and soon the project is done. When Crystal finds out her former pimp has been convicted, she begins to cry. A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "She's torn. He's her torturer, but also the father of her only child…" Crystal says that she's, "still afraid to lose him but I know it's for the best. I'm still scared about living on my own…I have no skills…My family hates me…"

Like the story of the woman who was abused by her husband back in India, the presentation of the abuser/victim dynamics is presented as complex. The player can then choose from two action buttons, "Work with other girls," or "Inspire her." Radhika responds, "…Know what? Only a few years back, I couldn't even read…I had never left

my village…it all changed when I met the right women and realized how to empower myself.”

“…Well, I’m not sure I’ll have as much luck as you. You’re like one in a million,” Crystal replies.

“Not just luck…but the right support and the right people around you,” says Radhika. The American girl who runs the shelter assures Crystal that all the girls there have been through hard times, and that there is hope. “You are part of our family now, and we can help you,” she says, “Even train you for a job.” The player can then “Give a Gift to Change a Life” by helping a real survivor to overcome sexual exploitation through a $20 donation to GEMS. The player learns that, like the sex trafficking scene in Vietnam, the victims in the US also need strong community support to move beyond their situation.

Next, Radhika discovers that Suong, the young girl from Vietnam, has ended up in the shelter. The American friend tells Radhika that the police arrested her in a crack house a few miles away. Suong says, “They hid us away for months…then they drugged us and put us on a plane, I don’t remember much after that.” The American girl explains that international sex trafficking is a real issue, and they should go to the police. Radhika and the American girl visit the police officer, who recognizes Radhika from TV. He tells them that, off the record, “some of the girls are Afghani…Most of them, in fact.”

Radhika is suddenly back in Afghanistan, where she joins Najiba in confronting the male community leader. He says perhaps some of these women “want to make a living? Have you thought about that?” A text box reads, “Something tells me he should be more surprised…” The player can “Press him,” or “Ask him about Suong”. If the

player chooses to "Press him," he responds by saying "it's always been that way, basic economics. Supply and demand. Everyone knows about it, and it's everywhere you go…" He then says there is a connection to Kenya.

But first, Radhika has to return Suong to Vietnam. She confronts Suong's mother and aunt. The mother says they sent her off for work. The Vietnamese police officer tells her she will be prosecuted for what she's done, unless she cooperates with them. The player can choose between two action buttons, "Who paid you?" or "You betrayed her!"

The trail leads her back to the men who threatened her before the election. He reminds her that he tried to tell her to mind her own business, but she didn't want to listen. He also says that his friends paid her family a "little visit" while she was away. She discovers that the men tried to burn her house down, but her neighbors helped to fight them off, and her family is safe. She also discovers that one of the attackers was a current police officer, and that the international sex trafficking ring leader is none other than the loan officer.

When Radhika confronts the man, he says he is, "a businessman. Girls are a product, just like anything else. A product in high demand. You can arrest me now, but there are many more like me." A text box at the bottom of the screen reads, "We may have stopped one international ring, but the serpent can regrow its tail…" The player is then given a real world fact that reads, "An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked each year, with at least 2,000 occurrences in New York City."

Radhika decides to throw a party for her friends. She says, "It has been a long journey. There is still a lot unknown ahead. This party is the beginning, not the end." The game ends by thanking the player. A pop-up message reads, "Congratulations! Your

choices have helped Radhika achieve global leadership!" It also tells the player about the real world impact she has had: "You triggered a book donation from Room to Read to help children read in school…"; You learned about gender issues in five different countries…"; "You triggered a $4.50 donation towards a life-changing fistula surgery…"; "You spread awareness about poverty, AIDS, domestic violence, sex trafficking, and so much more!". The player is told to "Stay tuned!" for additional quests that will be available in the coming months, and to continue playing "to help your friends and rank higher!" There is also a link to the Half the Sky book and documentary.

Moving through the entire game takes a substantial amount of time and real money from the player. The game "times-out" after minimal gameplay, forcing players to either wait 24-hours or pay to continue play. Regardless of how much time is spent waiting or the number of tasks completed, there were moments in the game in which it was impossible to move forward without paying at least a small sum, usually $1 or $2 spent to purchase Hope Bonds.

All in all, I spent a total of $364.00 U.S. to complete the game. This does not include any donations to NGO partners. This amount is purely the cost of in-game purchases necessary to complete tasks and carry the game forward. While I believe it would have been possible to spend less money to get through the game, it would not have been possible to get through without paying any money, and it would have taken additional time in terms of gameplay to do so. I estimate I could have saved approximately $164 if I had made a further time commitment to playing, on top of the more than 12 hours I spent playing. At the end of the game, I was surprised to see that my play commitment had only unlocked one book and $4.50 toward a fistula surgery.

Family Values

Family Values is made up of three "episodes," or story lines, in which the game player gets to make limited decisions that impact the direction of the game. While there is a strong visual element to the game (the characters have changing facial expressions, move to different locations, and change in looks over time), the story lines within each episode unfold via text-based narrative, thus a bias towards literacy is built into the game structure.

The story episodes take place in various locations – at a family home, a school, a kiosk in the city, and a medical clinic. The main character is a 10-year-old-girl named Anu, for whom decisions are made by the game player. Anu's family, including her Father, Mother, and older Brother and a variety of peripheral characters interact with Anu in various scenes. The game player is not represented visually in the game; rather she acts as an omnipresent subject who is, at times, spoken to directly by game characters, but for the most part simply looks on as a sort of virtual fly-on-the-wall. As the player pushes the enter button, the game moves forward scene by scene and the story unfolds via word bubbles that contain the characters' statements.

The game narrative moves uni-directionally until situations arise in which the player gets the option to either agree with (by selecting "CHOOSE") or question (by selecting "?") a statement/opinion/or declaration made by a character. This is where the "choose your own adventure" style of the game comes into play: at these strategic points, the narrative moves forward based on the player's decision until another CHOOSE/? scenario comes up.

To fully analyze how player choices impact the *Family Values* storyline, each possible scenario was played to its conclusion, and all text, character reactions, scene

aesthetics, locations, and game outcomes were tracked. Outlined below are a series of game scenarios that illuminate the development ideology constructed through the narrative and procedural rhetoric of *Family Values*.

Episode 1

The introductory scene is set in the family home. Anu greets the game player by saying, "Welcome to my life. Please help me make it a good one. Go on- click again." The player learns that Anu is a 10-year-old girl who dreams of being a nurse and opening a clinic in her hometown. Anu's Father, a principal character in the game, greets the player by saying "Ah, hello. I hear Anu has asked you to make some big decisions over the next few years." From these two statements, the player learns it is her job to make important life decisions *for* Anu in order to ensure her life is "a good one."

Anu's brother then enters the scene and is complimented by the father who says, "You've done nothing to make me so proud, Anu." From this short introductory scene the gender dynamics at play in the home (and ostensibly the larger community) are presented, as is the implied need for an outsider to make important decisions for the young girl navigating such dynamics.

The rest of the episode takes the player through a variety of scenes and situations in which she is intermittently asked to "CHOOSE" or "?" whether Anu should go out with her friends or stay in school to study extra hours; whether Anu and her Mother should let her Father and Brother eat dinner first, as the Mother suggests, or question this logic; and whether to "CHOOSE" or "?" the Father's statement to the Mother that they should "take Anu out of school to help more."

If the player chooses to follow the Father's request, either in this scenario or in a secondary version in which the Mother gets ill from not eating enough food and the family suggests Anu should stay home, Anu quits school school to help her family and the game ends. In this scenario the final scene takes place outside the family home where Anu says, "There isn't much more to say…Mother did get a job. Washing clothes…We're still poor. I'll never be a nurse now. But why not try again?"

The player is then taken to a screen that shows a tree with leafless branches. A blinking green leaf appears over the first branch, indicating that although the episode has been played, the desired or winning outcome (as designated by the rules of the game) has not been met. In another scenario, Anu's father decides she should be taken out of school when the player chooses for her to leave school early with friends instead of staying extra hours on her own to study. Anu then says to the player "It's just not fair. You didn't help keep me in school…But please play again." The green leaf continues to blink on the episode's branch.

The player can win a golden leaf, an indication that the right choices have been made and the desired outcome met, by taking an alternate route through this episode: if the player chooses to have Anu and her mother question the father's logic of taking Anu out of school and the player makes Anu stay late at school and study hard (instead of playing with friends), the episode then unfolds with Anu receiving top marks in school. She is congratulated by her teacher and parents, and the says to the player "Thanks for your help my friend. You have won the gold leaf on this branch of the family tree." A banner that read "Anu stays in school" scrolls across the top of the screen and Anu says she'll see the player again in a few years.

Based on the various scenario outcomes in this first episode, it's obvious that the way to win the game and create the "good life" for Anu is to make choices that will keep her in school.

The episode does highlight gender dynamics within the home beyond the issue of education: For instance, if the player CHOOSES for Anu to agree with her mother and let the men eat first the mother gets very ill. When the father realizes why, he declares that all family members will eat the same food from now on and says to the player, "Thank you for opening my eyes to this problem. We are still poor though. Your choices can help us find a better way."

In this scenario, both the family's poverty and the gendered distribution of resources in the home are touched on, and the player receives a solid (not blinking) green leaf. But scenarios that question the gendered hierarchy built into the family structure are not critical enough in the game to warrant a gold leaf; only by keeping Anu in school can the player give her a "good life" and win the game. Thus, *Family Values*' emphasis on education as *the* pathway to a good, empowered life for a girl comes through in this first episode.

Episode 2

In the second episode of the game Anu's brother welcomes the player back and says that nothing much has changed in the past five years: the Father still earns too little money and Anu is still the best student in school. All of the characters have aged since episode 1 and the player learns that the Mother is very ill. As the Father runs out to work he asks the game player if she can keep a secret: "A man with money wants to be my business partner. But he's looking for a wife too," he says.

The player learns that if Anu will marry this man, Kunal, the family will not have to be so poor. The direction of this episode is determined by whether the player decides to CHOOSE or ? Anu's statement "I suppose I must obey Father. I will marry Kunal." If the player selects CHOOSE, Anu marries Kunal and leaves school, at his request, so she can be a good wife.

The next choice the player makes determines whether Anu should obey Kunal and focus on her work in his home, rather than go and help her parents. If the player selects CHOOSE and obeys Kunal she learns the Mother has gotten very ill and passed away, and that Anu is pregnant. The episode ends with Kunal telling the player she doesn't get to see Anu again because she is too busy working: "Here's a leaf for your silly tree," he says, "Don't come back and bother me. If you want to try again that's your problem." The player does not receive a golden leaf and does not see Anu again. This route, quite obviously, is not the winning one.

An alternate scenario, in which the player makes Anu question her father's decision for her to get married leads to a scene outside the family home in which Anu says "I am happy to be free still. If only we could afford the medicine" for her mother. Throughout the episode Kunal and Anu's father continue to try and convince her to get married and take the family out of poverty.

If the player chooses for Anu to look at her father's accounts, against his wishes, she finds an error in his bookkeeping and helps the family get more money, to which the father says, "I always said it…Keeping that girl in school would benefit us all!" The episode ends with the family being able to afford medicine for the mother, the father making a small profit, and Anu winning a scholarship to go to nursing school.

Anu says to the player, “You know, I think we have a future for this family! Here’s the gold leaf for the end of this branch!” A banner goes across the top of the screen that says “Future for the Family.” The narratives of the various storylines and the game structure necessary to win in this episode continues the emphasis on education as the ideal path for achieving the “good life,” and adds in the importance of delaying marriage for girls so that education may continue.

Episode 3

Episode 3 moves the game forward in time once again as the player is greeted by an older Anu who has graduated at the top of her class. Anu tells the player that she has fallen in love with a boy named Sidhu and they have recently gotten married, but she wants to start a nursing program before getting pregnant. The focus of this episode is the pressure on Anu—from her parents, in-laws, and from the community in general—to get pregnant.

Anu says she loves Sidhu and knows he would like to have a baby, but her mother tells her the baby will be happier and healthier if she waits. The player has the option to CHOOSE or ? when Sidhu tells Anu, “I don’t want you to stop studying. Because I love you so much. Everyone wants us to start now. Anu we must start a family now.” While Sidhu seems to be supportive of Anu continuing her studies, he also pressures her to start a family right away.

If the player selects “?” after Sidhu’s statement, the couple enters into a discussion about seeing a nurse to get advice on family planning. If the player selects “CHOOSE” the two go visit the nurse and decide it is a good thing to be able to choose when to start a family. The nurse explains, “You use contraception. There are pills or injections for the woman. We can discuss it. I can explain more.” This is the end of the discussion and no

forms of contraception for the man are mentioned. After returning home from the clinic, Sidhu says he is relieved and that they will be able to manage much better now that they can decide when to start a family.

The player then learns that Anu has secured a place in a nursing program. After talking with her mother about how glad she is to have learned about family planning from the nurse, Anu goes back to Sidhu and says "I think the time might be right. I want a family with you…and a career and everything!" She then suggests they get tested (although she does not specify for what, we can infer she means for sexually transmitted diseases) before having a baby. While at the clinic the nurse says they are both healthy and that they "should not have sex with any other people." Anu responds by saying "We are happy together anyway."

In the very next scene, Anu is at a kiosk in the city. She tells the player, "I'm about to do a pregnancy test. Do you want it to be positive? So I'll have a baby?" If the player selects "?" (rather than CHOOSE), the player then sees Anu outside her home crying. Anu says "We have been trying and trying and I just can't get pregnant," to which Sidhu appears and says, "You work too hard and you have no desire to be a mother." As the episode ends, Anu says to the player, "At least Sidhu will stay with me. But he understands. So here's a green leaf for the tree. This is not how it should end." A banner scrolls across the top that says "Sidhu Understands" and Anu pleads with the player "So please go back and try again."

Although the player made sure Anu stayed in school, graduated at the top of her class, secured a position in a nursing school, avoided an early marriage, married the man of her choosing, *and* delayed an early pregnancy, this path doesn't lead to the "good life,"

because Anu doesn't end up being able to have a career *and* a baby (at least at this time). This scenario, which doesn't garner a golden leaf for the player, ends with Anu asking the player to please go back and play again because the game, aka her life, shouldn't end this way.

Discussion of the Games

The two games analyzed here, while different in platform and gameplay structure, both represent the HTSM's overarching approach to development: The movement uses individual narratives of poverty and oppression to highlight specific development issues; and it presents individual empowerment, predominantly in the form of microcredit, small women-owned businesses, and girls' education, as key to achieving development. Both games emphasize the need for individual women to prove their productive value to their families and communities in order to empower first themselves and then those around them.

The HTSMG takes up all five of the key development issues outlined on the HTSM's website—economic empowerment, education, forced prostitution, gender based violence, maternal mortality, and sex trafficking—illustrating these problems, and their solutions, for a primarily female, Western audience. *Family Values* focuses more specifically girls' education and the economic gains that come from delaying early marriage and keeping girls in school to marginalized audiences in the Global South. While the narratives in both games touch on a variety of gender related issues and present the player with nuanced moments that begin to hint at the complexity of systemic problems like poverty and gender based violence, the overarching ideology embedded in both games is built on individual empowerment, predicated on first overcoming

structural, cultural, and personal barriers, and then achieving educational and/or economic empowerment.

In the case of Radhika, a married mother, achieving economic empowerment is key to taking control of her life's circumstances—by securing a microloan she is able to start a small business, and she is able to use the profits from that business to help first herself and then those around her. For Anu, who begins the game as a young girl, empowerment is achieved through education, which enables her to help the family business and eventually secure a good job for herself. For both, proving to their family members and the people around them that they are productive members of the household, and that they have economic value, is necessary in order for them to take control of their own lives and move along on their journey from "oppression to opportunity."

The other life choices the characters get to make (for Anu, whom to marry and when to have a child; for Radhika, adding onto her home, helping others, and going into politics) are predicated on their ability to first individually overcome the cultural and structural barriers they face and prove their personal worth. This framing of women as productive members of society who should be valued based on their potential to contribute (both to development and to society at large) reflects and reinforces the mainstream discourse on investing in women and girls. Both games show that not only will investing in women, in the form of skills and resources, benefit the women themselves, but that those women will work to better their families and communities, lifting those around them out of poverty and extending the returns on the investment.

The HTSMG was designed specifically to reach "beyond the converted"—to take the issues of the HTSM to an audience unfamiliar with them, and to directly connect

solutions to problems, so that players gain not only an understanding of what is happening in the world, but also a clear sense of what needs to be done to address the issues. Through the HTSMG, players meet Radhika, learn about her hardships, and encounter microloans and individual entrepreneurship as the best way to overcome them.

As the game progresses, so does Radhika's capacity to solve more problems, both for herself and for others. By the last two chapters of the game, Radhika has moved from routinely employing economic solutions to taking a political stance to enact broader change – specifically in her campaign to run for local office, in her support for a law allowing Afghani women to own property, and in her speech at the United Nations.

Her political power, however, is predicated on her individual economic empowerment – that first microloan was the catalyst for all that has come after it, and because of that she plans to use her role in politics to support more microcredit programs like it. Further, it is through economic solutions (convincing other women to get a loan, going into business with them, selling a goat to them) that she is able to most successfully help other women around her.

Throughout the game, Radhika helps a variety of women, and some men, with a variety of problems. The solutions to these problems generally come in one of three forms: 1) Individual Economic Empowerment (e.g., sell seeds, start a business), 2) Non-Financial Material Resources (e.g., mosquito nets, cook stoves), 3) Cultural/Political Change (e.g., family planning talk, vote to allow women to own property, protest against police force's decision not to pursue a rapist). In the course of the game, only the Individual Economic Empowerment solutions and the Non-Financial Material Resources solutions proved consistently successful.

Two of the main Cultural/Political Change solutions – hosting a community discussion around family planning and birth control in Kenya, and having a vote on women's right to own property in Afghanistan – were failures. The player was shown the potential power of community organizing when Radhika convinced others to join with her and take to the streets to protest against the violence against women, which resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of a rapist. But they also saw that this approach doesn't always work (see above).

Although the importance of political organizing was presented to players through Radhika's successful run for office, the only outcome of her achievement comes in the form of speeches – one is on the importance of micro-lending practices, the other, at the U.N., focuses on her own story of changing her life through hard work.

While Radhika participates in a variety of activities, some of which bring groups of women together to fight for change in nuanced ways, the moments of *actual change* in the game – when the female players successfully transition from "oppression" to "opportunity" — are predicated on financial gain. Indeed, unlocking her own earning potential and building up a small-business was what allowed Radhika to change her own life, and it is the key she presents to many others along the way. Whether it is selling one of her goats to a pregnant woman in the market so that she too can make money off of its milk, helping her friend start a business beading clothes and employing other women in the village, or helping a young woman collect seeds and take a computer class to help grow her profits, Radhika helps other women move toward the same path to empowerment –a path that starts with individual economic gain.

As evidenced by the detailed discussion in Chapter 2, the discourse of poor women and market participation that is woven into the HTSMG is not a new one. Women and girls have become the face of global development. Framed as 'untapped resources,' the empowerment of women and girls, and the subsequent release of their economic potential and skills, is presented as key to achieving a variety of development goals.

The mainstream discourse within both the development industry and corporate responsibility field promotes 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics', a move that advances a "neoliberal economic policy agenda characterized by market fundamentalism, deregulation and corporate led-development" (Calkin, 2015, p. 296), while doing little to question or dismantle global and local power structures that create and reinforce gender equality. As noted earlier, this framing of women's empowerment is useful for creating overlap between the transnational corporate and development sectors as it is presented as a form of "straightforward transactions, a matter of putting money directly into the hands of women and girls, training them in the arts of the market, and watching them flourish as they lift their families, communities, and national economies," all the while creating new markets, and new sources of corporate profit (Cornwall, 2014, p. 131).

But such a discourse shifts the responsibility of individual, communal, and even national level development directly onto poor women (Wilson, 2015). In this context, challenging issues of gender inequality, specifically the rates of poverty facing women in the developing world, is achieved through individual effort, self-help programs, microcredit loans, and small business ventures. As analyzed at length in Chapter 2, it is a discourse that has challenged and oppressed women in new ways (Aguilar & Lacsaman, 2004; Alvarez, 1999; Kabeer, 1994; Karim, 2008, 2011; Wilson, 2015).

In the ‘Gender Equality as Smart Economics’ framework, global corporations, development organizations, NGOs, and individual citizens in the Global North all have a role to play: it is up to them to provide the initial material resources to kick-start the empowerment process. This may come in the form of skills training programs, microlending projects, donations to NGOs, etc. But once the initial investment has been made, “responsibility shifts entirely onto the individualized figure of the girl after the initial investment in her human capital: ‘she will do the rest’ (Nike Foundation, 2008), and any critique of structures is rendered irrelevant” (Wilson, 2015, p. 819).

Such projects create new forms of development governmentality that “train and shape bodies for particular forms of economic agency and participation” (Calkin, 2015, p. 302). In the case of the HTSM games, this training happens at two levels: through the HTSMG, players in the West are trained to see themselves as an already empowered agent in a position to help, and they learn that such help should come in the form of material resources. Through the mobile phone games, players are trained to be better “individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being” (Larner, 2000, p. 13), and to strategize, “for her/himself among various social, political and economic options,” rather than “strive with others to alter or organize these options” (Brown, 2003, p. 15).

In the HTSMG, individual players are asked to join in on the development process by generating the initial investments—by unlocking sponsored donations through game play, making personal donations to the game’s non-profit partners, and extending the network of developers by inviting friends to play along—all of which will lead to the empowerment of women and girls in the real world. Players can help Radhika and ‘real

women' get both money and goods by donating directly to the nonprofits featured in the game, or by buying additional "energy" or goods necessary to continue game play. As the game is set up so to time-out after a minimal amount of play, paying-to-play is, at some point, a necessity in order to get through the game. By shifting responsibility for development to NGOs, individual women, and individual female game players, the negative implications *for* women of women's entry into the current economic and social system are evaded and its structures of power left intact.

Throughout the game, players are asked to participate in what game developer Frima refers to as virtual-to-real-life translation by purchasing a good or service identical to the one that has just been used in the game through one of its seven nonprofit partners. For instance, after Radhika prospers from buying a goat and selling its milk, the player is asked if she wants to help a woman in real life by purchasing a goat through Heifer International. By connecting these financial donations to the concept of women's empowerment, the game participates in what Dingo (2012) refers to as the megarhetoric of empowerment: a mainstreamed, naturalized discourse, in which it is assumed that women's empowerment is equal to women's individual financial security. By unlocking material support through gameplay and engaging with in-game donations and purchases, players are able to assume they have empowered a poor woman in the Global South, and the player gains a sense of action and of personal empowerment along the way.

Indeed, social media posts from game players support this assumption. As outlined in Chapter 4, players' responses highlighted how easy the game made it for the player to create "real change". Being able to donate a book "for free!" to an in-game partner NGO just by playing for a short time was "So empowering" (@janiey_x, Twitter

post, 2016). And unlocking donations through gameplay reminded players “how much help others need in the world” (Holman, screen captures, 2016). Even when it was obvious to players that their in-game actions wouldn’t directly translate to real world action (e.g., rescuing a girl from the brothel) just playing still made them feel like they were doing something, “I don’t know, I just felt better afterwards” (Facebook post, 2016).

This positioning of the game player supports a hierarchy of expertise, power, and agency, which rests with the women who have the access, resources, and skills to play the game, and which constructs them as most capable of directing and impacting the lives of women throughout the Global South (Kwami, Wolf-Monteiro & Steeves, 2011). However, it also constructs for them a “low barrier” way, as Kristof described it, to engage with the issues and feel they are making a difference without needing to make a commitment beyond unlocking sponsored donations through gameplay. If the solution to women’s empowerment is indeed individual financial support, there is little reason to consider broader political action once this support has been given.

Dingo (2012) argues that approaches to empowerment that focus on financial exchange between individuals in the Global North and Global South reinforce “the notion of personal agency and monetary exchange over a broader feminist understanding of the transnational contexts that make donations, charity work, and development programs necessary in the first place” (p. 177).

While the game provides players with information on key issues as identified by the HTSM (such as the number of women living in poverty and the number of people infected with HIV), there is little given in the way of context: the women facing these

issues are in India, Kenya, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and the U.S., but there is no explanation of regional differences regarding these issues, or of why certain women are in poverty while others are not, or how historical and current political and economic processes have impacted such issues.

The player might gain a better sense of scale regarding the issues identified by the HTSM, but what she is unlikely to come away with is a nuanced understanding of either the potentially negative impacts processes like capitalism and globalization have on women in the developing world or the ways in which asymmetrical North/South power structures contribute to the oppressive reality of women in the developing world and exacerbate issues of inequality.

Moreover, the HTSMG fails to provide any meaningful discussion on the ways in which microlending practices oppress women in new ways while simultaneously benefiting the middle class at the expense of the poorest (Karim, 2011). Rather, because the player has given money (either by directly donating funds herself or by unlocking material goods and services through gameplay) she "can simply forget about the broader context of poverty and feel assuaged by her or his action" (Dingo, 2012, p. 177). Women's oppression and inequality is thus presented to the player not as a challenge to a system that is inherently asymmetrical, but instead as a depoliticized tool that promotes new market subjects (Karim, 2011).

Games like the HTSMG present development issues situated in the Global South to a primarily Northern audience while constructing for them a particular understanding of what development should look like, how it should be done, and what their role is in it. In this case, development is achieved by individual women in the Global South entering

the global marketplace via microcredit loans and small businesses, and the role of the game player, situated in the Global North, is to facilitate that productivity through material donations, achieved through the labor of gameplay to unlock sponsored donations, or through individual monetary contributions.

This emphasis on private aid and individual empowerment aligns nicely with a broader neoliberal development agenda that "reduces social change to entrepreneurship in a market-based system, and civic involvement and voice to clicktivism" (Wilkins & Enghel, 2013, p. 169). When the concept of individual empowerment is emphasized above all else, the constraints that social inequalities place on achieving individual success are erased, creating a depoliticized approach that supports a "neoliberal project, in which market-based exchanges are assumed to be beneficial without serious critique" (Wilkins & Enghel, 2013, p. 170).

Through the creation of development oriented games like HTSMG, organizations are adding a new text to the discourse *about* development— framing for players how development should be carried out, on whom it should focus, and what the end goal should look like. From a game studies perspective, video games are a perfect tool for generating and distributing such a message (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006). In creating the software for games, producers, designers, etc. construct realities for players, filled with the value systems, worldviews, and norms of the designer, whether embedded in the games intentionally or not (Flanagan, 2006).

Embedding ideologies in games works well as players are called on to take them up via the specific subject positions constructed through virtual play. These virtual subject positions create a subtle, "more flexible order where users of their own initiative

adopt the identities required by the system" (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009, p. 193). Further, the digital labor required of HTSMG players, most of whom are female, align with Jarrett's (2014) conception of Digital Labor 2.0 in which seemingly innocuous actions, 'Liking' a post on Facebook, asking a friend to join you in playing a game "becomes part of a powerful disciplining machinery specific to the historical moment" (p. 24). In this case, the actions around and within the game taken by game players work to further reinforce a neoliberal approach to development, both by directly supporting it through their own labor and material donations, and by using a social network to reinforce the neoliberal market system and its values, norms, and behaviors to their friends, all of which has implications for both the digital and real world (Jarrett, 2014; Terranova, 2000).

In the case of the HTSMG, the audience asked to participate in this development project is overwhelmingly female—80% of HTSMG players are female—and the top playing country is the U.S. (Half the Sky Movment, 2013). In creating a Facebook based game filled with female characters and illustrated in a distinctly cartoonish, childlike way, the HTSM and G4C targeted the traditionally female social media gaming audience: studies show that 55% of all social media game players in the U.S. are female and their average age is 48 (PopCap, 2010; Ingram, 2010). Women, it seems, are attracted to short, casual games that involve an active community such as FarmVille, Café Wars or Pet Society (eMarketer, 2010).

Further, women spend more time on social networks in general, so their strong presence on social media based games is logical (eMarketer, 2010). In keeping with the older demographic of Facebook—the primary platform for 83 percent of social game

players—the average age of social game players in the US is 48 (Ingram, 2010). While women have been the dominant demographic in the casual gaming industry since its beginnings, the divide between male and female players has grown as social media games continue to generate popularity with so-called "middle-aged," female players (Morrision, 2010).

In a promotional video for the HTSMG, G4C co-presidents Asi Burak and Michelle Byrd discuss player demographics and community building as reasons they chose Facebook as the platform for their social media game (YouTube, 2014). They note, correctly, that social media game players are women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s – a demographic they specifically hoped to target. This, along with the ability to invite friends to join the game (seen in games like the epically successful Farmville) gave weight to their decision to create this particular kind of game in this particular digital space. The game asks you, the player, to "recruit more people into this global movement" as you take Radhika, the character in the game, on a "journey from oppression to opportunity" (YouTube, 2014).

The HTSMG was designed as a way to present development issues situated in the Global South to a primarily Northern audience, while constructing for them a particular understanding of what development should look like, how it should be done, and what their role is in it. In the case of the HTSMG, development is achieved by empowering individual women to change the circumstances of the their individual lives, and the lives of women around them, a process that is catalyzed by microcredit loans and small business resources. The role of the game players, situated in the West, is to facilitate that empowerment through material donations.

With the launch of its Facebook game, the HTSM is capitalizing on the gendered digital space of a social media based game, coded with feminized visuals, as a way to reach out to middle aged, elite (meaning they have particular socioeconomic resources including money, leisure time, literacy, computer skills and access) women who, the organization hopes, will become invested in the project of developing the Third World women represented in the game. This focus on women as game players and developers has the potential to do several things.

First, it creates a new and unique space to carry out a discourse that is neither new nor unique – a discourse of global sisterhood in which women are at once rhetorically united by their position as women, while being distanced from one another by their position in the Global North or South. Further, this discourse supports a hierarchy of expertise, power, and agency, which rests with the women who have the access, resources, and skills to play the game, and which constructs them as most capable of directing and impacting the lives of women in the Third World.

Additionally, the game capitalizes on what Jarrett (2014) refers to as “immaterial labor 2.0,” in which unpaid digital labor by the “individual consumer/citizen/web user” is disciplinary practice through which the laborer is “organized/interpellated/shaped/seduced” into roles that work within the confines of contemporary capitalism and support social norms and behavior necessary for that system (p. 23). Jarrett (2014) sees the concept and political import of “immaterial labor 2.0” as particularly pertinent in studying “women’s work” in digital spaces. By tapping into female game players and their leisure time, the HTSM presents development work as a form of immaterial digital labor to be carried out by individual women in order to

“empower” individual Third World women via a standard neoliberal approach to development.

Unlike the HTSMG, *Family Values* was designed specifically for players in the Global South and aims to change normative attitudes and behavior around gender. Based on the various gameplay outcomes in which a player either wins a golden leaf or is encouraged to try again, it is clear that the narrative and procedural rhetoric of *Family Values* emphasize education as the most important resource for securing gender equality. By building her capacity through education, a girl will be able to prove her worth to her family, make her own decisions, earn an income and become an empowered woman.

According to the HTSM, the main goal of this game is to empower women in the developing world. The first lesson from the game is that an empowered girl is an educated girl, and that women and girls must do the work to earn gender equality by proving value to their family. It is also evident that securing access to an education is the responsibility of the individual: The game encourages the player to make Anu question the logic of her father, work around her family’s poverty, and dedicate herself to studying extra hours in school.

While the game points to several of the larger structural, social, and cultural issues that often block girls’ access to education, such as class, gender, and family expectations, the onus for overcoming these obstacles is placed solely on the individual. The empowered girl, then, is meant to find ways to work within the system to secure an education. And while Anu does question (if the player chooses for her to) why her brother gets to go to school and she doesn’t, or why she should have to get married so young, the game does not highlight systems outside the individual as sites for change or disruption.

While the game's presentation of family dynamics that both lead to or preclude Anu's access to education is at times quite nuanced, it is apparent that the only solution to gender equality offered by *Family Values* is for an individual girl to build her individual capacity by securing an education. However, as the game continues it becomes clear that obtaining an education is not, in and of itself, enough. Anu must also follow along a normative storyline of marriage and motherhood to "win" at life. The unexpected emphasis on having it all—"I want a family with you…and a career and everything!"—(which rings fiercely of Western notions of modernized womanhood) encourages the player to make decisions for Anu that ask her to push back against cultural and familial pressures, while simultaneously fulfilling normative expectations of marriage and motherhood. Getting an education changes the timing of these events but the result is only a delayed normativity, for Anu must still be able to get pregnant for the player to win the game and for Anu to win at life.

Tying paid work outside the home to the traditional goals of marriage and reproduction does little to disrupt normative gender expectations and institutional systems of gender inequality. Rather, it employs a neoliberal and hetero-normative narrative that asks a woman to be both productive and reproductive members of society in order to achieve gender equality within the household and in the community at large.

A key critique of recent mainstream development approaches to women's empowerment is that they de-emphasize structural change while stressing the importance of individual responsibility, a pattern we see repeated in the game. Anu must stand up to her father, and their family must make choices, but the game does not ask how larger structures

impact the issues that play out, nor does it emphasize the role of persons or structures outside of the family unit in addressing them.

Instead, *Family Values* uses a “smart economics” approach to construct its argument for gender equality. It argues that, if given resources such as food, education, and the right to delay her marriage, a daughter can build her individual capacity through education and help her family prosper economically: her math skills will help with keeping the books, which will save the business money, and her eventual career as a nurse will bring additional economic support. The daughter, then, is framed as an “untapped resource” in the family and community, who, if given the necessary knowledge, skills, and training, will be capable of supporting her own development, as well as the development of the community around her.

While the game should be commended for highlighting complicated gendered household power structures and pointing, albeit briefly, to larger systemic issues such as poverty and limited access to important resources, it fails to also take into account the structural changes and redistribution of power necessary in order to achieve gender equality. In the HSM, the best way to secure gender equality is through individual capacity building: if girls get an education they will gain individual economic empowerment which will ultimately lead to gender equality for themselves and the women around them. But remember, securing such a future is up to individual 10-year-old girls.

The overarching narrative in the game is about the struggle of individual families, and specifically the young girls within them, and the individual paths they must take to change their lives/empower themselves, regardless of the various constraints (e.g., lack of

material resources, skills, education, childcare) they may face. Such a narrative neglects to evaluate the role of social and political structures and institutions in creating change (Brown 2003; Karim 2011; Moser 1989; Razavi and Miller 1995). Rather than questioning what negative effects a global capitalist system has on women's lives (Aguilar & Lacsamana, 2004), *Family Values* encourages players to act as "model neoliberal citizens" and find development solutions among the various social, political and economic options made available through it (Brown, 2003, p. 15). It does not ask them to join "with others to alter or organize these options" (Brown, 2003, p.15). Women's oppression and inequality is thus presented to the player not as a challenge to a system that is inherently asymmetrical, but instead as a depoliticized tool that promotes new market subjects (Karim, 2011).

As Matt Watkins, Creative Director of Mudlark, the studio responsible for designing *Family Values*, says in a promotional video, "Any game is a partnership between the people who make it and the people who play it," (Half the Sky, n.d.). While this is certainly an important concept in terms of player response and resistance to games, it is equally important to consider the power dynamics at play in the construction of such games.

While players may have control regarding their individual responses to games, not all are given equal access to constructing the narratives of empowerment and development embedded in them—this is certainly true when such a game is aimed at "the hardest to reach." Rather, a game like *Family Values,* which teaches players via procedural rhetoric, have the potential to be ideal sites for circulating specific ideologies about women and development. While the HTSM claims *Family Values* is a game meant to empower women

and elevate their value in the family, the nature of the game structure (which frames particular life choice as *the* route to empowerment) works to embed a Western, hegemonic development ideology within the game that narrowly defines what an empowered subject should look like.

Constructing and promoting this narrative of a single path to empowerment has problematic implications for both the development field and individual game players. If education is indeed *the route* to empowerment within the game, then choices that diverge from this path will ostensibly lead to a less empowered, or a disempowered, subject. As the game calls on players to make specific choices in order to create an empowered subject within the game, there is the potential for players to see themselves as disempowered subjects if their real-life choices do not include education. Because the game is aimed at the "hardest to reach," it seems plausible to assume that many players may not have access to education for various structural, economic, or social/cultural reasons.

As such, creating a narrative in which education is the only pathway to empowerment could lead to an understanding of alternative life choices as disempowered, and an understanding of the self as existing in a disempowered subject position. Steeves and Kwami (2013) point out that scholars and practitioners must be especially cognizant when dealing with projects that intend to "empower" others, for they "often harm and oppress in complex ways, and…marginalized groups must therefore find ways to resist and/or creatively manipulate projects intended to help them" (p. 6).

The HTSM's normalizing narrative of education as a standard of empowerment can be seen as a digital practice that promotes specific life choices determined by the HTSM to be relevant to a modern, developed individual (Brigg, 2002). As it calls upon players to

take up certain values and align themselves with a particular subject position (one that fits within a modernized, neoliberal vision of development that values a Western conception of progress and empowerment), *Family Values* is designed to operate as a form of biopower, shaping and directing the lives of "the hardest to reach" through an innovative technological platform.

The problematic assumption too often taken by social cause game supporters that interactivity through new media platforms such as digital games is automatically empowering and democratizing must be checked by critical development scholars, especially when such projects target the "hardest to reach" marginalized women, for although DDGs might prove to be innovative channels for carrying out development projects they also hold the potential to act as "machines of 'subjectivation'" that are not "free from ideology; rather it intensifies the sense of free will necessary for ideology to work really well" (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009, p. 192). As empowerment becomes, as Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2003) argue, a "motherhood term" used in everything from grassroots movements to multi-million dollar USAID projects, it is necessary to analyze the many messages the term is tied to.

Introducing a development narrative into game play can be understood as a way to generate support for a particular way of *doing* development – in this case, development based on women's entry into the marketplace/the shaping of female neoliberal subjects in the developing world. The focus on women in the HTSM, which is embedded in the two games, reinforces a mainstream discourse that frames women and girls as an "untapped resource," and emphasizes 'empowering' them—through education and economic investment—as key to achieving a range of development goals, including gender

equality. As has been discussed, such a discourse shifts the responsibility for achieving gender equality onto individual women, and specifically onto poor, marginalized women, while leaving intact the local and global power structures that create and sustain inequality at a various levels.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On March 8, 2016, three years and four days after its launch, the "Facebook adventure that raises awareness & funds to empower women & girls across the world" said goodbye to those who "made a difference" by playing the *Half the Sky Movement: The Game*. A note to players on the game's Facebook page read:

> This week we say goodbye to the Half the Sky Game. It made a difference in so many lives! We thank everyone for playing and hope we have inspired you to continue to fight against oppression and seek opportunities to empower women worldwide. The game says goodbye, but let's keep taking actions to increase opportunities for women worldwide! (Facebook, 2016)

The "online social experience that turns gameplay into real-world activism" had run its course (Movement, n.d.).

In the three years it was live it brought in just over one million players, it raised close to $500,000 in sponsored and individual donations, and it generated a media and celebrity buzz that brought the HTSM to the attention of many. In terms of the number of press impressions, a member of the G4C team said the project had "great success" (Interview F, 2016). In terms of bringing in players and generating individual donations, however, success was limited.

As noted in an earlier chapter, only approximately 10 percent of the donations raised through the game came from individual players, while the rest came from unlocking the in-game sponsored donations. For the game to be as successful as it was in raising money for its NGO partners, it was dependent on its corporate sponsors, Johnson & Johnson and Pearson Foundation, who donated $500,000 to the game (which, it should

be noted, was more than the $447,000 that was actually unlocked or donated through the game).

But while not many players became the kind of “hardcore activists” G4C had hoped for early on, players reported that the game was an empowering experience for themselves and that they felt they were truly making a difference in the lives of women in need simply by playing (as detailed in Chapter 4). Many it seems, were captivated by what a member of the HTSM team referred to as the “new phase of feminism,” that the movement helped propel: a phase focused on the concept of women’s empowerment, achieved primarily through education and income generating activity, and facilitated via Western financial support channeled through NGOs (Interview E, 2016).

Through the game, players learned about the issues facing women and girls globally, and about the specific solutions best suited to addressing them. They also learned that they were in a position to enact change across the globe from the comfort of their own homes. As the HTSM says, “Change is possible, and *you* can be part of the solution” (Movement, n.d.). Simply by joining the game, players were contributing financial support to NGOs working to solve the problems they saw in the game, and they were empowering women by doing so; and knowing this financial support had been unlocked was gratifying and empowering for the players themselves. They enjoyed becoming more knowledgeable about the issues facing women and girls around the globe, but they especially enjoyed being able to address those issues simply by giving their leisure-labor time to the game.

The HTSM worked to directly connect issues to solutions, both as a way to keep the narrative of the game optimistic, and in order to provide “concrete steps to fight these

problems and empower women" (Movement, n.d.). However, the majority of players only learned about the issues and solutions presented in the early stages of the game. The number of people who actually played the game all the way through was marginal: When an interviewee from the G4C team learned I had played the game to its completion, the team member remarked that I was probably one of only a few thousand who actually did so (Interview F, 2016).

For many players, then, the various non-financially oriented empowerment narratives embedded later in the game (e.g., the women's newspaper in Afghanistan, Radhika running for local office and speaking at the United Nations) would not be a solution they were introduced to. Rather, they would leave the game having learned the term microcredit (as WuDunn hoped they would) and would understand it, based on the game's narrative, as a positive tool for empowering women. Some players who made the time commitment to play all the way through would learn about additional avenues for empowering women that built off of, or added onto, income generating solutions. But even they would see that the economic solutions presented in the game would prove most directly successful for Radhika and her friends.

While the game did not bring in nearly the numbers the HTSM had hoped for, it did reach approximately 1.1 million players, and, although the top playing country was the U.S., many others were playing outside of the West. G4C credits the relationship with Zygna for generating the number of players the game saw, especially at the global level (Interview F, 2016). If Zygna had not highlighted the game on its Z-bar, numbers would likely have been much lower and the game would not have reached so far beyond U.S. borders (Interview F, 2016). As one G4C team member noted, creating strong

relationships with established corporations in the commercial gaming world is crucial for achieving success in a project like this, and such a project could potentially be replicated "with the right partners" (Interview F, 2016).

A few months before the sign-off of the Facebook game, the HTSM Global Engagement Initiative (HTSM Initiative) was also wrapping up. The HTSM Initiative, a public/private partnership created through a second USAID grant, did much to expand the reach of both the games specifically and the message of the HTSM generally. Via the HTSM Initiative, the Facebook game gained 32,397 players in India and Kenya, and the two countries generated 112,611 downloads of the mobile phone games. The Half the Sky documentary was also aired 56 times over 1.5 years in the two countries, broadening the scope of the film, which had already aired in the U.S., tremendously.

In December 2015, the year-and-a-half long HTSM Initiative was administering post-tests to gauge the project's effectiveness, employing FHI 360 and USAID's focus on rigorous evaluation. According to two members of the FHI 360 team, the games had a positive impact (Interview B, 2016; Interview C, 2016). A 2012 evaluation (conducted during the first USAID grant period) of one of the games, *9 Minutes*, found that the game, as part of a broader curriculum which included the HTSM videos and group discussions, had a significant impact on participants' ability to name beneficial pregnancy health activities (Dasgupta, et al., 2012).

Participants reported that they enjoyed playing the game, and that they liked being given information in an entertaining format (Dasgupta, et al, 2012). Some female respondents reported liking this particular mobile game more than others they had played because it was both fun and informative, and said they would play it again if given the

chance (Dasgupta, et al., 2012). Participants learned new information through the intervention, and there was significant improvement in their knowledge and recall of intended information post-intervention (Dasgupta, et al., 2012). This was true for groups who played the game only, as well as for those who played the game, watched the videos and participated in discussion groups. However, the effects were stronger in participants in the group exposed to the total intervention package (games, video, and discussion).

A 2015 midterm report for the HTSM Initiative also indicated positive impacts associated with the use of the games (Interview B, 2015). The NGOs involved in the project described the intervention packages (which include the videos, mobile games, and discussion guide) as useful and successful to their programs. And early evaluations showed changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors in some key areas (Interview B, 2015).

However, the evaluations also highlighted a variety of limitations to the successful use of the games. First, players in the 2012 evaluation of *9 Minutes* reported having differential access to mobile phones, and differing frequencies of mobile phone gameplay, based on their gender. While almost a quarter of total participants (23.1%) reported playing mobile-based games on a daily basis, and 41.6% reported playing at least once per week, male respondents played mobile games at a higher frequency than female respondents (Dasgupta, et al., 2012, p. 15). For instance, 37.7% of men reported playing mobile phone games every day, while only 15.8% of women reported similar play frequency (Dasgupta, et al., 2012, p. 16). This information supports the sentiments expressed by an FHI 360 team member in chapter 4, which pointed to gendered differences in mobile phone access and use in India (Interview B, 2016).

Additionally, differences in literacy levels in the program regions had a strong effect on players' responses to the games (Interview B, 2015). Low literacy levels proved to be a barrier to gameplay for all three of the games, even *9 Minutes* which was designed specifically to be a game that was accessible regardless of players' literacy levels (Interview B, 2015). The limited number of devices available to NGOs to use for gameplay also had a strong effect on usefulness and player enjoyment—the fact that only one person can play the mobile phone game at a time made the games less enjoyable in a group setting (Interview B, 2015).

While an FHI 360 team member reported limited use of the Facebook game in community settings because of barriers such as internet connectivity (Interview D, 2016), the midterm report found that two NGOs that did use it were "especially enthusiastic about the Facebook online game, and saw it as an extremely useful tool for group discussion" (Interview B, 2015). Although the game was designed specifically for a Western audience, an executive director of one of the NGOs called the game "'amazing,' and the discussion leaders chose to spend three sessions playing the game rather than two, at the demand of participants" (Interview B, 2015).

The NGO staff especially appreciated being able to pause the game, "(for example when the main character had to make a decision about her future actions) and discuss the issue with the group before proceeding with the game," which made it easier to integrate the game into group discussions (Interview B, 2015). It was suggested that if the mobile phone games could be projected on a screen to where they could be used similarly to the Facebook game they could have also been better integrated into the group structure (Interview B, 2015).

According to the Final Report, released on March 15, 2016, the HTSM Initiative reached 160,120 people "in some of the most challenging environments possible" (Final Report, 2016, p. 10). The report indicates that, in both India and Kenya, "Outcomes of the pre- and post-surveys show significant changes" in participants' knowledge around "certain areas of women's empowerment—particularly around education and pregnancy health" (Final Report, 2016, p. 10). Further:

> In Kenya, knowledge about economic empowerment increased as well. Participants' attitudes about particular areas of women's empowerment, particularly education, improved in both countries. In India, attitudes about reproductive health improved as well. In Kenya, attitudes regarding gender-based violence improved. Participants' perceptions of social norms with regard to gender-based violence improved in India. Perceptions of social norms with regard to education improved in Kenya. Participants' self-efficacy regarding their own ability to make changes increased in the area of gender-based violence in both countries. In India, self-efficacy in the areas of education and reproductive health increased as well (Final Report, 2016, p. 10).

Changes in individual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior were more significant in India than in Kenya. Overall, the changes were greater for women than for men. In India, however, it was men who saw the most significant change in terms of attitudes about girls' education:

> While women already had favorable attitudes to girls' education, men's attitudes were less favorable. Men's attitudes towards girls' education in India saw the largest change of any area of the project. Before the discussion groups began, men had an average score of 3.7 out of 5 (somewhere between 'neutral' and 'somewhat agree') when asked whether they believed that 'girls who finish senior secondary school are able to contribute financially to their families.' After the session, this score moved to a 4.5 (between 'somewhat agree' and 'strongly agree').

Men's attitudes around whether they believed "early marriage for girls is good because then the girl will be protected" moved from 4.3 (close to 'somewhat disagree') to 4.8 (very close to 'strongly disagree'), and their attitudes on whether they believed "it is

more important to educated a boy than a girl" also shifted. It seems, however, from the report that it was the discussion groups around the media content, not the media content itself, that drove these effects.

According to the final report, during the duration of the project several girls re-enrolled in schools, parents bought bicycles for children so they could get to school more easily, women said they regretted not studying and that they would make sure their younger brothers and sisters did, women felt confident to stand up and speak out against issues of gender violence, to talk with their parents about girls' education, and to join together to form savings groups and open checking accounts (Final Report 2016).

An interview highlighted in the Final Report (2016), states that "Some women were depending on their husbands but now they have their own jobs and their own money and those who used to shy away from doing jobs like washing for other people are now more open about it" (p. 63). It should be noted once more that the outcomes evaluated here stemmed from projects using discussion groups along with the videos and games.

Based on the survey questions asks, it seems the value of girls' education was once again tied to the potential it creates for future financial contribution. By directly asking players before and after their experience with the game *Family Values*, and the group discussions and videos that supplement it, if they believe "girls who finish senior secondary school are able to contribute financially to their families," the survey reinforces the idea that an investment in girls' education now will lead to a financial return for families later on (Final Report, 2016).

The games can be considered successful, in terms of project goals, on a few levels. They took the messages of the HTSM "beyond the converted," placing them

before audiences in the Global North and Global South. Through the Facebook game, they connected the issues and solutions identified by the HTSM to audiences in the West, who, according to a member of the G4C team, are at the heart of Kristof and WuDunn's conceptualization of social change: In the eyes of the HTSM, people in the U.S. and in Europe are the ones who can influence their governments, they are the ones who can contribute money, they are actors who can enact change (Interview F, 2016).

Through the mobile phone games, they increased the knowledge of players living in the Global South, and impacted their attitudes around gender and health issues. Such impact, however, was generated through the use of games as part of a broader curriculum, which included educational videos and group discussion, not from simply playing the games alone.

While the games proved to have little success as "stand alone tools," and were in reality primarily used as a) great conversation starters or b) one channel out of many used for message reinforcement, the use of the games did generate ample positive media coverage for the HTSM, G4C, and USAID, furthering discussions around the work of all three organizations, and around the potential for games to "change the world". As a member of the G4C team noted, USAID worked hard to publicize its relationship with the HTSM and the funding of the mobile phone games: "My point is that not only were they very forward thinking [in terms of using games], it seems they have a lot of interest to put the fact that they're doing games as the headline. You know, like showing they are really pushing the boundaries" (Interview F, 2016).

Because the use of games is considered innovative throughout industries, a game-based development project like the one between USAID and the HTSM worked as an

effective way to generate positive attention for the organizations and support for the work they are doing. As is discussed by critical game studies scholar Bogost (2013) (and detailed in chapter 4), video games bring a "hip" factor to projects that can be useful for branding an organization and promoting a project, even if the use of the actual game is only minimally effective.

As some indicators from the Final Report (2016) make evident, the HTSM Initiative, which included the use of the games along with the rest of the HTSM media content, did have positive effects on spurring discussion around issues of gender; it motivated individuals to consider new ways of thinking about issues; and, at least anecdotally, it even inspired many to make changes that could directly effect gender inequality in individual households and communities. Because the evaluations were conducted soon after participation in the project and exposure to the media sources, it's impossible to say what sort of long-term effects such an intervention may have.

Regardless, the *Half the Sky* book itself was so inspiring to so many because it was able to highlight individual stories of success: moments of change where individuals take control of their circumstances and work to make things better. And this study does not deny the importance of those stories or the importance of considering strategic change initiatives that may serve to benefit individuals here and now.

However, this study argues that the intense focus on individual women's empowerment, via economic and education initiatives, comes at a cost. Even at the local level, it continues to tie women's rights and women's empowerment to their potential economic value. And at the global level, it works to direct focus away from the need for

larger structural changes while emphasizing the responsibility of individual, marginalized women.

The HTSM's stated gender focal areas are women's empowerment, early education, economic empowerment, family planning and reproductive health, maternal and child health, gender-based violence, and sex trafficking and prostitution (Final Report, 2016). As noted earlier, *Worm Attack!* took on a health issue outside the purview of USAID's C-Change program, although it does focus on an aspect of child health, a stated focal area of the HTSM. The game *9 Minutes* focuses specifically on maternal health. The other two games, *Family Values* and the HTSMG, take up the broad concept of "women's empowerment".

In *Family Values*, issues of gender inequality are explored, specifically focusing on gendered power dynamics within the home, and early education is promoted as key to combatting them and achieving "women's empowerment". In the HTSMG, all of the focal issues (early education, economic empowerment, family planning and reproductive health, maternal and child health, gender-based violence, and sex trafficking and prostitution) are explored to some degree. While there are a variety of solutions brought up throughout the entirety of the game, individual economic empowerment is presented as fundamental to tackling the issues and achieving women's empowerment, as evidenced above and in Chapter 5.

It seems that the gender focal points presented by the HTSM should be divided up into two areas: a selection of issues (family planning and reproductive health, maternal and child health, gender-based violence, and sex trafficking and prostitution) and a selection of solutions to those issues (economic empowerment, early education), all of

which must be overcome (in the case of issues) or made use of (in the case of solutions) to achieve the end goal of "women's empowerment". Through their mobile phone and Facebook games, the HTSM was able to disseminate its particular message of "women's empowerment" to a broad audience.

As argued in Chapter 2, the mainstream narrative of women's empowerment that conceptualizes investing in women and girls as "smart economics" is problematic at many levels. Yet it is one that continues to be reinforced by many organizations, including USAID and the HTSM. As a member of the FHI 360 team commented, what is being said in the games is "the same things we've [those in the development industry] have been saying for the past five years" (Interview C, 2016). The narrative in the games, then, is not a new one: the narratives and procedural rhetoric embedded in the HTSM games work to further the dominant narrative of "Gender Equality as Smart Economics" already at play in the industry today. The HTSM has, however, found an innovative way, through games, to extend this narrative "beyond the converted".

Digital Development Games (DDGs) are not unlike past development projects that have utilized information and communication technologies to spread educational messages and to facilitate attitude and behavior change. Although in the Final Report (2016), Show of Force (the production arm of the HTSM) stated that Behavior Change Communication (BCC) "initiatives within international development have typically shied away from using new and creative technologies and media outlets," research (as outlined in Chapter 2) shows the opposite is true: media and communication technologies have been used in international development to spread messages and achieve attitude and

behavior change goals since the beginnings of the industry itself. Digital games are simply the newest innovation to be used to do this work.

New communication technologies, especially ICTs, have often been celebrated for their potential to democratize information, increase participation, and empower individuals. In the Final Report (2016), the Show of Force team argues that because of the "recent explosion of and interest in media technologies around the world, it is important that development practitioners explore these media outlets as increasingly cost-effective opportunities to increase reach and impact efforts" (p. 17-18). But were the HTSM games a cost effective project? Did their production broaden control over information, empower individuals, and generate participation? As Chapter 4, which detailed the private/public relationships generated through the production of the games, the influence these relationships had on game content, and the cost, in time and finances, required to create them, it seems the answer to all of these questions is no.

The SG industry has seen such fantastic growth in part because of its ability to bring together a variety of industries to create projects that are mutually beneficial to multiple sectors (e.g., the commercial video game industry and the United States military). As evidenced here, where there was success in this project it came from relationships between the commercial gaming industry, nonprofit industry, and public and private funders.

Both projects furthered the specialization of the development industry, generating multiple layers of sub-contractors specializing in ever more technical sectors. For example, the mobile phone games, which were funded by USAID, brings in FHI 360 as a communications and messaging contractor, Show of Force as a sub-contractor to

specialize in the production of the videos, G4C to oversee and direct the making of the games, first an Indian gaming company and then Mudlark to do the technical designing of the games, E-Line Media to publish the games, and a variety of telecommunication companies to distribute the games. Thus, the making of DDGs brings together a variety of industries and public/private partnerships that further segment and compartmentalizes the work of development.

Both the SG Industry and the development industry stand to benefit from the success of projects like the HTSM. As a G4C team member noted, part of the decision to take on the HTSM project was based on an understanding that if it went well, it would be a major gain for the growing nonprofit. Both Frima and Zygna highlight their roles in the HTSMG on their websites and in descriptions of projects they've worked on. They use the success of the game to position themselves as leaders in creating and distributing social based games, which is of course a huge and growing market. By supporting such projects, private foundations are helping to create new markets for SGs and continue the industry's growth.

As outlined in Chapter 4, Ubinas, who was the president of the Ford Foundation when it funded the HTSM, is also an important board member for Electronic Arts Inc., a U.S.-based "leading global interactive entertainment software company," with a net revenue of $4.5 billion in 2015 (EA, n.d.). Creating spaces for continued growth in the gaming industry is of obvious interest to a person in such a position. Further outlined in chapter 4, the SG industry is growing dramatically, and that growth is concentrated within North America, specifically in the U.S.

When major development organizations (such as USAID), private foundations (such as the Ford Foundation) and for-profit corporations (such as Intel) support DDG projects operated by nonprofits in the West, and employ commercial gaming development studios in places like Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., they continue that concentration of wealth and further entrench the knowledge/technology/industry divide between the Global North and Global South. The public/private/governmental relationships generated by projects like the HTSM make more difficult the possibility of production of DDGs by local companies, as limited funding resources are given to the big name game producers.

As noted in Chapter 4, G4C originally began working with an Indian company to produce the HTSM mobile phone games. But because of complications, which seem to center around communication problems and missed production timelines, they left that relationship and went instead to Mudlark. The push for highly polished, commercial level games that are in line with production standards in the West could continue to preclude smaller companies from gaining entrance into the DDG space, as major projects funded by organizations like USAID look to the resources of a Frima-like studio to create that level of work.

If funders decide to only back games with that level of polish, they will continue to funnel funding to those major projects produced by large-scale companies. Further, as Chapter 2 outlined, if ICT/tech based development projects are going to really benefit women in the developing world, they must deconstruct/dismantle the current production systems that perpetuate a North/South divide, and they must actually bring women into

the spaces of production. The relationships generated by the HTSM games do little of this work.

An important element this study highlighted is the complexity of the various stakeholder relationships on shaping game content. Based on what we know about the influence donor organizations have on setting project agendas, it makes sense to see that the mobile phone game *Family Values* prioritizes the goals of USAID, which (like other major development institutions, such as the World Bank) is highly invested in the narrative of "Gender equality as Smart Economics". As USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said about the organization's partnership with the HTSM:

> The most effective way to ensure long-term, sustainable development is to create opportunities for women and girls around the world…I am pleased that USAID is a partner on the Half the Sky Movement, supporting the creation of educational and empowerment tools that will help women and girls build better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

And, of course, because the HTSM is also invested in such a narrative, there would be little disagreement or tension in creating a game centered on it. An interesting point this study brought up, however, is the ways in which money, publicity, and politics tempered these priorities and relationships. For instance, although de-worming was not a priority issue within the framework of the C-Change project, USAID authorized the production of a de-worming based game because the HTSM was able to bring in additional funding from an outside source. The procurement of funds, then, took priority over the program's stated mission.

Further, as discussed above, USAID was able to use the production of mobile phone games as a great "headline," and the partnership with HTSM was of great value to them in bringing attention to the project and the work. As many interviewees from across

the organizations noted, one of the things Nick Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn do best is bring media attention to their work and get funders on board. Thus the relationship between USAID and the HTSM created a political stronghold that those in FHI 360, who were the communication sub-contractors for the C-Change project and in charge of developing messaging for the games, had to remain aware of and work around. When it came to making decisions on what was the “right way” to tell certain stories/frame certain issues/etc., it became a fight of who knows best – those with the Emmy or those without. And those without (the FHI 360 team members) knew there was a certain amount of political leverage that those with the Emmy (the HTSM and Show of Force) held that needed to be accounted for and placated.

Despite some late-in-the-game concerns from funders and NGOs over whether some storylines would be received appropriately, there seemed to be a limited bucking of heads between those in the HTSM and the Facebook game’s funders (made up of private foundations and corporations) in designing game content. As outlined in Chapter 2, the mainstream narrative of women’s empowerment that is at play today is useful in bringing together the international development industry and the corporate sector, for it is a narrative that aligns with and promotes a neoliberal agenda while doing little to question the structural issues that perpetuate gender inequality at a variety of levels. The private/public relationships generated in the making of the Facebook game, then, worked to further extend this narrative of women’s empowerment, benefitting both sectors.

While it is obvious that those in FHI 360 and G4C were vested in the project and had a strong desire to use these games and the larger project to positively impact the lives of women and girls around the world, it is also clear that the “best path to improvement”

was conceptualized within a mainstream framework of women's empowerment and "Gender Equality as Smart Economics."

Specifically within the Facebook game, this conceptualization was derived directly from the HTSM book, and the work of Kristof and WuDunn. Kristof and WuDunn's goals in creating the game projects are less clear. From several interviews, it was evident that those leading the HTSM were strongly focused on how best to bring attention to the movement writ large, and how to secure funding to do so.

A member of the FHI 360 team directly questioned the motives of the HTSM and noted that they cared more about simply securing funding rather than being certain that the project itself would be effective. It was noted in an earlier chapter that a member of the FHI 360 team said, "At the end of the day, and this is a big point to make, gamers and filmmakers do not make great people in development…and you can quote me on that," but the team member went on to say, "Their hearts are in the right place but a film nor a game equals development and they had…their hearts…well, I can't even say this for the Half the Sky, I don't think their hearts were in the right place…I think the Half the Sky people were more interested in the money at the end of the day, which was very disappointing" (Interview C, 2016).

While Kristof and WuDunn have been critiqued for their work, they have continued to move it forward, creating more and more avenues for their messaging and bringing in more and more industries behind them: with their HTSM game projects they gained the support of the one of the world's largest development organizations, major players in the world of commercial gaming, one of the nation's largest private

foundations, and the world's leading social media platform, not to mention a bevvy of celebrities and elite politicians.

But while these relationships were integral to the success of this particular project, the success of the HTSM did little to propel forward Kristof and WuDunn's most recent work, *A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity*. The new book, written by Kristof and WuDunn, and documentary, produced by Show of Force, (both released in 2015) provide "a unique and essential narrative about making a difference in the world—and a roadmap to becoming a conscientious global citizen" (A Path Appears, n.d.). *A Path Appears* expands on the focus of the HTSM, using reporting to "assay the art and science of giving, determine some of today's most successful local and global initiatives to fight inequality, and evaluate particularly effective forms of help such as early childhood education" (A Path Appears, n.d.).

The book and documentary, while still global in scope and focused, like the HTSM, on women and girls, bring in a strong emphasis on issues in the U.S. than was seen in the HTSM. But, despite the fact that it was building on an existing audience, *A Path Appears* has brought in "less than half the audience" that the *Half the Sky* did (Interview E, 2016). A member of the HTSM team attributes some of this to the fact that *A Path Appears* didn't have the "powerful" coalition of funders and NGOs that they worked to build up behind the original project.

There are, notes a member of the HTSM team, a variety of reasons a project is successful or not, some of which are hard to pin down, but according to the team member, having that coalition—of private funders, corporations, development agencies, commercial and nonprofit gaming companies, and NGOs—was a powerful force. If that

is the case, if the HTSM "coalition" was a driving force in the project's success, it seems reasonable to expect to see more projects that bring together a similar range of industries and organizations to future development projects aimed at empowering women and girls, especially as it is a pattern that has proven successful elsewhere (see the Nike Foundation's Girl Effect, for example).

As more industries join in on such development projects, we should also expect to see the continuation of the "Gender Equality as Smart Investment" narrative, as the promotion of individual women's empowerment, via economic and education based projects, is a discourse that neatly aligns with the sort of neoliberal agenda necessary for the growth of transnational industry. When women are framed as an "untapped resource" and their individual empowerment, via entrance in the global market—either immediately, through micro loans and small businesses, or eventually, through a path of formal education—is presented as key to development, the continuation of neoliberal trade policies and emphasis on individual resource gain over state responsibility for social resources makes sense. Such a discourse, then, will continue to shape the realities of the development industry, and of women in the developing world, legitimizing certain futures over others.

The HTSM game projects were successful in taking this particular narrative "beyond the converted," generating additional mainstream support for such an approach and shaping individuals in line with its goals. But, as Larner argues, the discourse and practice of individual neoliberal projects must be understood as sites of political struggle and contestation: these sites are not closed off, and their productive ends are not inevitable. But highlighting the available political positions, identities, and subject

positions made possible through specific projects is necessary if we are to understand how to create possible alternatives. Because the current mainstream discourse of women's empowerment has done little to restructure the local and global systems that perpetuate gender inequality, projects that work to propel it forward must be given our critical attention—particularly as digital games, which work well to shape and promote neoliberal identities, are used to bring new industries into the mix.

Kristof and WuDunn are right in one regard: transformation is needed and opportunities must be created. And games, which do present exciting ways to target both large-scale global audiences and individuals in the "hardest to reach places" should be looked to as sites of possibility. But, like the messages embedded in them, the production of games will only be truly "revolutionary" to women and girls in the developing world through disruptions of the system of production, dismantling of the knowledge/technology power structures, and legitimate inclusion of women in the information society itself.

Limitations

A goal of this study is to highlight the way games are used in international development, analyzing game narratives, the complex relationships generated across industries, and the ways these relationships affect the design of game content. In doing so, it used the games of the HTSM as a case study. As such, the findings in this study are limited to the specific site of analysis, and generalizations cannot be made from them. While the findings can point to problems and possibilities that *may* come from using games in international development projects, each project has its own details and must be considered individually.

This study was further limited by the fact that it was conducted after the completion of the HTSM project. Many of the questions were asked in order to understand the making of the games, but as that process took place some years ago, the study had to rely on the recollection of interviewees. While the six key individuals who were most involved with the project were interviewed in this study (and additional information was drawn from others involved using published articles, conference recordings and so on), not every person involved with the project was spoken to.

Because this study was specifically interested in the design and production of the HTSM games, as well as in the relationships generated across industries through their production, it did not talk to the intended game audiences. While some members of the Facebook game audience were represented via posts on social media, they were limited to a small number. Aside from general information taken from project reports and evaluations (on demographics, player responses, etc.), no information was included directly from the mobile phone audiences themselves. Understanding these players' responses to the games, especially in terms of analyzing the narrative of women's empowerment embedded in them, would bring to light important issues regarding the use of these games in individuals' lives and the ways in which people use or contest the narratives in them.

Future Research Directions

It is clear from both the growth of the SG Industry and the interest in games within the development industry that more games like those created by the HTSM will be made. Future research should continue to look at games as both important texts within international development discourse, and as political economic products. Both textual

analysis of individual games and the study of game production will continue to be of importance, especially as the SG Industry sees significant growth in the coming years. But this research should not remain limited to games created in the Global North, or on games designed specifically around women's empowerment. Future studies should look at the production of games at local levels for local audiences. Understanding how locality impacts production networks and game narratives will be important in order to see if there are differences in development games designed in the Global North vs. those designed in the Global South. If participation at the level of production is seen as a point of importance, studying how global projects like the HTSM affect gaming companies and industries in the Global South will also be necessary.

Finally, studies that analyze player responses to games will be important to creating a deeper understanding of the potential of games. While evaluations on game effectiveness have their place, qualitative studies that dig into what games and game narratives mean for players will be important to understanding the effects of games on players' lives, beyond issues of simple knowledge retention.

Conclusion

According to Kristof and WuDunn in discussion of their newest project, "Sometimes the chance to make a difference comes in unexpected ways and places," (A Path, n.d.). While others may certainly argue otherwise, I believe the goal of many in the development industry is truly to bring about beneficial change and improve the lives of others. Unfortunately, decades of development have shown that regardless of intention or motivation, the project of facilitating beneficial change led by those in the Global North has often had negative effects on the lives of those in the Global South.

And the use of media and communication technologies, which have been part of the industry since its inception, have often done more to reinforce gender divides and inequality than they have to disrupt them. As games are hailed as a revolutionary way to "change the world," it is imperative that development scholars critically analyze how games are being made and used, and to what end.

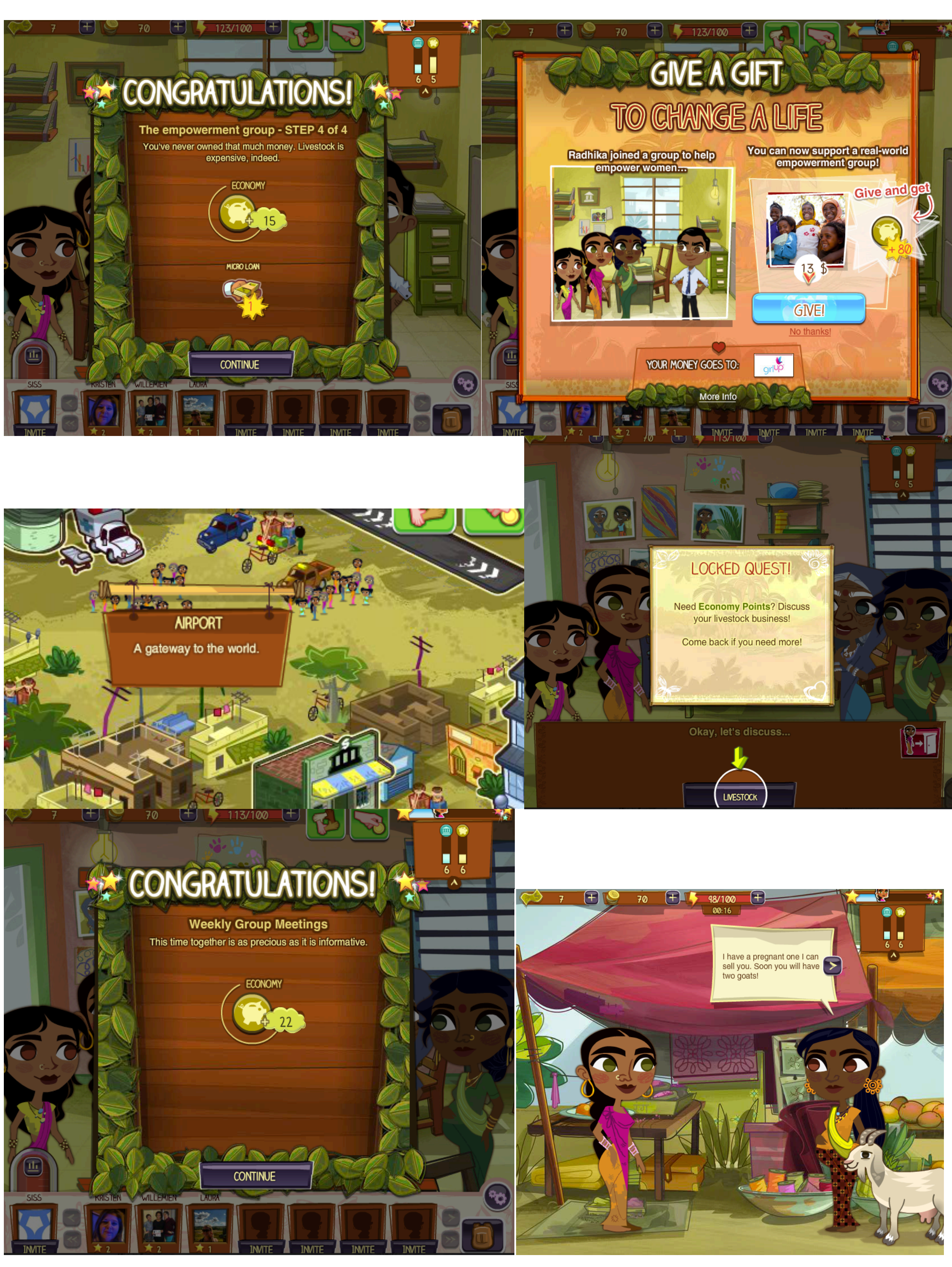
This dissertation used the HTSM games as a case study. In doing so, it highlighted the ways in which the production practices behind the games perpetuate not only a problematic discourse that frames individual women as responsible for development, but also the material practices that reinforce a Global North/South technological divide that continues an imbalanced accumulation of wealth and technical knowledge. As little research has been done on the use of digital games in the international development industry, this study highlights important issues to consider not only in this project, but in those that will inevitably take place in the future.

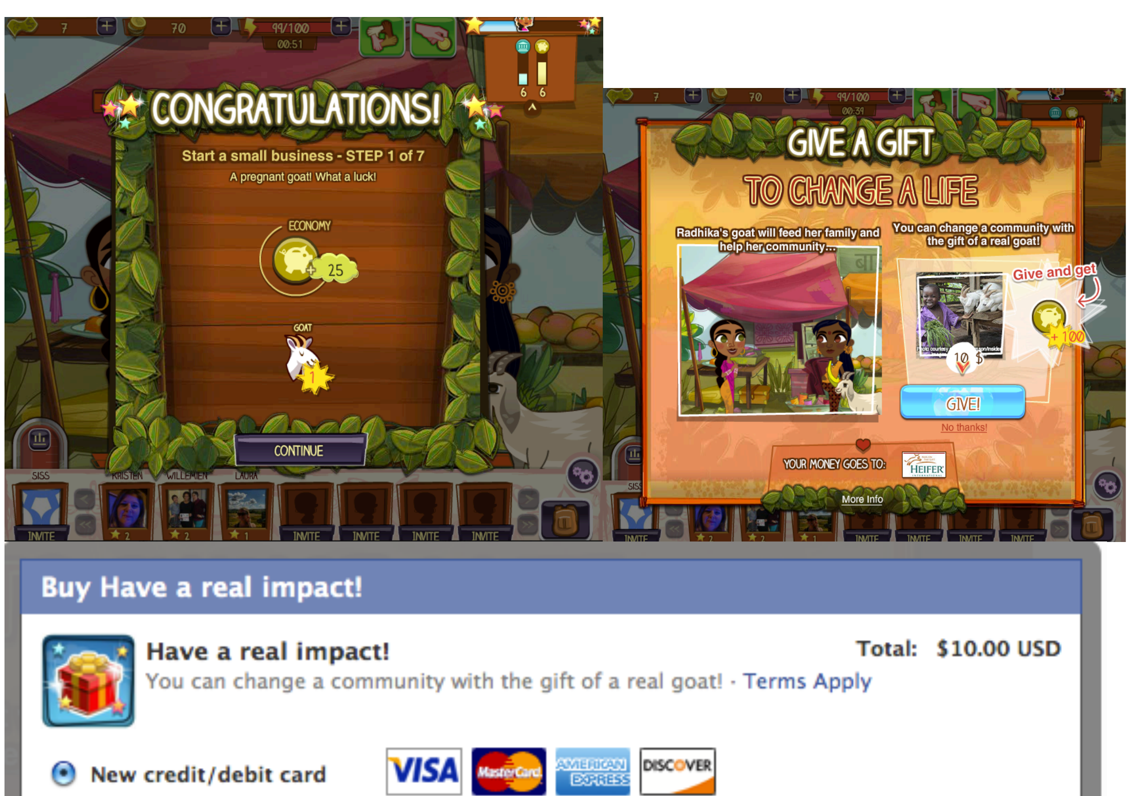
As was posited earlier in this study, the gamification of the development industry must be understood as the design of "technology-with-intent" (Rughinis, 2013); this study was conducted because understanding that intent matters.

APPENDIX A

HTSMG SCREEN SHOTS

Half the Sky: The Game


CONGRATULATIONS!
The empowerment group - STEP 4 of 4
You've never owned that much money. Livestock is expensive, indeed.
ECONOMY
15
MICRO LOAN
CONTINUE
GIVE A GIFT
TO CHANGE A LIFE
Radhika joined a group to help empower women...
You can now support a real-world empowerment group!
Give and get
+80
13 $
GIVE!
No thanks!
YOUR MONEY GOES TO:
More Info
AIRPORT
A gateway to the world.
LOCKED QUEST!
Need Economy Points? Discuss your livestock business!
Come back if you need more!
Okay, let's discuss...
LIVESTOCK
CONGRATULATIONS!
Weekly Group Meetings
This time together is as precious as it is informative.
ECONOMY
22
CONTINUE
I have a pregnant one I can sell you. Soon you will have two goats!



Buy Have a real impact!

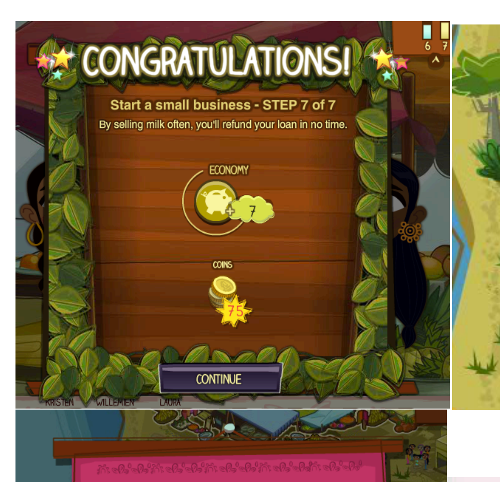
Have a real impact! Total: $10.00 USD

You can change a community with the gift of a real goat! · Terms Apply

- New credit/debit card
- PayPal
- New mobile phone

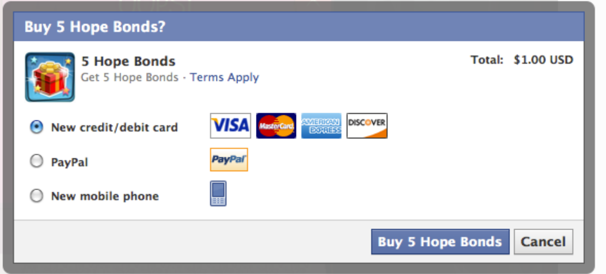
Buy Have a real impact! | Cancel

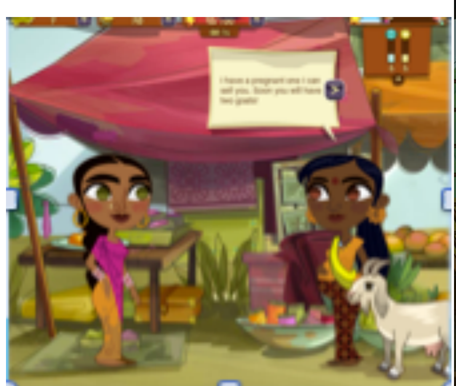
Unbelievable! I never thought we would have a goat one day.
The long walk back makes me nervous. It's far from home, and the streets are not all that safe...
COLLECT WATER
Caring for a goat can be exhausting, but it will pay off...
CARE FOR GOAT
A healthy kid! I can sell her and help another family start a business!
COMPLETE QUEST
CONGRATULATIONS!
Start a small business - STEP 5 of 7
The kid is energic and healthy. Selling it will go a long way toward helping you repaying your loan.
ECONOMY
15
GOAT KID
CONTINUE
OOPS!
YOU NEED AT LEAST 15 ENERGY.
PURCHASE


CONGRATULATIONS!
Start a small business - STEP 7 of 7
By selling milk often, you'll refund your loan in no time.
ECONOMY
COINS
CONTINUE

GET A ROOM! - STEP 1 OF 3
Level 8 required
With the money you make, why not improve the house?

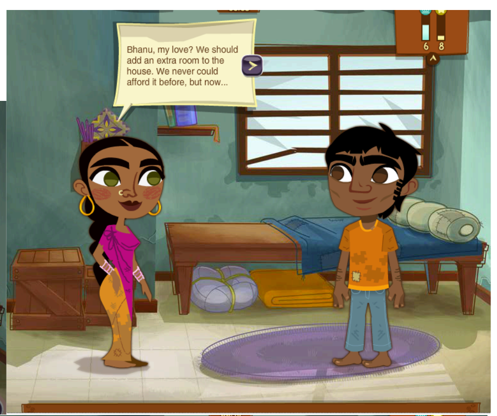
OOPS!
TO ACCESS, YOU NEED TO BE:
Level 8
YOU ARE: Level 7
Repeat daily activities to level up. Look for the economy icon on the map!
OK


Buy 5 Hope Bonds?
5 Hope Bonds
Get 5 Hope Bonds · Terms Apply
Total: $1.00 USD
New credit/debit card
PayPal
New mobile phone
Buy 5 Hope Bonds
Cancel

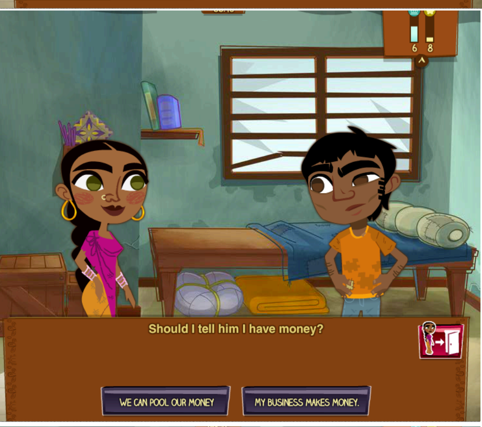


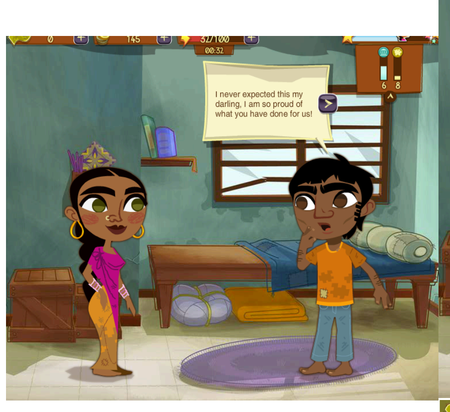
CONGRATULATIONS!
Goat Delivery
Hay, water and tender care: with this combination, labor will always go well.
ECONOMY
MANURE
CONTINUE

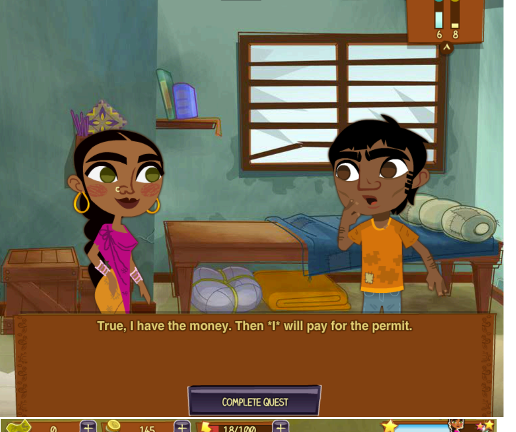
CONGRATULATIONS!
Bedtime Stories
You get better everytime you read together!
EDUCATION
7
CONTINUE

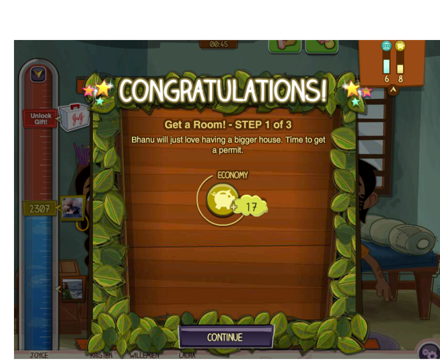

Bhanu, my love? We should add an extra room to the house. We never could afford it before, but now...

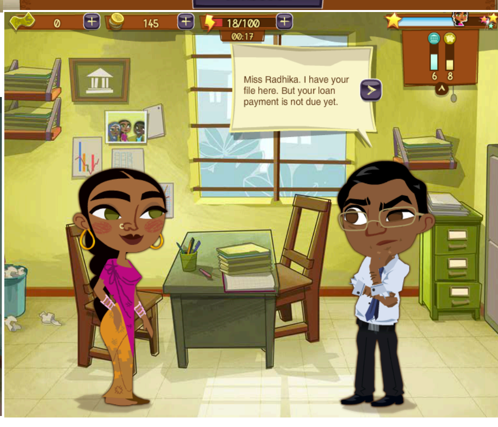
Have you really earned that much money?

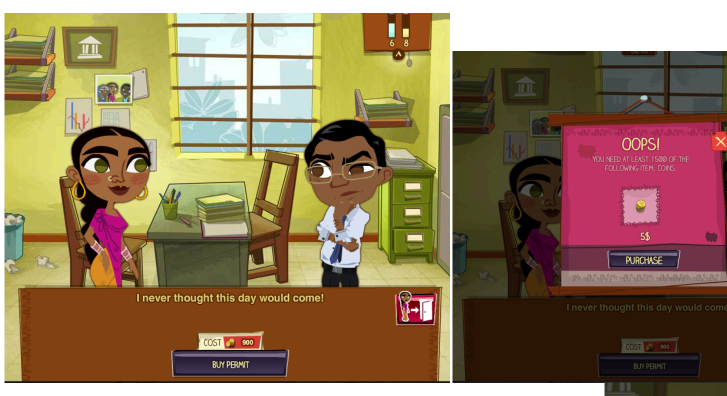

Should I tell him I have money?
WE CAN POOL OUR MONEY
MY BUSINESS MAKES MONEY.

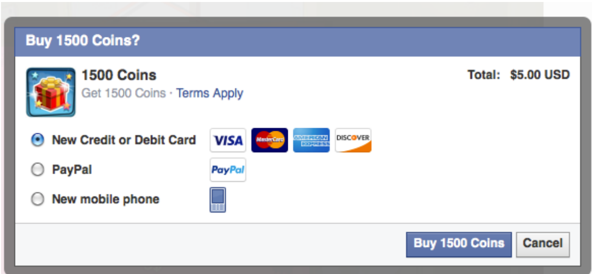

I never expected this my darling. I am so proud of what you have done for us!


True, I have the money. Then *I* will pay for the permit.
COMPLETE QUEST

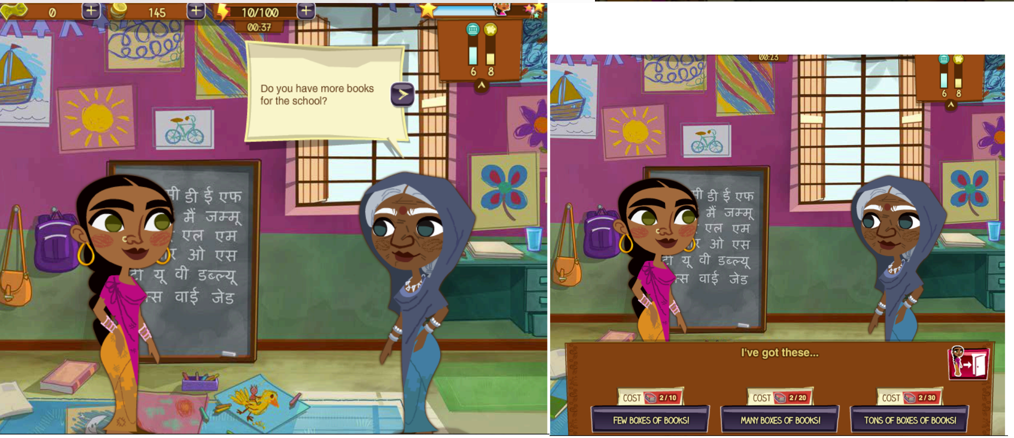

CONGRATULATIONS!
Get a Room! - STEP 1 of 3
Bhanu will just love having a bigger house. Time to get a permit.
ECONOMY
17
CONTINUE

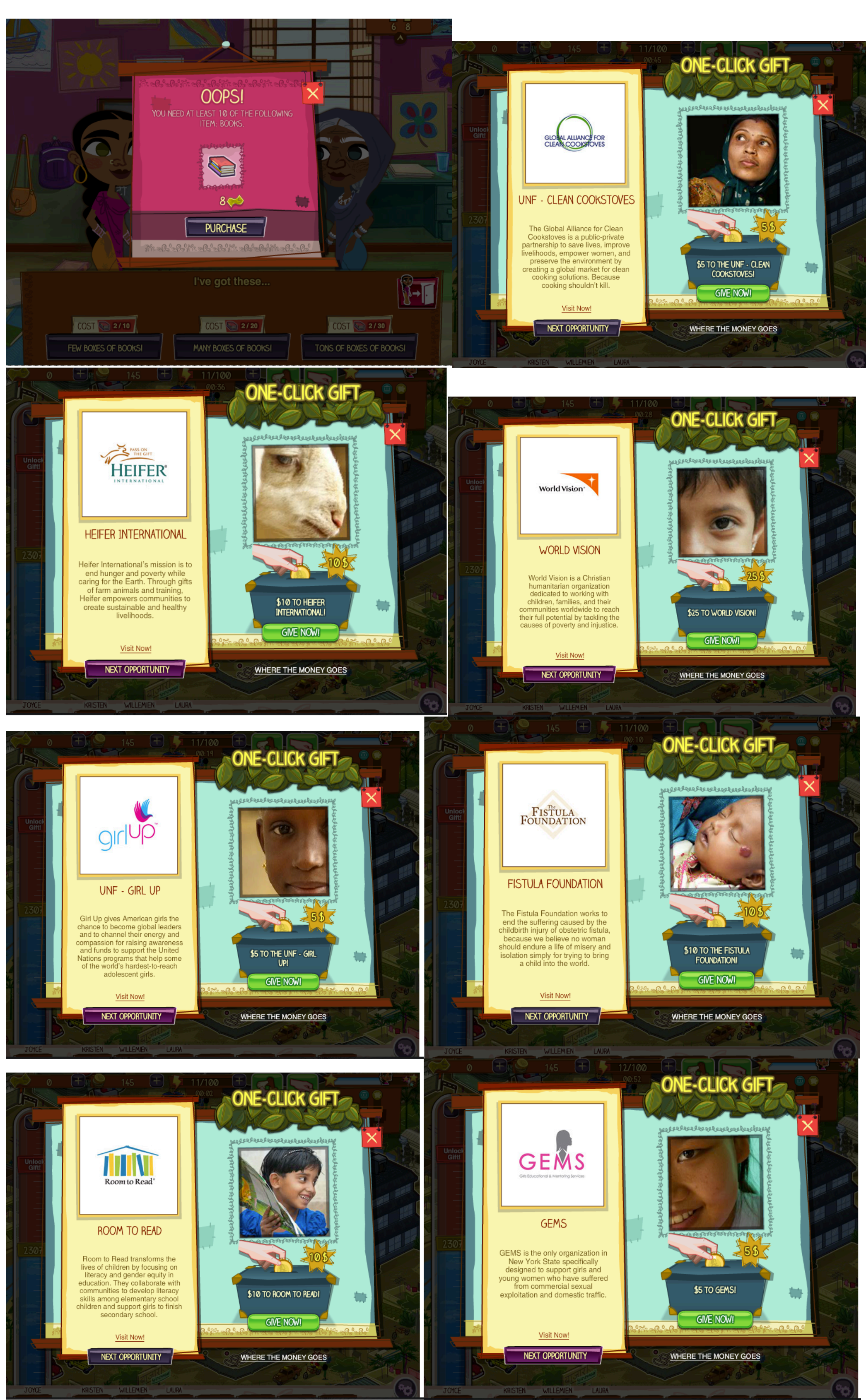

Miss Radhika. I have your file here. But your loan payment is not due yet.


I never thought this day would come!
COST 900
BUY PERMIT
OOPS!
YOU NEED AT LEAST 1500 OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM: COINS
5$
PURCHASE
I never thought this day would come!
COST 900
BUY PERMIT


Buy 1500 Coins?
1500 Coins
Get 1500 Coins · Terms Apply
Total: $5.00 USD
New Credit or Debit Card
VISA
DISCOVER
PayPal
PayPal
New mobile phone
Buy 1500 Coins
Cancel

ARE YOU SURE?
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO THE WORLD MAP? YOU WILL LOSE ANY SPENT ENERGY.
CANCEL
CONFIRM


0
145
10/100
00:37
Do you have more books for the school?
I've got these...
COST 2/10
FEW BOXES OF BOOKS!
COST 2/20
MANY BOXES OF BOOKS!
COST 2/30
TONS OF BOXES OF BOOKS!



OOPS!
YOU NEED AT LEAST 10 OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM: BOOKS.
PURCHASE
I've got these...
FEW BOXES OF BOOKS!
MANY BOXES OF BOOKS!
TONS OF BOXES OF BOOKS!
ONE-CLICK GIFT
UNF - CLEAN COOKSTOVES
The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves is a public-private partnership to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and preserve the environment by creating a global market for clean cooking solutions. Because cooking shouldn't kill.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$5 TO THE UNF - CLEAN COOKSTOVES!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
HEIFER INTERNATIONAL
Heifer International's mission is to end hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth. Through gifts of farm animals and training, Heifer empowers communities to create sustainable and healthy livelihoods.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$10 TO HEIFER INTERNATIONAL!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
WORLD VISION
World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$25 TO WORLD VISION!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
UNF - GIRL UP
Girl Up gives American girls the chance to become global leaders and to channel their energy and compassion for raising awareness and funds to support the United Nations programs that help some of the world's hardest-to-reach adolescent girls.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$5 TO THE UNF - GIRL UP!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
FISTULA FOUNDATION
The Fistula Foundation works to end the suffering caused by the childbirth injury of obstetric fistula, because we believe no woman should endure a life of misery and isolation simply for trying to bring a child into the world.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$10 TO THE FISTULA FOUNDATION!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
ROOM TO READ
Room to Read transforms the lives of children by focusing on literacy and gender equity in education. They collaborate with communities to develop literacy skills among elementary school children and support girls to finish secondary school.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$10 TO ROOM TO READ!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
ONE-CLICK GIFT
GEMS
GEMS is the only organization in New York State specifically designed to support girls and young women who have suffered from commercial sexual exploitation and domestic traffic.
Visit Now!
NEXT OPPORTUNITY
$5 TO GEMS!
GIVE NOW!
WHERE THE MONEY GOES

APPENDIX B

FACEBOOK GAME PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Total Budget: $1.2 million

- ***Game Production Budget*:** $600,000
    - *The remaining budget spent on PR, marketing, community outreach & distribution*
- *Major Funders:*
    - Ford Foundation, $400,000
    - Zynga.org, In-kind resources
    - Rockefeller Foundation, $250,000
    - Intel Corporation, $185,000
    - The United Nations Foundation, $100,000
    - The National Endowment for the Arts, $75,000
    - Wyncote Foundation, $250,000

Sponsorship of In-Game Donations:

- Johnson & Johnson: $250,000
- Pearson Foundation: $250,000

Game Producer: Games for Change
Game Designer: Frima Studio

NGO Beneficiaries:

- The Fistula Foundation
- Gems
- Heifer International
- ONE; Room to Read
- World Vision.

The Project: To create a Facebook game, aimed at players in the West, to generate awareness about and support for issues facing women and girls globally; to create concrete steps towards change; to generate a first-of-its-kind in-game donation system with direct game-to-real-world translation.

Project Launch: March 2013
Project End: March 2016

Game Statistics

- Approximately 1 million players
- Raised close to $500,000 in in-game donations
    - 10% of in-game donations from individual players; 90% sponsored

APPENDIX C

MOBILE GAMES C-CHANGE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Total Budget: $295,000

- **Funder:** USAID
- **Funding Mechanism:** C-Change Project
    - Total Budget for 5-year C-Change Project: $67,606,830

Grant Contractor: FHI 360

- **Subcontractor:** Show of Force, Production of educational videos
- **Subcontractor:** Games for Change, Production of mobile games

The Project: Creation of three mobile phone games, 18 educational videos, and a discussion guide to be used by partner NGOs.

Program Implementation: Work with NGOs to layer new HTSM media materials onto existing programs to add to program efficacy and address information gaps.

- Engage an audience for 8-10 weeks
- Meet once a week; go through module
- Pre-test interview and questionnaire; post-test evaluation to determine impact
- Individual behavior change goals
- Materials used: *9 Minutes, Worm Attack!, Family Values*, educational videos, community discussion guide

APPENDIX D

HTSMG GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Total Budget: $5.13 million

- *Funding from USAID:* $2,338,625
- *Private Funders:* $2,791,375
    - The Ford Foundation
    - Ikea Foundation
    - United Nations Foundation
    - Frima Studio
    - FremantleMedia
    - Intel
    - Johnson & Johnson
    - The Pearson Foundation
    - Wyncote

Grant Contractor: Show of Force

The Project: Utilize the communication tools developed under the C-Change Project (three mobile phone games; educational videos; curriculum) along with the rest of the HTSM media (including the documentary and Facebook game).

Program Implementation at National Level*:* Distributed HTSM media material, complemented by country-specific campaigns, as a way to foster public dialogue.

- *Partner Campaigns*
    - India: Frame Her Right
    - Kenya: Wezesha Dada
- 56 airings of HTSM documentary
- Facebook game accrued 32,397 players
- 112,611 mobile game downloads in India and Kenya

Program Implementation at Community Level*:* Worked with NGOs that have a gender program and had suitable implementation techniques to embed media tools (mobile games, Facebook game, documentary, educational videos)

- *Engage an audience anywhere from 8-10 weeks*
- *1-2 hours, once a week; Go through each model*
- *Started with pre-test interview and questionnaire*
- *Post test interview and questionnaire after 10 weeks*
- *Post test interview and questionnaire again after 3 months*
- *Groundwork began July 2014*
- *Wrapped up December of 2015*
- *Final evaluation December 2015 - January 2016*
- *Java phone games, 9-Minutes, Family Choices, Worm Attack!, all the games embedded within the curriculum, let participants play the games and then have Q & A*

- *Facebook game used in a couple of instances within community sessions (Connectivity issues)*
- *Focused on individual and community level behavioral and attitudinal change*

APPENDIX E

HTSM TIMELINE

2002

- Release of *America's Army;* Recognized by many as the beginning of the Serious Games Movement

2005

- The UNWFP releases *Food Force*, the first ever humanitarian video game

2007

- Mikeala Beardsley (*Show of Force*) makes a film about Nick Kristof, options the rights to make a film about his planned book
- Beardsley and Kristof contact Games for Change
- The five year C-Change Project is established by USAID

2008

- Nick Kristof is invited to be the keynote speaker at the Games for Change Festival
- Kristof meets Asi Burak
- The Nike Foundation launches the Girl Effect campaign
- The Goldman Sachs Foundation launches the 10,000 Women Initiative
- Hillary Clinton is named Secretary of State

2009

- *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is published and quickly becomes a bestseller

2010

- Asi Burak and Michele Byrd come on as co-presidents of Games for Change
- Games for Change partners with the Half the Sky Movement to create three mobile phone games through USAID's C-Change program

2012

- USAID launches the three mobile phone games through its public-private partnership with the Half the Sky Movement.

2013

- *The Half the Sky Movement: The Game* Facebook game launches in March.
- The C-Change Program wraps up

2014

- The HTSM Global Engagement Initiative, a public-private partnership led by Show of Force and supported by USAID, is established to utilize the development tools (three mobile phone games, 18 educational videos,

curriculum) created under the C-Change program along with the rest of the Half the Sky Movement media (the documentary and Facebook game) at a national scale in India and Kenya.

2015

- December, the HTSM Global Engagement Initiative project wraps up, post-testing takes place.

2016

- The final report for the Half the Sky Movement Global Engagement Initiative is released.
- The *Half the Sky Movement: The Game* Facebook game is taken offline.

APPENDIX F

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DDG	Digital Development Games
G4C	Games for Change
GAD	Gender and Development
HTSM	Half the Sky Movement
HTSMG	Half the Sky Movement Game
HTSM Initiative	Half the Sky Movement Initiative
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SG	Serious Games
SGM	Serious Games Movement
WB	World Bank
WID	Women In Development
UN	United Nations
UNWFP	United Nations World Food Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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