All Stitched up? Labour Process Regimes and Patriarchal Relations amongst Female Garment Workers in Bangladesh

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DECLARATION

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the experiences of female workers in the readymade garment industry in Bangladesh, analysing how a range of factors, including government regulation, the power of multinational corporations, employment practices, and cultural norms and values, impact on the lives of these women, in the workplace and beyond. A comparative case-study approach using theoretical concepts relating to the global value chain, labour process, and patriarchy has been used to understand the complex interconnections between women's experiences in the workplace, the home and broader society. The nature of these experiences is also compared and contrasted across Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and non-EPZ factories.

Contrary to some previous study findings, a detailed comparative analysis of terms and conditions in EPZ and non-EPZ factories indicated that the former were better, reflecting the co-operative, less patriarchal character of the factory control regime and better position in the supply chain. The experience of women in the workplace had impact on the use of their agency, for example, EPZ women engaged in work effort bargaining through collective organisation (Worker Welfare Association), whereas non-EPZ women were likely to react and resist, either individually or collectively to improve their working conditions. Across all the factories, women's workplace experiences of agency and resistance also had an impact beyond the factory. In the domestic sphere, when combined with other factors such as educational level and marital status, work can also play a powerful emancipatory role, affording some groups of women ("Progressive" and "Independent" group) a greater degree of empowerment in gender relations and financial autonomy. At societal level, regardless of educational and marital status, the workplace experiences of female workers appears to bring increased self-esteem and confidence, economic security and a degree of personal independence, and greater awareness of life options, indicating the role which work can play in empowering women within Bangladeshi society. The experience of work in Bangladesh's RMG factories does have the ability to play an emancipatory role for women, but the degree of empowerment they experience is dependent on their level of education, marital status, the position of the firms within the global value chain, the labour process regime in operation and the degree of patriarchal control exerted at the workplace and beyond.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	Arm's-Length Contractual Relation
AGM	Assistant General Manager
BEPZA	Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BKMEA	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BSCI	Business Social Compliance Initiative
CIFE	Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments
COC	Codes of Conduct
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CR	Critical Realism
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEPZ	Dhaka Export Processing Zone
DL	Directorate of Labour
DLS	Dormitory Labour System
DPS	Deposit Protection Service
EPB	Export Promotion Bureau
EPZs	Export Processing Zones
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLA	Fair Labour Association
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GCC	Global Commodity Chain
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GM	General Manager
GPN	Global Production Network
GSP	Generalised System of Preference
GVC	Global Value Chain

HR	Human Resource
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
LPT	Labour Process Theory
MFA	Multi-Fibre Agreement
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NAFTA	North-American Free Trade Agreement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OCR	Obligational Contractual Relation
OEM	Own Equipment Manufacturing
O-i-C	Officer-in-Charge
PC	Participatory Committee
PM	Production Manager
QC	Quality Controller
RAJUK	*Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkha*
RMG	Ready Made Garment
SAI	Social Accountability International
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRAP	Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWA	Workers Welfare Association

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Since the 1970s, a combination of technological, political, and economic developments have given rise to a powerful new form of capitalism, characterised by a networked form of multiple layered subcontracted production with a global reach. In particular, a growing number of multinational corporations (MNCs) have reconfigured their operations, shedding their in-house production capacity and using subcontracted supply chains to source goods and get them to market rather than having to bear the risk of employing large numbers of staff in production (Wills and Hale 2005). The dominance of neo-liberal policies, particularly export-oriented development strategies, has been a major source of employment in many developing countries in the South. This has proved especially attractive to a large number of female workers who have been employed in the export-oriented, labour intensive industries such as in textile, clothing, electronics, toys, and footwear, created by the MNCs which rely on low-cost production for global markets (Elson & Pearson 1981; Ward & Pyle 1995; Standing 1999; Pearson 2000; Beneria 2003; Rossi *et al.* 2014).

Similarly, the emergence of the export-oriented ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh has provided women with opportunities for waged work outside the home and linked them into the global economy (Dannecker 2002), leading to the large-scale integration of women into the non-domestic sphere for the first time. Traditionally, Bangladeshi women have not participated in social, political and economic activities in the public domain due to very limited employment opportunities as well as prevailing patriarchal norms and social values, especially *purdah[1]*, which have controlled their social and economic mobility (Khosla 2009).

Increased participation of women in export-oriented production factories in developing countries has inspired new areas of research. Various accounts have highlighted the effects of women's involvement in waged employment, theorising them as 'cheap labour' or a 'flexible labour force' (Mitter 1994; Standing 1989; 1999), exploring the 'adverse impact' or the 'benefits' of

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[1] The patriarchal as well as socio-cultural norms of *purdah*, a model of separate spheres which operates in a conservative fashion, has traditionally determined permissible modes of behaviour for women (Kabeer 1991; Dannecker 2002) effectively confining women to the private domestic domain, away from the outside world of men (Kibria 1995).

industrialisation (Ward and Pyle 1995; Lim 1990). Existing literature on women's employment in the RMG industry in Bangladesh suggests that this experience of the workplace entails both benefits and costs. On the positive side, it has offered them the opportunity to avoid some of the more physically demanding types of employment traditionally available to them, including stone crushing, agricultural labour, and paid domestic work (Kabeer 2004). However, more negatively, this type of employment is also notorious for its exploitative practices such as low wages, erratic payment, gender inequality, harassment, job insecurity, and hazardous working conditions (Zaman 2001).

Media coverage of trade union suppression, wildcat strikes by RMG workers, and major disasters such as factory collapses or fires have brought the poor working conditions in the RMG industry to public attention. One incident in particular made headline news around the world, putting Bangladesh back into the western media spotlight (Gomes 2013). On 24th April 2013, the collapse of the Rana Plaza, an eight-storey building on the outskirts of Dhaka housing several garment factories, led to the deaths of some 1,132 RMG workers, making it one of the worst industrial accidents in the country's history (CPD 2013; Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2014). On the very day of the tragedy, workers who had raised safety concerns had been threatened with the loss of a month's salary if they did not return to work (Gomes 2013; Burke 2014). In the absence of basic workplace health and safety standards, these workers literally became "fashion victims", drawing attention to the true cost of the cheap clothing required by ever-more demanding retailers for their price-conscious consumers. Despite protests and boycotts of well-known fashion retailers by concerned individuals and groups, the debate continues about who should ultimately bear the responsibility for the deaths of these workers, as a long interlinked chain stretches all the way from the Bangladeshi government, via the garment factory owners, the buyers, and the high-street retailers to the consumers in the West (Gomes 2013; Burke 2014).

At the time of this disaster, I was engaged in fieldwork in Dhaka interviewing female RMG workers. I witnessed their reactions at first hand as events unfolded, seeing their initial shock and outpourings of grief as the death toll mounted. Within a few days these feelings had turned into disbelief, boiling over into anger as government authorities and multinationals alike refused to accept responsibility for what had happened. Eventually, however, the overwhelming emotion that I sensed was one of resignation. The women I interviewed were well aware this was not the

first tragedy in the Bangladeshi RMG industry, and most thought it was not likely to be the last, given what they knew about conditions in the sector. But still they returned to their sewing machines.

This made me all the more determined as a researcher to learn about their individual experiences of work and to relate these to broader economic and cultural factors in Bangladeshi society and beyond, in order to understand their reasons for remaining in this industry. As a Bangladeshi woman, some elements of the experiences they recounted as female workers were familiar to me as the product of the specific set of social and economic circumstances which is unique to contemporary Bangladesh. However, I realised that many of the issues that they highlighted echoed concerns voiced by female workers in the Mexican *maquiladoras* or on Chinese hi-tech assembly lines, possibly pointing to underlying similarities conditioned by patriarchal systems and the global political economy which merited further examination. Finally, on listening more closely to their stories, I also detected that underlying their apparent resignation to their situation as workers in the RMG industry there was perhaps also an alternative narrative of resistance, forcing me to reassess whether all these women had been totally "stitched up" by what appeared to be a seamless unbeatable system or whether by performing their small acts of resistance they subtly succeeded in unravelling some of the threads that bound them.

This thesis investigates the role of the different actors and mechanisms that are, directly or indirectly, responsible for shaping the experiences of women working in Bangladeshi RMG factories, using a multi-layered approach to identifying those circumstances. Thus, the principal research question addressed in this thesis is: ***Which major economic and cultural factors influence the employment conditions and quality of life of female workers in the export-oriented Bangladeshi RMG industry, and how?*** In order to gain a holistic picture of women's experiences in this context and understand how various forces combine to affect them, it is important to analyse the interaction of various factors including government regulations, the role of trade unions and multi-national retailers as well as the patriarchal norms and values of Bangladeshi society. The latter part of the chapter provides the context and rationale of the study, research questions, research objectives, as well as an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Context and Rationale of the Study

Bangladesh has seen the successful integration of its RMG industry into the global value chain as a result of liberalisation of the economy, in response to pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) (Pyle and Ward 2003; Ward *et al.* 2004; Akhter *et al.* 2010). A number of internal and external factors played an important role in the phenomenal growth of the Bangladeshi RMG industry. Firstly, at the global level, increased cost competition in the export markets in the North led MNCs to set up their production units where the cheapest labour possible was available (Custers 1997; Rahman 2011) and Bangladesh offered access to a large, cheap female workforce with a lack of other employment options (Zaman 2001; Haider 2007; Baral 2010). Secondly, the RMG industry benefited from the introduction of Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA)[2] which governed world trade in textiles and RMG from 1974 to 2004. Under the provisions of the MFA, a number of developing countries, including Bangladesh, were given preferential market access to European and North American markets, including quantity quotas for RMG and textile exports, and duty free and tariff privileges. This boosted the rapid expansion of this industry and its contribution to the GDP (CPD 2003; Baral 2010; Ahmed *et al.* 2013). Thirdly, supportive government policies also helped transform the industry into one of the world's major RMG exporters. In December 1975, new trade and market liberalisation policies were introduced as the government adopted a new export-oriented strategy; rules and procedures regarding FDI were relaxed and export-processing zones (EPZs) were established in Dhaka and Chittagong (Rahim 1978; Bhattacharya 1998) to encourage private sector trade.[3]Later, a number of direct export incentive schemes such as back-to-back letters of credit, the duty drawback scheme, special bonded warehouse facility, and cash incentives were put in place in order to provide the RMG manufacturers a favourable atmosphere for conducting business.[4]

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[2] Since the end of the MFA in 2004 all garment-producing countries must now compete with one another without quantity quotas or trade barriers (Ward *et al.* 2004).

[3] The EPZ initiative was launched in 1976 by the late President Ziaur Rahman at the suggestion of Robert McNamara, then WB president. By 1978 construction had begun on the Chittagong EPZ which became operational in 1983. In 1980, the BEPZA Act and the FDI (Promotion and Protection) Act were passed by Parliament (Murayama and Yokoto 2008).

[4] Back-to-back letters of credit helped the RMG manufacturers to deal with the problems associated with the availability of credit, the duty drawback system provided the option of getting back the money paid as import duty on the importation of raw material, the bonded warehouse facility provided the chance to import raw materials and other garment related products on free of duty payment, and the cash incentive system enabled the garment

Local and international investors were attracted by the fact that Bangladesh was able to guarantee lower labour costs than those of other RMG producers in South and Southeast Asia (Ward *et al.* 2004). It is worth noting that although some of the largest factories were established as EPZ joint ventures with Korean and Hong Kong-based producers, more than 95% of RMG companies are owned by Bangladeshi entrepreneurs (Gonzales 2002; Murayama and Yokota 2008). The fact that a relatively small amount of capital was needed to establish a business since technological requirements were limited facilitated the involvement of local industrialists in the RMG industry. Also, the sector's growth, supported by the state's post-1975 trade liberalization policies, contributed to the emergence of a new local entrepreneurial class, an entirely new phenomenon with profound implications for Bangladesh (Zaman 2001). These industrialists acquired political power and connections;[5] in addition, their values, symbolised by a luxurious life-style, the scale of which had not been seen before in Bangladesh, have come to dominate the socio-cultural landscape (Ahmed 2004).[6]

Starting in the late 1970s, the RMG industry rapidly became the major source of Bangladesh's foreign currency earnings (Ahmed *et al.* 2013). RMG sector earnings increased from USD 31.57 million in 1983 (3.89% of total export earnings) to USD 21.51 billion in 2012-13 (BGMEA 2013a) (80% of total export earnings). By 2013, Bangladesh was ranked the second largest RMG producing country in the world, after China, claiming 4.8 per cent of the global RMG trade of USD 412 billion (Bearnot 2013; BGMEA 2013b). Thus the RMG industry has made a significant contribution to socio-economic development in Bangladesh and has contributed to poverty alleviation and employment generation, particularly for women (Khatun *et al.* 2008). By the fiscal year 2012-2013, some 5,876 factories existed, employing nearly four million workers (BGMEA 2013a). Some 3.5 million (80%) of these are women, the majority of them are disadvantaged and poverty stricken (BGMEA 2013b).

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manufacturers to get some financial support such as cash compensation and simplified export procedures (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a; Haider 2007).

[5] In 1996, approximately 25% of Members of Parliament were industrialists (Ahmed 2004).
[6] Since Pakistan gained independence in 1947, economic disparity existed between East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (now Pakistan). The latter's dominance of the military-political-economic scenario created unrest among the general population of East Pakistan, which led to the 1971 war (Zaman 2001). According to Ahmed (2004:36-37) this created the proto-capitalist, risk-taking entrepreneurs who had no status during the pre-war period but flourished in the chaos of war, honing their business skills on often shady undertakings.

The Bangladeshi RMG industry is characterised by the subcontracting relationship; of the estimated 5,876 factories currently operating in the country (BGMEA 2013a), only 800-900 engage in direct exports, while the remainder work on the basis of subcontracting (Ward *et al.* 2004). Also, the RMG industry is not a homogenous entity. This industry is made up of several different segments, including small, medium and large factories, both registered and unregistered, most of which produce garments to supply foreign clothing retailers (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b, Alam *et al.* 2004). The largest factories often employ several thousands of workers and deal directly with international buyers. These are to be found in the country's EPZs (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b). With modern equipment, and better quality assurance, they account for only 12% of total RMG sector workers in Bangladesh (Murayama and Yokota 2008; Islam and Mukhtar 2011). Non-Export Processing Zone (non-EPZ) factories are scattered throughout the main urban areas of Bangladesh. They vary in size from large to medium and around 30% of these deals directly with buyers. The rest of the RMG sector is composed of smaller factories and workshops, which rely on a combination of direct orders and subcontracted work from larger factories which have taken on too many orders, or need to meet deadlines. There is considerable variation here in number of employees, profit margins (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b). In order to select a representative sample for this study of women's experience of work in the RMG sector and develop a comparative framework, it was important to choose a range of factories which reflected the diversity within this sector.

The rapid growth of the RMG sector in Bangladesh and its importance has received increasing attention by researchers due to the impact of the significant growth in paid employment opportunities for women. Some studies have focused specifically on women's experiences in export-oriented factory work including wage-related issues (Absar 2001); gender differences in employment conditions and their socio-economic effects (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; 2006); employment and poverty reduction (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a; 2004b); the workplace environment (Jahan 2012); the impact of employment on adolescence, health, fertility and marriage prospects of garment workers (Amin *et al.* 1998; Naved, Newby and Amin 2001); the sexual exploitation of RMG workers (Siddiqi 2003); and the impact of working in this sector on women's position within the family, and on financial control (Kibria 1995). The impact of globalization on labour market decisions by women workers has also been studied (Ward *et al.* 2004, Ahmed 2004; Kabeer 2004).

Relatively few of these previous studies have explored how different factors, such as forms of regulation and patriarchal norms and values, combine to influence employment conditions and quality of life for these female RMG workers. Moreover, the findings of previous studies conducted in Bangladesh from the 1990s onwards regarding the implications of waged employment in the RMG sector reflect the contradictions of the ongoing debates elsewhere regarding the emancipation vs. exploitation thesis with obvious differences of opinion about areas including wage issues, control over earnings, role in household decision making (Kibria 1995; Absar 2001; Kabeer 1997, 2004; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b). These previous studies either examined the impact of factory work in general without specifying whether factories were located inside or outside the EPZ) (Kibria 1995; Afsar 2001; Zaman 2001; Ward *et al.* 2004; Jahan 2012), or compared implication of employment with EPZ to other export sectors or non-export industries (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; 2006; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a, 2004b). To date, no study has only focused on comparing the EPZ and non-EPZ experience of work for women within single industry, meaning that we do not know how this impacts on women's lives. In addition, while most previous studies examined the impact of work on women either in the workplace or within the household, this research explores the complex interconnections between women's experience of work, the domestic domain and the social sphere. It aims, then, to enhance our understanding of the work experiences of female RMG workers, identifying how a range of factors impact on their lives in the hope that this more detailed picture will help to contribute to some of the debates in the existing literature. In order to do so, this thesis uses a comparative case study research design, choosing a range of factories situated within EPZ and non-EPZ areas to generate an understanding of women's experiences of work.

1.3 Research Questions

The major research question of this thesis is: Which major economic and cultural factors influence the employment conditions and quality of life of female workers in the export-oriented Bangladeshi RMG industry, and how? The research aims to answer the following specific questions:

1. How is employment managed internally within the four RMG factories selected for this study?

(a) What are the differences amongst them, if any, in terms and conditions relating to female workers in the areas of appointment, working hours, leave, payment, safety and security, and discharge and dismissal issues?

(b) How do external bodies including trade unions, government authorities and multi-national retailers influence these terms and conditions?

2. Does women's experience of work in this sector vary depending on factory location (inside or outside an EPZ), various sizes or status (subcontractor or not)? More specifically:

(a) How do women's experiences of work differ in the workplace in terms of management control and surveillance, skills and opportunities, occupational segregation and health, safety and wellbeing issues?

(b) To what extent have women been empowered outside the workplace?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to investigate and understand the nature of the interaction between labour process regimes and patriarchal relations at factory level and beyond the export-oriented RMG industry in Bangladesh. Using a comparative case study approach, the study compares internal management practices in a representative sample of four Bangladeshi RMG factories and also examines key external factors, namely government regulation, trade unions, multi-national retailers and patriarchal norms and social values, to investigate their influence on employment practices in the case-study factories. The research also explores the ways in which various aspects of the terms and conditions of employment impact on female workers in the RMG industry, and attempts to determine the ways in which their experience of work influences the quality of their personal lives and well-being beyond the workplace. It also provides an insight into the roles played by the largely male senior management and supervisory staff within the four Bangladeshi RMG factories selected as the focus of this study.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

Following this general introduction, the thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter Two provides an analysis of the theories of labour process and patriarchy, focusing on contemporary debates in these fields. It then presents a review of key literature relating to the Global Political Economy, beginning with an overview of global policy trends and patterns since the 1970s. It

explores the factors and actors which have affected production processes worldwide and brought about a radical transformation in the direction of global flows of capital, goods and services, and labour. This section also employs another analytical framework, the global value chain (GVC) approach, as a means of understanding contemporary trends in global production. The chapter concludes by providing a rationale for using labour process, patriarchy and GVC theories.

Chapter Three reviews the literature on women's employment in the waged labour market, beginning with an examination of women's work, with a particular emphasis on the phenomenon of feminisation of employment in the export-oriented sector within developing countries. It then considers the impact of work on the lives of women in developing economies, both within and outside EPZs. This chapter concludes by explaining gender relations in Bangladeshi society and women's position within it.

Chapter Four presents a description of and rationale for the research methodology used in the thesis. After presenting the research objectives and the theoretical approach underpinning this research, the research design and strategy are discussed, providing a detailed justification for the use of the case study approach, the selection of cases and interviewees, reflexivity in the research process, data collection methods, and data analysis procedure. This chapter also describes the profile of the cases selected for study and the socio-demographic profile of participants. Finally it ends with a discussion of research validity, ethical issues and study limitations.

Chapter Five explores different forms and scales of regulation, identifying the differences and similarities between the EPZ and non-EPZ regulatory regimes and buyers' codes of conduct (COC) and examining how these influence everyday working practices in four RMG factories in Bangladesh. In addition to this, various other underlying mechanisms which are responsible for producing the differentiation and similarities among the case study factories are explained. Issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical concerns are also discussed since these have played an important role in improving working conditions in the case-study factories.

Chapter Six looks at women's experiences of work in the four case-study factories, offering a comparative analysis of conditions in relation to management control and surveillance, skills and opportunities, occupational segregation, and health, safety and well-being issues. After detailing

the differing degrees of management control to which women are subjected within the case-study factories, the chapter explores their use of various strategies of resistance.

Chapter Seven shifts the focus to examine women's experiences of work beyond the workplace, investigating issues relating to the double workload burden and to financial matters. The chapter also explores the extent to which women perceive factory work as a means of empowerment regarding their role in the household decision making, their attitudes and life styles. The chapter concludes by considering how women manage the tensions which can arise between factory and family life, and their reactions to negative perceptions of RMG factory work.

Chapter Eight brings together the key arguments which have emerged from the data analysis of this study. It also details the contributions made by this thesis on the complex inter-relationships of labour process regimes, the global value chain and patriarchy and followed by some concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO:
LABOUR PROCESS, PATRIARCHY AND TRENDS IN THE GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with a review of literature on the conceptual framework that underpins this study: the labour process theory (LPT), and the theory of patriarchy. In order to build a more comprehensive conceptual framework, this study draws on a number of concepts from both labour process and feminist theory, since it is argued that no one single concept or theory is adequate for understanding women's position within the labour market and analysing their experiences of work in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The chapter begins by focusing on the first of these conceptual frameworks: labour process theory. Walby's (1989; 1990; 1996) notion of patriarchy is later explored to explain the existence of patriarchal relations in the RMG factories and to understand existing patriarchal practices within the households of female garment workers.

In order to analyse women's experiences of work in the RMG industry in Bangladesh, it is also important to understand the external contexts, such as how global value chains impact on the working conditions and women's lives. Therefore, this chapter examines broader economic conditions in which the RMG industry is operating, focusing on the literature concerning global political economy. This is followed by a review of the literature on GVC approach to understand contemporary trends in global production. The final section of this chapter then argues that making use of Critical Realism (CR) allows for theoretical pluralism (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014), enabling LPT, patriarchy and global value chain theory to be linked.

2.2 Labour Process Theory
2.2.1 Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital

This section begins with the review of Braverman's view of labour under capitalism and provides criticisms of the book *Labour and Monopoly Capital*. The diverse contribution to the debates on the labour process is also provided later in this section. More specifically, this section examines the key concepts of management control from LPT drawing on Ackroyd and

Thompson's (1999:88) typology of managerial regimes (low/high trust and low/high regulation) as a means of exploring both the formal and informal dynamics of control that exist in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Another key concept of LPT developed by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999:25) is that of 'misbehaviour' or worker resistance in the workplace and their framework has been used here to interpret the workplace behaviour attested to by interviewees. Finally, Smith's (2006; 2010) concept of labour power mobility is also examined as a useful means of exploring women's potential bargaining power within contemporary global capitalism.

Influenced by Marx, LPT is a theory of the work and organisations under capitalism. It provides "a distinctive and penetrating account of how work is organised in capitalist societies" (Knights and Willmott 1990:38). Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), a critique of twentieth-century work organisation under capitalist conditions, is considered to have provided the foundations for LPT. His broad thesis is that under capitalism, workers have been subordinated, dominated and oppressed by managers and employers who own the means of production. He posited that the modern capitalist class has transformed labour, creating inhumane conditions of work and obscuring labour's real value (Braverman 1974). According to Braverman, de-skilling and management control constitute the two key elements of capitalism and are used by employers as a means of accumulating capital, which in turn ensures higher productivity and reduces production costs for them (Spencer 2000).

With reference to the first of these elements, Braverman explained that the logic of de-skilling involves a two-fold process of job fragmentation and progressive separation of the spheres of conception and execution. This entails the labour process being broken down into its simplest elements, with management exercising full control over the knowledge and design of production processes (Kitay 1997). Braverman (1974) argued that, as a result, de-skilled workers engaged in performing routine, fragmented tasks without understanding the principles underlying the production process.

In the case of the second key aspect of Braverman's (1974) LPT, management systems and control, he claimed that expanding surplus value depends on the progressive erosion of worker control over the labour process (Spencer 2000; Smith 2010). In his analysis, Braverman (1974: 68-69) also considered control to be "the central concept of all management systems" for "it is essential for the capitalist that control over the labour process pass from the hands of the

workers into his own […] not only in a formal process but by the control and dictation of each step of the process". Braverman was particularly interested in how technology facilitated this transfer of control over the labour process from workers to management.

Although Braverman's thesis was extremely influential, later studies criticised several aspects of his work. In terms of de-skilling, Wood (1982) contended that he had ignored historical evidence of the persistence of skilled labour and that his representation of a degraded workforce was not an accurate representation of twentieth-century capitalism. Others, including Kusterer (1978), Elger (1982) and Meiksins (1994), challenged Braverman's characterisation of assembly line jobs as 'de-skilled'. They argued that these and other forms of degraded work involved considerably more skill than he believed since the contemporary labour process makes production into a collective endeavour in which skill is embodied in a complex, collective worker, requiring a web of interlinked specialised workers within a complex division of labour. Beechey (1982) criticised Braverman's conception of skill, noting that his description of the craft workers failed to explore the relationships between male craft workers and the unwaged domestic labour of their wives. According to Burawoy (1979), Braverman's de-skilling thesis understates the degree of worker consent to the fundamentals of capitalism. In terms of the issue of subjectivity, Friedman (1977) and Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) observed that Braverman detailed the characteristics of control, but did not pay sufficient attention to the nature of worker resistance to managerial control, thereby overlooking employee initiative.

The publication of Braverman's work initiated what has come to be known as 'the labour process debate'. The next section will examine the contribution that this debate, which began in the late 1970s, has made to our understanding of work and organisations.

2.2.2 Labour Process Debate

After Braverman many labour process writers attempted to develop and refine labour process concepts relating to the degradation of work, the application of new techniques, skill and de-skilling, managerial strategies for worker control, worker resistance and the role played by forces outside the workplace in shaping the labour process and the conflicts within it (Friedman 1977; Edwards 1979; Burawoy 1979; Elger 1982; Meiksins 1994; Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). As Thompson and Smith (2010) note, the contemporary debate regarding 'labour process' has helped strengthen workplace studies; for as capitalism and work change, the

continuing debate over the labour process has offered the analytical and empirical tools to maintain the historic dynamics of work relations and the connections between the workplace and the wider social system.

Following the first surge of interest in LPT, the idea of a core theory developed from the research of second-wave theorists, such as Burawoy, Edwards, Friedman and Thompson. Whilst Braverman (1974) had originally emphasised techniques of scientific management and the exercise of 'direct control' over workers by managers, later labour process analysis focused on exploring the range of managerial control strategies. Both Friedman (1977) and Edwards (1979) posited that these changing forms of control arose from conflict between management and labour (Kitay 1997).

Friedman (1977) identified two different strategies adopted by managers with the aim of ensuring their continued domination over labour in contemporary workplaces. At one extreme, he found overtly despotic methods involving 'direct control' using the techniques of scientific management. At the other extreme, managers used tactics of encouragement and consensus, what Friedman referred to as 'responsible autonomy', allowing workers substantial levels of autonomy and discretion. Friedman found no evidence of either trend gaining dominance and thought that these would continue to co-exist as modern capitalism progressed. Edwards (1979) developed a more historicised view of the evolution of the labour process, suggesting that capitalists have developed different modes of control in response to new forms of worker resistance in the production system, noting how control strategies have developed from simple control in the form of organisation to additional forms of control, both technical and bureaucratic, to maintain the interests of the capitalist class. Contributors such as Friedman (1977) and Edwards (1979) attempted to establish the dialectic of managerial control and worker resistance as the central dynamic in understanding why the capitalist labour process takes on particular forms in given periods or circumstances.

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) argue that the frameworks of Friedman and Edwards are flawed because of their over-ambitious attempts to create overarching models of managerial regimes which explain the central characteristic of periods of capitalist production. According to them, a regime refers to a pattern of control based on systematic attempts to regulate and/or accommodate to specific forms of misbehaviour. They suggest that Fox's (1974) concept of low vs. high trust managerial regimes can be usefully combined with the dimension of high vs. low

regulation to produce four major managerial strategies i.e. direct control, controlled autonomy, responsible autonomy[7] and indulgency or irresponsible autonomy[8] (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). Each of these strategies tends to produce different worker responses. The commonly occurring combination of a low trust and high regulation regime is associated with a managerial policy of direct control. Management exert surveillance over many aspects of employee behaviour, being suspicious about workers' motives and actions, a strategy which elicits recalcitrance and militancy in the labour force. In this context, management and labour continuously engage in confrontations with each other over a range of practical issues. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) further suggest that a low trust/low regulation regime produces a pattern of self-organisation in which irresponsible autonomy can easily flourish. By contrast with this, responsible autonomy will exist in the context of a high trust/low regulation regime.

Elaboration of this dialectic of control and resistance became a central feature of the LPT approach, thanks to the pioneering work of Burawoy (1979), who considered the question of worker consent to managerial controls within the labour process (Thompson and Smith 2010). Burawoy (1979) argued that basing labour process analysis on conflictual foundations could not account for the prevalence of cooperation in most workplaces much of the time. Instead, management are able to control workers by giving them the 'illusion of choice' in a highly restrictive environment, designing workplace activities in a manner which is more favourable to employees. Worker participation in choosing generates consent (1979: 27). According to Burawoy (1979), management manufactures consent by using a variety of strategies or 'games', which deflect workers' attention away from its expropriation of surplus value towards activities which appear to give them the chance to outwit management. Thus, for example, the use of incentive payments means that workers will compete with each other to surpass their expected production quotas or 'make out'. The 'making out' game allowed management to reduce the potential for class consciousness and workforce conflict while maximising productivity. Burawoy's (1979) model suggests that the opportunity to gain small victories masks the

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[7] Unlike Friedman (1977) for whom the notion of responsible autonomy referred to a strategy of control, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) see this as the product of a disposition to act in response to a policy adopted by management. They argue that skilled workers have a degree of autonomy and that this is not simply a means of control chosen by management.

[8] Irresponsible autonomy refers to the form of self-organisation and action by employees which occupy their own space independent of management, for example, recalcitrance of employees.

fundamentally disadvantageous position of workers within the capitalist mode of production (Kitay 1997).

Another major contributor to second-wave LPT was Littler (1982) who retained the radical orientation of Marxism, but sought to link labour process arguments about control with Weberian concepts of bureaucracy and legitimation. He claimed that a more complex approach to labour process was needed which would address three different levels: job design, the structure of control, and the employment relationship. According to Littler, these levels have a degree of independence, allowing for mixed strategies to be employed. Littler's use of Weberian constructs prompted consideration of subjectivity which potentially covered a wider range of workplace actions than Burawoy's analysis in terms of consent and games (Kitay 1997).

Edwards (1986), another major labour process contributor, made substantial use of marxist concepts, but went to considerable lengths to distance his work from marxism. Noting a broad theoretical similarity between marxists and radical non-marxists in the use of terms such as exploitation, contradiction, and the centrality of workplace struggle, Edwards terms his approach 'materialist' but not marxist. Whilst Edward's position is sympathetic towards workers, he does not presuppose that class conflict will necessarily lead to social transformation or even that the common class situation of labour will result in shared subjective interests (Kitay 1997). Edwards's viewpoint was adopted by Thompson (1990), one of the relatively few major radical writers to have maintained an ongoing involvement in LPT from the early 1980s to the present. Both Edwards and Thompson sought to develop conceptual commonalities from second-wave LPT research in order to identify core elements of the labour process and important tendencies in work and employment relations in capitalist political economy. These core elements were identified by Thompson (1989; 1990) and have been further refined by Thompson and Newsome (2004) and Jaros (2005). According to Thompson (1989) the core elements of labour process included issues such as labour's unique character as a commodity and its indeterminacy which allows "*the conversion of labour power (the potential for work) into labour (actual work effort) under conditions which permit capital accumulation*" (Littler 1990:48). Thompson and Vincent (2010: 48) argue that four principles flow from this core assumption:

1. The role of labour and the capital-labour relationship is an important part of labour process analysis because the labour process generates the surplus and is a central part of human experience in reproducing the economy.

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2. There is a logic of accumulation that compels capital to constantly modernise the forces of production. This arises from competition between capitalists and between capital and labour. This logic places constraints on capitalists' ability and willingness to empower employees and combine conception and execution.

3. Since market mechanisms (i.e. the process whereby capitalist purchase workers' labour power for capital) alone cannot regulate the labour process, a control imperative is utilised within systems of management to reduce the indeterminacy gap.

4. Given the dynamics of exploitation and control, the social relations between capital and labour in the workplace are of structured antagonism. As capital constantly seek new and more effective forms of work intensification, they also must seek a level of creativity and cooperation from labour which might result in different worker responses varying from resistance to accommodation, compliance and consent.

These core elements of labour process relate specifically not only to the capitalist mode of production, but also to the historical change that characterised it. This core has played a crucial role in the analysis of workplace studies and this study uses these notions from core theory. In order to better understand organisations and relations in the workplace, the next section will review literature concerning conflict and resistance in the workplace.

2.2.3 Understanding Conflict and Resistance in the Labour Process

According to Jaros (2005) the purpose of the capitalist mode of production is the extraction of surplus value, and this surplus value is created by the labour power. As workers lack the means of production, therefore they must sell their labour power in order to survive. Edwards (1990) notes that, in this mode of production, workers receive less than the value of labour performed because capitalists expropriate some of the value of what the former produce. This is the basis of the conflict between capital and labour which Edwards (1990:128) describes as 'structured antagonism'.

One of the more recent labour process writers, Smith (2006), identifies two types of indeterminacy associated with labour which produce this conflict. The first of these can be called 'production indeterminacy' and refers to the indeterminate nature of labour's contract with capital. Under competitive market conditions, the exchange relationship between wages and work-effort remains open-ended, allowing management and their representatives to use their

power over labour and creating 'production struggles' concerning wages and conditions, and work rate. The second type of indeterminacy relates to the fact that workers can end their employment contract, leaving one employer for another. Under the current neo-liberal flexible labour regime, this ability to change employers due to dissatisfaction with workplace conditions creates a phenomenon unique to capitalism in which the "*ownership of quitting is ideologically and politically controlled by the seller*" (Smith 2006: 390). Thus, this double indeterminacy of labour shapes workers' struggle and resistance in the workplace. Resistance can be seen as an expression of the conflict within capital-labour relations.

As previously noted, resistance has been conceptualised as a fundamental defining feature of the capitalist mode of production in which surplus value is appropriated. More recently, LPT research has begun to focus on resistance in the workplace in order to gain a more coherent understanding of the labour process. Work by Knights and Willmott (1989) theorising subjectivity, power/knowledge relations in identity formation and resistance has been very influential in this context. They argue that both marxist labour process theorists and their non-marxist critics are guilty of dualism which is based on the distinction between agency/structure or voluntarism/determinism. This leads to subjectivity being tacitly conceptualised as "that creative autonomy or personal space not yet captured by political economy" (Knights and Willmott 1989:549). According to Knights and Willmott (1989:554), however, subjectivity and power are mutually constitutive, such that "subjectivity is understood as a product of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies: human freedom is constituted through their mediation of subjectivity".

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) contested post-structuralist LPT, such as Knights and Willmott because of its failure to incorporate theoretical and empirical analysis of worker resistance and offered an insightful analysis of the contemporary workplace practices that constitute diverse forms of workplace misbehaviour and resistance. They argue that "*ordinary employees […] are likely to exercise what modest powers they have in ways that they think fit, to continue to define their interest and identity as being, in some ways, distinct from those of their employing company*" (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999: 2-3). They used the term 'misbehaviour' to refer to the non-compliant practices that employees engage in, noting that these can take a wide variety of forms and have varied motives that can be encompassed through the available models

(Ackroyd and Thompson 1999:24). This notion of misbehaviour is synonymous to a degree with more commonly used terms, such as conflict or resistance.

They categorised types of misbehaviour along a scale of worker attitudes which range from the most positive (commitment/engagement), through increasing degrees of non-compliance, to the most negative (hostility). The appropriation of work is reflected in activity, effort bargaining, soldiering,[9] and at its most extreme can involve recalcitrant employees resorting to destructiveness or sabotage. There are various ways through which employees can appropriate their time, employing time wasting strategies such as unnecessary visits to the toilet or going for a walkabout around the offices, absence from work, or through turnover. Appropriation of products involves pilferage (stock shrinkage), fiddling and theft.

	3.Appropriation of time	1.Appropriation of work	2.Appropriation of product	4.Appropriation of identity
Commitment Engagement Cooperation	Time Perks		Perks	Goal Identification
	Time Wasting	Work Activity		Joking Rituals
		Effort Bargaining	Pilferage	Sub-Cultures
	Absence		Fiddling	
Compliance		Soldiering		Sex Games
Withdrawal				
Denial Hostility	Turnover	Destructiveness and Sabotage	Theft	Class or Group Solidarity

Figure 2.1: Dimensions of misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999:25)

The fourth form, the appropriation of employee identity, relates to informal actions carried out by individual or groups of workers within the workplace. These actions may include joking rituals based on horseplay and banter; the formation of sub-cultures, leading to the development of initiation ceremonies, ritual tests or humiliation in order to incorporate new workers into a

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[9] This term was originally coined by Ford who observed that, in general, when forced to perform repetitive tasks, workers perform at the slowest rate that goes unpunished. He referred to this type of work as 'soldiering'.

grouping, or 'sex games': informal interactions on the shop floor within and between groups of men and women. Class or group solidarity may also be created amongst certain sets of workers. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 25-27) saw all of these as recurrent features of workplace life.

Smith (2006) also focuses on the types of power that labour can exercise conceptualising this in terms of work effort power and mobility power (a worker's power to move from one firm to another). Workers can choose to express work-effort bargaining by means of reducing their work effort, going slow, or withdrawing commitment and they can engage in these activities in a variety of forms: collectively, by work group or trade union or in another formalised way. Smith (2006) suggests that mobility power or mobility effort bargaining provides the workforce with an area of strategy and tactics in situations when employers use coercive control within the workplace, since employees can use exit power to bargain with employers. This form of power could be used to influence not only the length of the stay in any workplace, but also other aspects including the nature of tasks, intensity of work, and types of authority regime (Smith 2006; 2010).

Smith (2010) further notes that the expression of mobility effort bargaining could be internal as well as external. For workers, mobility power is manifest in the time involved in network-building, increased frequency of job searching, threatened exit and organisational withdrawal, and these activities can be engaged in by individuals or groups or in an informal manner. In terms of the internal expression of mobility power, the threat of exit could be used as a form of labour resistance for individual or collective benefit without the threatened exit actually taking place. One example of internal expression of mobility power used by workers can be cited here from Smith and Pun's (2006) work. Drawing on a case study of a large factory and dormitory[10], 'China Wonder Electronics' based in the Southern city of Shenzen, they explored the ways in which by working and living together, workers were able to develop collective resources that could be mobilised against managerial prerogatives. Women living together were reluctant to participate in management control; they shared intensive information exchanges about external job opportunities through dormitory social networks and thereby built 'mobility power' and

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[10] Dormitory labour regime (DLS) is highly paternalistic, coercive, and intensive production system, in which management have unprecedented control over workers' lives. The focus of the DLS is to maximise the utilisation of labour services of the temporary, migrant and contract labourer by controlling the daily reproduction of their labour power. It provides absolute lengthening of working hours and double extraction of labour power through absolute control of labour time and living space (Smith 2003; Smith and Pun 2006; Pun and Smith 2007).

'resistance power' (p. 1458). In times of lay-offs of workers, women were efficiently organised and spontaneously participated without any formal organisational help from trade unions or labour organisations and able to renegotiate their internal work bargain (Smith and Pun 2006). Smith (2003) noted that dormitory provision reinforces forms of social solidarity that spill over into the labour process. Labour turnover, the premature exiting of contracts can also be identified as a protest against this labour management regime. It can be regarded as an external expression of mobility power since skilled labour in the form of an asset cannot easily be replaced within a workplace (Smith 2006; 2010). Therefore, pressure of labour turnover can force employers to employ counter strategies by changing work organisation and human resource practices with the aim of improving retention rates, and reducing the costs that flow from high labour turnover, especially in the highly competitive labour market (Smith 2006).

One of the main reasons for reviewing LPT is to gain an insight into the capital-labour relation and capital-labour struggle in the export-oriented RMG factories in Bangladesh. Although LPT has been useful for analysing particular types of capitalist institutions and contemporary production processes, it has been challenged by critics. Elger (2001) argues that it fails to explain the interconnections amongst external factors, including how labour and the workplace interact with wider social relations including the role of state, labour markets, and unpaid labour in the home. Feminist writers have critiqued LPT for its failure to explain the source of female subordination at work and argued for the concept of patriarchy to understand female concentration in the de-skilled, low-paid work at the bottom of the hierarchy of production (Hartmann 1976; Walby 1986).

2.3 Patriarchy Theory
2.3.1 Understanding Patriarchy

This section reviews literature on patriarchy and the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, both of which are considered relevant when analysing the principles underpinning women's oppression and subordination both in the workplace and at home. Walby (1990; 1996a) suggested that one of the key feminist concepts, i.e. the theory of patriarchy, is a useful tool for understanding changes in gender relations, especially in terms of women's increasing participation in the labour market. This is because she thinks that a theory of patriarchy:

is both structural enough to grasp the scale and interconnectedness of these changes on a macro level, while flexible enough to capture change and diversity (historical and cross-cultural variation in gender inequality) (1996a:1).

Feminists use the term patriarchy as a concept to explain patriarchal relations, and like all other concepts, it is an effective tool for analysis which helps to understand the realities of women's experience.

The word 'patriarchy' comes from the Greek meaning 'the rule of the father' and was used originally to describe the herding societies of the Old Testament, in which the authority of the father over family members was practically absolute (LeGates 2001:11-12). The concept of patriarchy has a long, complicated, and contested history which has been defined in a number of different ways among social scientists. Weber (1947) used it to refer to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households. In this usage the domination of younger men who were not household heads was as important as, if not more important than, the element of men's domination over women via the household. The meaning of the term has evolved since Weber. It acquired its feminist meaning relatively recently when Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), used it to describe to male domination and the power relationships by which men dominate women. In her analysis, the most fundamental unit of patriarchy is the family and she argues that the family functions to socialise its members to conform to sexually differentiated roles, temperaments and statuses, and to maintain women in an inferior position and state of subordination. In terms of its public dimension, she posits that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, finance, the forces of Law and Order, all sources of power within society lie within male hands (Millett 1970).

Delphy (1984: 95) sees patriarchy as a system of oppression with a material base in the 'domestic mode of production', meaning that women provide domestic services in the family, where childbearing occurs, and where certain goods are produced for use and exchange. Under patriarchal relations of production women perform these tasks for the benefit of their husbands. Hence housewives are the direct producers while husbands expropriating the labour of their wives. Female exploitation and oppression within the family derives from male control over both the productive and reproductive activities which take place within the family mode of production. She further argues that marriage is the institution by which women's unpaid work is appropriated by their husbands.

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In her essay on the 'Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism', Hartmann (1979b:11) defines patriarchy as:

> *A set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women.*

She argues that the material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power, a control that is maintained by denying women access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting their sexuality. Hartmann (1979b) lists the key elements of patriarchy as being heterosexual marriage; female childbearing and housework; women's economic dependence on men; the state; and various institutions which are based on social relations among men, such as clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations and armed forces where patriarchal behaviours are taught. She also notes that women are socially defined and recognised as inferior to men. As children are generally raised by women at home they learn this domination and submission within the family.

Walby (1996b: 28) sees patriarchy from a multi-dimensional approach and views patriarchy as "*systematically structured gender inequality.*" Analysing a range of definitions of patriarchy, she identifies three main sources of divergence and debate. The first relates to whether the notion of gender inequality is expressed as men's domination over women, using biological categories (e.g. Firestone 1974), or in terms of social structures and practices (e.g. Hartmann 1979a). If a definition refers only to biological categories, she believes there is a very strong danger of biological reductionism since most analysts rejects the view that biological differences between sexes can explain gender differentiated temperaments, sex roles and social statuses. Walby (1990; 1996b) thinks that a definition of patriarchy should make reference to the social dimension whilst not losing sight of the importance of the biological signifier. Therefore, capturing the middle ground, she defines patriarchy "*as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women*" (1990: 20; 1996b: 21).

The second major issue she focuses on is whether the definition of patriarchy as a concept should be tied to the household or not. Both Millett (1970) and Hartmann (1979a) represent a strand of thought which defines patriarchy in terms of men's domination over women by means of the household, often incorporating a generational hierarchy among men in which the oldest

male in a household dominates all its members including younger men. Walby (1990) thinks that the incorporation of a generational element into the definition of patriarchy implies a theory of gender inequality in which this aspect of men's domination over each other is central to men's domination over women. Other writers have preferred not to tie the definition of patriarchy to any particular household form, and have left open the question as to the relationship of the household to gender inequality. Mies (1986), for example, argues that the term 'patriarchy', which literally refers to the rule of the father, should not be the only consideration because many other categories of men are involved in the subordination of women, including husbands, male bosses, and the heads of many societal, political and economic institutions. Walby (1990; 1996b) argues that the household form of domination is a contingent, not necessary, part of patriarchy, as is the generational element, hence these are best omitted from definitions.

Walby (1996b) identifies the third major divergence in definitions of patriarchy as lying in the extent to which writers include a theory of patriarchy within the definition. For example, Hartmann (1979b) argues that the chief way in which patriarchal control is maintained is through the appropriation of women's labour. Her definition of patriarchy thus includes a theoretical relationship in which labour is the base and other aspects of society constitute a superstructure. Other theorists have variously suggested male violence, especially rape (Brownmiller 1976), compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980), sexuality (MacKinnon 1989) and reproduction (Firestone 1974), and various other areas operating as the basic structure. Walby (1989; 1990) argues that it would be highly misleading to tie the concept to a single base, as this tends to produce an ahistorical and universalistic theory of patriarchy, making it better to abandon base-superstructure models. Instead she posits that it is theoretically useful to tie the concept of patriarchy to gender inequality which covers the full range of patriarchal structures (see below).

From the analysis of Millet, Delphy, Hartmann, Walby and others, it is evident that that some scholars analyse patriarchy on the basis of male dominance, power and control over women's labour, while others emphasise ideological factors or sexual control of women. This thesis adopts Walby's (1990) definition of patriarchy.

The relationship between the twin structures of patriarchy and capitalism has also been a topic of major interest in feminist discourse for marxist and radical feminists. Their work can be

categorised into three types, depending on the degree and form of their engagement, as outlined in the following section.

2.3.2 Capitalism and Patriarchy: Separate or Fused Systems?

Some theorists such as Eisenstein (1979:29) consider capitalism and patriarchy to be so closely intertwined that they can be considered not merely symbiotic, but fused into one system, claiming that "*If the other side of production is consumption, the other side of capitalism is patriarchy*". She defines patriarchy as a sexual hierarchy within the family in which the woman is mother, domestic labourer and consumer, and in which oppression of women occurs. The fact that women also work in the paid labour force for lower wages than men also perpetuates patriarchy. Eisenstein (1979) contends that capitalism needs patriarchal relations in order to survive, and vice versa. Their effect on each other and need for each other is seen as too great for them to be conceptualised as separate systems. She proposes that each system contributes specific things to the whole. Thus patriarchy contributes especially order and control, while capitalism provides the economic system driven by the pursuit of profit. Walby (1990; 1996b) notes a logical problem here, the way that Eisenstein tries to combine the two sets of relations in her analysis is rather problematic. When she writes of systems needing each other, this logically involves a notion of two analytically distinct systems. If the two are fused into one system then it is only one, but Eisenstein continually speaks of an interrelationship as if they were two entities.

For another group of theorists, patriarchy and capitalism can be regarded as analytically distinct, inter-acting systems (Hartmann 1979a; Mitchell 1975). These writers differ themselves in their mode of separating patriarchy and capitalism. Mitchell (1975) discusses gender in terms of a separation between the two systems, allocating the economic level to capitalism and the level of unconscious and culture to patriarchy. Hartmann (1979a), however, differs, viewing patriarchal relations as operating at the level of expropriation of women's labour by men in relation to two key sites, the household and paid work, not at the level of ideology and the unconscious. These two forms of appropriation reinforce each other, since women's disadvantaged position in paid work makes them vulnerable in negotiations over the domestic division of labour, while their position in the family disadvantages them in paid work. Thus she sees patriarchy and capitalism ultimately as mutually reinforcing systems, even if there are elements of tension between them.

According to Walby (1996b), Mies (1986:38) takes a mid-way position on the separation and integration of patriarchy and capitalism, mentioning that it would be misleading to talk of two separate systems because capitalism cannot function without patriarchy. The goal of the former is the never-ending process of capital accumulation which cannot be achieved unless patriarchal relations are maintained or reconstructed. For Mies, then, patriarchy and capitalism are seen as closely connected, and capitalism is, therefore, another form of patriarchy. Patriarchy is maintained by a series of structures and practices including the family, systematic violence, and the expropriation of women's labour. Walby (1996b) believes that by using the term 'capitalist-patriarchy' to refer to the current system which maintains the oppressive and exploitative relations affecting women, Mies resolves the dilemma of dual-systems theory by theorising capitalism as an expression of patriarchy.

Supporting Hartmann's argument, Walby (1986; 1990) notes that patriarchy and capitalism are analytically independent, but interacting social systems which can affect each other. She argues that patriarchy is a system of interrelated structures through which men exploit women, while capitalism is a system in which capital expropriates wage labour. Therefore, it is the mode of exploitation which constitutes the central difference between the two systems. Although Walby (1990) agrees with the dual-system approach, she argues that there is more tension between the two systems of capital and patriarchy than Hartmann suggests. While Hartmann does note that there is some tension between the two systems, she primarily presents a picture of harmony between them. This is the case especially in her analysis of the family wage system from which both employers and husbands are seen to benefit, the former from the lower wages they can pay women, the latter because of the greater control it gives them over their wives.

Walby (1990) further mentions that one of the limitation of existing forms of dual-systems theory is that they do not cover the full range of patriarchal structures, therefore she thinks that a broader range of structures should be theorised as part of the patriarchal side of dual systems. As a result, Walby (1989: 213; 1990: 21) conceptualises the system of patriarchy as being composed of six interrelated structures which she identifies as:

> *Patriarchal relations in household work, patriarchal relations in paid work, a patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions including religions, media, and education.*

The six identified are real, deep structures and necessary to capture the variation in gender relations. The patriarchal mode of production refers to the undervalued work of housewives who are the producing class, while husbands are the expropriating class. The second patriarchal structure, which patriarchal relations in paid work, refers to the fact that traditionally women have been excluded from the better forms of work and segregated within worst jobs which are deemed to be less skilled. The third structure, which is about patriarchal relations in the state, refers to the fact that state is patriarchal, capitalist and racist and it clearly has bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions. The fourth structure is male violence which explains how men's violence against women is systematically endured by the state's refusal to intervene against it. Patriarchal relations in sexuality constitute a fifth structure where compulsory heterosexuality and the sexual double standard are two of the key forms; and the sixth structure patriarchal relations in cultural institutions composed of a set of institutions which create the representation of women within a patriarchal gaze in a variety of arenas, such as religions, education and the media (Walby 1990).

Walby (1989; 1990) argues that these structures represent the most significant constellations of social relations which structure gender relations. She argues that by analysing these structures the varied forms of women's oppression and patriarchal practices can be adequately grasped in the period and place under consideration. In different times and places some of the structures are more important than others. The elimination of any one does not lead to the demise of the system as a whole. Walby (1990; 1996a; 1996b) further posits that the interrelationships between these structures create different forms of patriarchy: private and public, noting that the above six structures are present in each type of patriarchy, but the relationship between them and their relative significance varies. For Walby, private patriarchy is based upon household production, with a male (either husband or father), exercising direct individual control over a female in the relatively private sphere of the home. In this context, a man is the direct oppressor and beneficiary of the subordination of a woman. As previously noted, she does not view household production as the sole patriarchal structure but it is maintained by the active exclusion of women from the public arena and confinement to the private world of the family household. In public patriarchy, women are not barred from the public arena, but are, nonetheless, subordinated within all spheres of social action. The expropriation of women is performed collectively rather than by individual patriarchs, and segregationary strategies are used to subordinate women within all spheres of social action.

Although Walby's (1990) work has been highly influential in feminist theory, she has been criticised for her overarching tendencies towards structural analysis and for neglecting real people. Pollert (1996) argues that Walby emphasised more on structures and this loses the tension between agency and structure necessary to understand social process, and ends in a static form of systems theory. Moreover, she has a tendency to speak of 'patriarchal interests' and 'capitalist interests' as if these were real entities which existed independently of actual people. However, Walby (1990; 1997) claims to work with an integrated conception of structure and agency in her theory of patriarchy, particularly Giddens's[11] type understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, where each are mutually constitutive of the other. Her definition of patriarchy specifies systems, structures, and practices (or agency). She also cites practice or agency as a key factor in bringing about change from private to public form of patriarchy, where she emphasises the important role played by feminists in securing the advancement of women into the public world.

Following Walby, this research will define how men dominate, oppress and exploit women by means of both private and public patriarchy in the context of the Bangladeshi RMG industry. Drawing closely on Walby's (1990) model of the six patriarchal structures in conjunction with the concepts of LPT and global value chain, this framework will be used to help to explain women's position as workers, for example, how patriarchal control is maintained through the appropriation of women's labour within marriage and household relationships, or how culture which includes the different norms and values of expected behaviour for Bangladeshi women disadvantages female workers within the household, work and society, or how men's superiority is maintained by means of job segregation by sex in the workplace or how men's power is maintained by the use of male violence which restricts women's possibilities of advancement to higher-ranking positions in the labour market. In order to understand the interaction of labour process regimes and patriarchal relations amongst female RMG workers in Bangladesh, this thesis will examine Walby's argument regarding the relationship between capitalism and

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[11] Archer (1995) criticises Giddens for "central conflation" of failing to see the separate roles of the "parts" (social structure) and "people" (agents). She criticizes that by conflating structure and agency into unspecified movements of co-constitution, central conflationary approaches preclude the possibility of sociological exploration of the relative influence of each aspect. In contradiction, Archer offers the approach of "analytical dualism", arguing that by isolating structural and/or cultural factors which provide a context of action for agents, it is possible to investigate how those factors shape the subsequent interactions of agents and how those interactions in turn reproduce or transform the initial context.

patriarchy which says that these two are analytically independent systems that exist in conflict and tension rather than mutual accommodation.

Sokoloff (1980:196-197) notes that marxist and socialist feminists consider that "*capitalism and the industrial capitalist construction of women's position in the home are major causes of the problems faced by women in the labour market*". Moreover, the author argues that in order to analyse women's problems in modern capitalist society, an understanding is also needed "*of the complex effects of the social relations of patriarchy*". Socialist feminists argue that the sexual division of labour both in the home and the market is a synthesis of patriarchy and capitalism. Within the household women do more labour than men even if they also have paid employment, and within the field of paid work occupational segregation is used by organised men to keep access to the best paid jobs for themselves at the expense of women (Hartmann 1979b).

2.3.3 The Sexual Division of Labour

Walby (1990) notes that existing explanations of gender divisions in employment fall into various schools of thought: economic and sociological functionalism, liberalism, marxist feminist analysis and dual-systems theory. Several theorists of the first school of thought predict certain outcomes for the extent of women's and men's comparative participation in paid work, and for differential wages for men and women. Women get less paid than men because they have less skill and labour market experience and fewer qualifications than men as a consequence of decisions as to the allocations of the time of men and women in households (Becker 1965; Mincer and Polachek 1974).

Liberal approaches have focused on small-scale processes which differentiate women's position in work from those of men and drew upon the broader notions of cultural differentiation of men and women. Kanter's work (1977) clearly documents the disadvantages that women face in corporations and describes the proximate mechanisms through which this takes place. She emphasises the importance of cultural pressures and of organisational features which lead to less success among women than men in reaching the upper echelons of these institutions.

Marxist feminist analysis explains women's lesser labour force participation and lower pay are critically shaped by the capital-labour relation. Women are seen as a subordinate and marginal category of worker because their greater exploitation benefits employers, although a sub-group

of this school sees women's position in the household, rather than paid labour, as an achievement rather than failure of the working class (see Walby 1990).

Dual-systems theory attempts to combine class analysis with the theorisation of patriarchy introduced by radical feminism. It posits two systems-patriarchy and capitalism-as analytically necessary to understanding gender relations (see Cockburn 1983, 1985; Hartmann 1979a; Walby 1986, 1989, 1990). Hartmann (1979a) argues that patriarchal relations in employment cannot be understood in terms of capitalism alone because they pre-date the rise of this system. Central to her understanding of gender relations is job segregation by sex. She contends that this is central to men's control over women in all spheres of society. It is by excluding women from the better kinds of paid work that men are able to keep women at a disadvantage. Men are able to do this largely because they are better organised than women. Hartmann draws on examples of men organised in trade unions which excluded women, such as nineteenth century craft unions, and the support of the state for the exclusion of women from certain forms of paid work.

It has become almost commonplace for feminist theorists and historians to assert that male workers colluded with the bourgeoisie to ensure exclusion of women by supporting certain forms of protective legislation which prevented women from working in particular industries – most notably coal mining – and from working nights or long hours, and thus helped to structure the sexual division of labour by disallowing competition with men on an equal basis (Barrett 1980; German 2013). Men sought to keep the lion's share of well-paid jobs, and organised themselves to raise male wages generally (German 2013). There is a vicious circle in which women's forced absence from the best jobs leads to their disproportionate domestic burdens which further hinders their ability to spend time on training and gain access to the better forms of work (Hartmann 1979a). Women's precarious position in capitalist production reflected in their low wages and segregation in a limited number of occupations effectively confirmed their position in the family, and their dependence upon men (Barrett 1980).

However, Brenner and Ramas (1984: 40) argue that the sexual division of labour cannot be understood with reference to protective legislation or trade union exclusiveness on the grounds that protective legislation barely existed in the US until well into the twentieth century, long after the 'male breadwinner' sexual division of labour came into being, and even in Britain the Ten Hours Bill (1847) and the Mines Regulation Act (1842) had little effect on the structuring of

job segregation by sex. Instead, they suggest an alternative historical interpretation, observing that "*both the sexual division of labour and the family-household system which developed in nineteenth-century England and the US, were crucially conditioned by the exigencies of biology and class structure*" (Brenner and Ramas 1984:48). These circumstances meant that the low level of wages for the working classes and capitalist reluctance to support certain aspects of working class reproduction, particularly childcare, in the second half of the nineteenth century helped provide reasons for the sexual division of labour, since workers could not afford to purchase services to substitute for their housework and childcare. As the nursing of infants was necessary to guarantee their survival, the inability to nurse new-born children led to high rates of infant mortality. As employers would not make provision for the needs of pregnant women and infants, it made sense for women to stay at home, if the family could possibly afford it, in order to care for their children (Brenner and Ramas 1984).

The adoption of the notion of the 'family wage' was another mechanism instituted by employers in capitalist society intended to give men and their families enough to live without the woman needing to go out to work. Increasingly, the male sphere became the world of work, the female sphere that of the family and domesticity (German 2013). Through these mechanisms men have achieved superiority over women, forcing them to remain dependent on men for an income within the family (Hartmann 1979b), however Barrett and McIntosh (1980) criticises that the family wage was an ideology justifying higher wages for men, rather than a reality. Lower wages for women were enforced by job segregation in the labour market which both assures women's economic dependence on men and reinforces notions of appropriate spheres for women and men. For most men, then, the development of family wages secured the material base of male domination in two ways. Firstly, women earn lower wages than men receive in the labour market which perpetuates men's material advantage over women and encourages them to choose homemaking as a career. Secondly, women perform house work, childcare, and other services at home which benefit men directly (Hartmann 1979b). Therefore, women's home responsibilities in turn reinforce their inferior labour market position (Hartmann 1979b; Barrett 1980).

Patriarchal institutions and social relations have made women's status inferior or secondary in the capitalist wage-labour market by restricting their choices and limiting their access to different types of work (Lim 1997). Women's primary involvement in domestic and child care

responsibilities continues to be a source of vulnerability for them, not only because this is unpaid work but also because it diminishes women's mobility and autonomy to design their labour market strategies (Beneria 2001). Mies (1986) believes that women are the optimal labour force for the capitalist system, because they are considered as dependent housewives. What Mies (1986:110) refers to as 'housewifisation' decreases women's political and bargaining power, enabling employers to pay low wages meaning that women remain concentrated in low-level jobs in the manufacturing sector of capitalist economies, and have a low value in capitalist society (cited in German 2013). Sex segregation of jobs and low female wages are intimately connected, both having their roots in the barriers women face to defend their pay and working conditions (Brenner and Ramas 1984). Walby (1989; 1990) highlights the differentiation of full- and part-time work and occupational segregation by sex in the labour market as one of the patriarchal practices which constitutes the structure of patriarchal relations in employment. She further asserts that politics and the state both in the sense of state action and organised collective behaviour have been much more important in the structuring of the sexual division of labour.

Lim (1997) argues that the employment of women reflects the influence of patriarchy on the female labour market in both developed and developing countries. The relatively cheap cost of women's labour in the capitalist wage-labour market enhances the comparative advantage of firms employing them in labour-intensive industries producing for the world market (Khosla 2009). Lim (1997) stresses that, although all women are subject to patriarchal exploitation, female workers in developing countries are additionally subject to imperialist exploitation which arises from the ability of multinationals to take advantage of different labour-market conditions in different parts of the world, a perfectly rational practice in the context of world capitalism. This will be explored in the next section.

2.4 Trends in the Global Political Economy
2.4.1 Global Trends and Patterns

The section examines the major trends and patterns in the larger context of changes in the global political economy which have taken place since the late 1960s and 1970s. It discusses how industrialisation has changed the nature of work, production processes worldwide and given rise to labour-intensive export-oriented global production factories in a number of developing countries. Global restructuring in production has created a new interdependent relationship between North and South, with MNCs emerging as powerful actors in the free-market economy

and driving global competition by using locally owned manufacturing factories in developing economies. They have also adopted different strategies to ensure their profitability in controlling the labour process of developing countries, which are examined in detail in the following sections.

Since the early 1970s, several major trends have transformed the global economic situation as capitalist processes and ideologies have spread throughout the world (see Pyle and Ward 2003). Firstly, during the 1970s and early 1980s, the impact of various economic crises, involving periodic recessions, and rising inflation profoundly impacted on the world economy, particularly in developing countries. The consequences of the anti-inflationary policies which they adopted contributed to excessively rapid lending internationally. This in turn led to balance of payments difficulties as it reduced export earnings for these countries as commodity prices declined (Ward and Pyle 1995; Lopes 1999; Hewitt 2000).

Secondly, there has been a shift from state-run towards market-based economies, particularly through the inclusion of export-oriented production strategies and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the early 1980s (Ward and Pyle 1995). These World Bank and IMF programmes reflected a neo-liberal ideology involving privatisation and deregulation of industry; intensification of free trade by reducing trade barriers and lowering import tariffs; management of balance of payments; reduction of government services through public spending cuts; removing wage controls and many others (Green 1995; WHO 2014). In many developing countries SAPs played a crucial role in establishing more open and globalised economies by providing them with financial assistance and credit[12] (Beneria *et al.* 2000). In response, Governments established EPZs to produce goods for the global market, offering international firms located there exemption from taxes, and from labour-related and other types of government legislation (Potter *et al.* 1999).

Thirdly, technological developments during the 1970s dramatically reduced the cost of communications, meaning that the time and space which once separated national markets was

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[12] However, SAPs were not beyond criticism. Pearson (2000) argues that donors compelled indebted developing countries to implement SAPs as a condition for granting loans to restructure their economies. Other critics argued that SAPs did not have the desired effect in developing countries, creating deterioration in their levels of capital accumulation, public investment, foreign direct investment, and industrial and export growth (Lopes 1999; Willis 2005).

effectively erased. This resulted in the erosion of economic borders and the internationalisation of production processes, expanding trade significantly (Beneria *et al.* 2000).

Fourthly, the shift of MNCs into manufacturing, service and finance sectors in developing countries and the establishment of subcontracting networks have been another important factor in the global economy (Pyle 1999; Pyle and Ward 2003). Over the course of three decades, the largest players, particularly Western-based retailers, relocated their labour-intensive manufacturing operations from high-wage to low-cost production regions in developing countries to increase profitability, by not only evading higher labour costs but also benefiting from the lack of protection for industrial workers in the developing world (Cox 1987; Gereffi *et al.* 2002; Rahman 2004).

These trends and changes strengthened economic linkages and integrated the world economy in a process described as globalisation (Cook and Kirkpatrick 1997) which has been defined as:

> *The forging of a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world system. The processes by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe* (McGrew 1992:262).

Globalisation – a deeply contested term – has also been defined in terms of changing power relations between state and non-state institutions particularly MNCs. Dicken (1994:102) stresses "*the centrality of international firms and nation states in shaping the changing geography of the global economy*". Globalisation has changed the rules of world trade, meaning ever more countries are integrated into a global market and encouraged to compete for exports (Hale 2000).

In many ways the RMG industry is the outcome of these contemporary trends in global production. During the 1970s, the international trading regime regulated by the MFA contributed to the development of apparel industries in a large number of developing countries. The low entry barriers and minimal investments needed in apparel led to booming employment in apparel factories in regions where formal employment was limited or, in some cases, entirely absent (Rossi *et al.* 2014). The emergence of global coordinated apparel production as a key feature of economic globalisation has been studied extensively from different perspectives,

ranging from more operational and firm-centred global commodity chains (GCC) or global value chains (GVC) (e.g. Gereffi 1994, 1999; Humphrey and Schmitz 2002) to the broader concept of global production networks (GPN) (Henderson *et al.* 2002; Dicken 2004; Hess and Coe 2006; Coe *et al.* 2008), as explained in the following section.

2.4.2 The Global Value Chain Approach

This approach, originally popularised by Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, explores how the production, distribution, and consumption of products are globally interconnected via the global commodity chain (GCC), which 'consists of sets of inter-organisational networks clustered around one commodity or product, linking households, enterprises, and states to one another within the world-economy' (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994:2). Gereffi and Korzeniewicz's original GCC concept has been further developed. Gereffi *et al.* (2003) have explored how value is produced and captured within GCCs and the implications of this for industrial policy and efforts to upgrade production capacity in different parts of the world. Later, geographers like Dicken have used the GCC model to engage with debates about globalised production, emphasising the role of networks. His research used the notion of global production networks which he defined as 'a nexus of interconnected functions, operations and transactions through which goods and services are produced, distributed and consumed' (Dicken 2004:15). Henderson *et al.* (2002) have emphasised the need to incorporate the broader social and institutional contexts with this Global Production Networks approach. That means economic activity and actors' behaviours are strongly influenced by the social and institutional context in which they operate, and encompasses not only the economic and commercial actors involved in global production, but also the whole range of actors including states, supra-national organisations, business associations, trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that surrounds and influences global production (Rossi *et al.* 2014).

GVC approach stresses the importance of including all those who are involved in the processes of commodity production, distribution and consumption. Moreover, it also broadens out the analysis of power relations to embrace institutional, labour and civil society actors, and their respective networks, and their potential impact on the nature and location of production, distribution and exchange (Wills and Hale 2005). However, in much of the GCC literature, labour itself has been curiously neglected although writers such as Smith *et al.* (2002) and Carswell and Neve (2013) highlight the need to focus on the experiences and agency of labour

in the constitution of GCCs. This study contributes to this research gap by exploring women's experiences of work in the Bangladeshi RMG industry.

It should be noted that, the apparel value chain is organised around five separate but interrelated networks, such as raw material, component, production, export, and marketing (Gereffi and Memedovic 2003). In this process, value in globalised value chains has increasingly been captured by input/raw material suppliers (textile companies that produce yarn and fabric), and by some lead firms, including MNCs and trading companies, who control design, branding, marketing and retail services (Rossi *et al.* 2014). On the other hand, apparel manufacturers or suppliers (primarily involve in production, stitching and embellishment) have become the weakest actors in GVCs. This is because actual assembly operations costs have been squeezed and actors' involved in production have little positional power in relation to the lead firms (Frederick and Gereffi 2011). Gereffi *et al.* (1994) have argued that the apparel industry is now characterised by buyer-driven GCCs, as distinct from more traditional producer-driven chains. Gereffi originally distinguished between producer- and buyer-driven governance structures. The former are typical of capital and technology intensive industries in which transnational manufacturing firms drive the chain, controlling the core technologies and production facilities, often through vertical integration (Islam 2008). That means that in garment industry supply chains, which involve a wide range of component inputs, assembly and distribution of finished goods, the balance of power lies with the retailers and brand-name merchandisers. It is argued that these buyers create the geo-economy of garment industry chains by their ability to select suppliers in different parts of the world whilst the governance of such chains is characterised by the power of those at the top. Gereffi (1994: 97) uses the term governance to refer to the authority and power relationships of the chain. Subcontracting within these buyer-driven chains helps to concentrate power with buyers rather than manufacturers (Hurley and Miller 2005; Coe and Hess 2013).

Sako (1992) identifies two distinct types of buyer-supplier relations, i.e. the Arm's-Length Contractual Relation (ACR) and Obligational Contractual Relation (OCR). The ACR involves a specific, discrete economic transaction. In this type of transaction, buyers and sellers of a product act independently, not disclosing much information about costing and future plans. The buyer seeks to maintain low dependence by trading with a large number of competing suppliers within the limits permitted by the need to keep down transaction costs. Suppliers also seek to

maintain low dependence by trading with a large number of customers within limits set by scale economies and transaction costs.

The OCR also involves an economic contract covering the production and trading of goods and services. In this type of contract, there must be high trust cooperativeness with a commitment to trade over the long run. This commitment may come at the expense of taking on rather a lot of sometimes onerous obligations and requests (e.g. for just-in-time and ship-to-stock delivery). But the benefits of accepting mutual obligations lie in good quality and service, growing or stable orders, and other non-price aspects of trading born out of a tacit understanding over time. Trading partners hold a sense of mutual trust and for a buyer, it prefers to give security to few suppliers rather than rely on multiple sourcing from several suppliers on short-term basis.

Therefore, in an increasingly interconnected global economy, the organisation of economic activity has become more complex, involving the consideration of many actors with diverse power relations (Johns 2006). MNCs who operate at the top level are defined as '*manufacturers without factories*' (Hale 2000: 2), maintaining the overall control of the industry. They are also capturing a larger proportion of total chain value. The next section discusses the power and influence of MNCs within global production chains, since one of the key research questions in this thesis addresses the degree to which MNCs influence employment terms and conditions in Bangladesh's RMG factories.

2.4.3 The MNC: Value, Power and Influence

Dicken defines the MNC (2007:106) as: *"a firm that has the power to coordinate and control operations in more than one country, even if it does not own them",* noting that MNCs take advantage of geographical differences in the distribution of production factors, i.e. natural resources, capital, labour, and in state policies, for example taxes, trade barriers, and subsidies. He argues that their potential geographical flexibility ─an ability to switch and reswitch resources and operations between locations on an international or even global scale─ means that large US, European and Japanese retailing companies such as NIKE, Adidas, Wal-Mart, Sears Roebuck, Carrefour, Marks and Spencers, and C & A Modes, have become the primary shapers of the contemporary global economy (Dicken 2007). Some 20 clothing MNCs (nine being US-based, six EU-based and five Japanese-based) effectively dominate the entire industry, and account for almost half of the turnover for the entire industry (Euratex 2004). They

dominate the global economic landscape by retaining their control over marketing and brand names while reducing cost and risk through independent outsourcing to developing countries (Hale 2000; Wills and Hale 2005).

Since the 1980s, the system of subcontracting with local manufacturers has significantly minimised the production role of MNCs, with local firms having responsibility for carrying out the entire manufacturing process but remaining dependent on large foreign companies "for markets, materials and technical know-how" (Mitter 1994: 20). In practice, MNCs operate a new and more sophisticated version of what was known as the 'putting-out' system (Elson and Pearson 1981:88). From the 1800s to the 1850s, it was very common in many industries in England and USA for merchants to arrange for craftspeople to work with their own equipment in their own homes to manufacture certain goods, especially textiles and shoes. The introduction of more productive manufacturing equipment helped bring about the demise of this system, but it persisted for some time in the clothing industries in England even after the rise of the factories. The system's advantage lies in its flexibility which helps employers to adjust output to fluctuating market demand as well as lowering fixed company costs by laying off full-time permanent workers (Cappelli 2000). Various different levels of subcontracting have emerged, for example, buying companies may contract to major manufacturers who undertake production themselves or may subcontract to smaller production units, who in turn increase their flexibility by bringing in temporary workers and putting work out to home workers (Hale 2000). Relying on subcontractors offers MNCs several advantages. Firstly, with short-term contracts and no large capital investments, firms can quickly shift contracts to other countries if lower costs are possible. Secondly, corporations can avoid bearing some of the responsibility for instituting fair labour practices and meeting environmental standards by claiming these are at least jointly the duty of subcontractors (Roach 2007).

As noted earlier, one of the defining characteristics of MNCs is their ability to transfer resources across national borders, by relocating production or seeking new contractors as a result of changes in national regulations concerning workplace standards, minimum wages, or environmental quality. This international mobility combined with sheer size and economic efficiency means they wield considerable political power and influence in the world economy (Roach 2007). Conversely, governments of developing countries have lost their bargaining power to the MNCs because in the capitalist economy, nations compete against each other and

are concerned about losing contracts and tax revenues, and therefore offer MNCs low tax rates on profits and investments (Stopford and Strange 1991 cited in Cook and Kirkpatrick 1997).

MNCs not only benefit from this competition, but also gain increasing support and powerful concessions from the World Trade Organization (WTO) in relation to international trade agreements allowing them to dominate democratic sovereign governments (McMichael 2000; Roach 2007). For example, under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an agreement signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, where rights were granted to MNCs with regard to overruling domestic legislation. Chapter 11 of NAFTA specifies that no party to the agreement may "*nationalize or expropriate an investment*" or "*take a measure tantamount to nationalization or expropriation*" of a MNC without sufficient compensation. While the purpose of this clause appears to be simply to protect MNCs from seizure of private property, in practice it has had much broader implications:

> *Since the agreement's enactment corporate investors in all three NAFTA countries have used these new rights to challenge a variety of national, state, and local environmental and public health policies, domestic judicial decisions, a federal procurement law and even a government's provision of parcel delivery services as NAFTA violations* (Roach 2007:20).

NAFTA permitted MNCs to sue a host government and they were given power to force a national government to change its policies in the interest of free trade.

In addition, MNCs perform quality control and, if they wish are able to reject the product because of their ability to manipulate transfer prices and move their resources and operations between different locations in the world (Johns 2006). This represents the source of the multinationals' direct power over manufacturing firms. MNCs often seek compliant manufacturers with regulation and strong reputations for success and, as a result, these particular firms are placed in a more powerful position as trust and confidence assume extra significance in negotiating financial deals (Johns 2006). MNCs have developed a range of strategies to attempt to capture maximum value, thereby increasing their economic and political power.

Some perceive the ascendency of MNCs as a positive force, bringing economic growth, jobs, lower priced products to consumers, and quality products to an expanding share of the world's

population. Others believe that whilst they benefit from the flexibility offered by subcontractors, these arrangements create harmful social and environmental impacts such as exploiting workers, dominating the public policy process, damaging the natural environment, and eroding cultural values (Locke *et al.* 2006; Roach 2007). Due to growing public concern about well-known companies selling products made by exploited workers, many MNCs have drawn up codes of labour conduct for their overseas suppliers (Frank 2008; Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2014). Most codes of conducts are based upon respect for domestic legislation and core labour principles from United Nations' International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour, non-discrimination and equal wages, and the abolition of child labour (Hale 2000). MNCs have enthusiastically supported voluntary initiatives, like CSR, Ethical Trading Initiatives (ETI), however, at the same time they continue to engage in aggressive buying practices that systematically undermine the principles of decent work (Barrientos and Smith 2007; Alam *et al.* 2008), an issue that is explored later in the context of the case studies. The next section will review issues regarding CSR and ethical buying practices of MNCs.

2.4.4 Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics

There has been increasing importance of issues such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and 'compliance with labour standards' in the business agenda over the past two decades. The business concept of CSR, which originated in American and European companies, refers to "*how companies can manage their business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society and environment*" (Van Yperen 2006: 2). CSR involves conducting business in an ethical way and in the interests of the wider community. This also links into an increasing concern in Western countries with the conditions under which consumer goods are produced in developing and newly industrialised countries as part of the globalised economy. Improving social standards in these producer countries and increasing awareness of the environmental impact of manufacturing processes has become a very important topic for many well-known brands wishing to maintain their reputation and to satisfy both shareholders and stakeholders (Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2014). Major brands and retailers in the USA and EU sought to develop private governance to ensure compliance with labour standards, mainly through the mechanisms of codes of conduct and buyer audits under the rubric of CSR (Pike and Godfrey 2014).

In his report on CSR in the textile industry, Van Yperen (2006) identifies a wide range of initiatives, standards and guidelines which apply to the clothing and textile sector and an overview of the most important ones is reproduced in appendix I.[13] He illustrates how, in addition many brand companies, trade unions have developed voluntary organisations, such as Social Accountability International (SAI) SA8000 and Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production (WRAP), Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), and Fair Labor Association (FLA), and many others introducing their own corporate code of conduct on social responsibility. In order to remain competitive and gain export orders, RMG suppliers are expected to comply not only with the relevant national laws but also with the specific Code of Practice established by particular buyers, evidence of being compliant with regulations is a key requirement for most of the best-known global RMG buyers (Baral 2010). Although some of the large factories possess standard certificates from the voluntary organisations for quality management, quality assurance, and environmental management (because of either buyers' requirement or to make factory safer), but factories put more importance on specific codes of conduct established by particular buyers' they deal with and following their instructions on maintaining factory level compliance (Rahman *et al.* 2008).

The impact of codes of practice or buyers' insistence on compliance being policed by social auditing has excited much debate in the literature. Based on primary evidence from the UK ETI impact assessment, Barrientos and Smith (2007) noted that such codes led to limited improvements in areas such as health and safety provisions, rates of pay and reduced working hours but had little or no effect on workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, or to levels of gender discrimination. Others conclude that compliance is likely to prove ineffective in improving working conditions and labour standards for factory employees (Heintz 2004; Alam *et al.* 2008; Frank 2008). These authors have also highlighted the role that unethical buying practices by MNCs can play in lowering wages and promoting poor working conditions in the labour-intensive export industries in developing countries.

A previous study conducted by Alam *et al.* (2008) focused on the working conditions in the supply chains for three UK companies selling RMG: the supermarkets Tesco and Asda, and the clothes retailer Primark. The authors argued that whilst the UK government promoted the

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[13] Other campaigning organizations that take a keen interest in the rights of RMG workers are the Fair Wear Foundation (www.fairwear.nl) and the Clean Clothes Campaign (www.cleanclothes.org).

voluntary approach of 'CSR' as its response to the exploitation of workers, retailers have also been keen to show their enthusiasm for these voluntary initiatives as a means to avoid over-burdensome regulation under the law. They concluded that, despite their claims to be following ethical labour standards, the aggressive buying practices of these UK retailers undermine voluntary initiatives such as the ETI.

Alam *et al.* (2008) explain that the growing trend in the RMG industry for so-called 'fast fashion' has had a particularly harmful effect on buying practices. The idea of fast fashion is to give shoppers the latest styles just six weeks after they first appear on the catwalk, at prices that allow them to wear an outfit just once or twice before replacing it. This practice itself can be seen as part of a more general trend towards disposable fashion where clothing is discarded as soon as it is perceived to be out of date. The consequent short-lead time and irregular demand for large quantities of clothes places extreme pressure on suppliers, which is, in turn, passed on to workers, who are forced to produce more garments in less time, without any corresponding pay rise.

Alam *et al.* (2008) challenged the companies concerned (Tesco, Asda and Primark) about paying lip service to CSR and argued that time and time again supplier audits have failed to uncover appalling conditions and a glaring lack of respect for worker's rights. He further noted that this type of inspection contains fundamental flaws because company audits are typically conducted just once a year, with many suppliers notified ahead of the audit so that factories can be cleaned up in advance and workers coached on what to say to auditors. Hale (2000) queries whether it is possible for such initiatives to be implemented in the context of such strong downward pressures on labour conditions, in a globalised economy in which the principal driving force for most companies is maintaining profit levels in the face of intense competition.

In their article, Beneath the radar? A critical realist analysis of 'the knowledge economy' and 'shareholder value' as competing discourses, Thompson and Harley (2012) looked at the analysis of discourses in organisational change, and explained how the discourse of shareholder value has had a profound impact on the shape of contemporary capitalism and on managerial practices within contemporary organisations. They argued that the discourse of shareholder value has causal power owing to the context, which is driven by specific profit related imperatives. In the context of readymade garment manufacturing, mock compliance, in which lip service is paid to regulations and power is used to control workers, suggests that compliant

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discourses are driven by the imperatives of the fashion industry. The power which MNCs exert and their buying practices within the RMG sector in Bangladesh is one of the key areas of research interest for this study.

As noted earlier, the transnational mobility of MNCs seeking low-cost production opportunities has expanded the establishment of export-oriented production factories in numerous developing countries. At the micro level these production sites play a key role worldwide by utilising national labour forces for international market-oriented production (Frobel *et al.* 1980). The next section reviews the establishment of EPZs, the nature of work and production processes carried out there, and the preferred workforce in subcontracting production factories operating worldwide.

2.4.5 Nature of Work, Production Processes and Labour in EPZs

In the deepening process of economic globalisation, EPZs became a channel whereby foreign capital could search for unexploited supplies of cheap labour and enabled the host country to connect to export markets. An EPZ is a designated area in which imported raw materials and components can be processed and exported elsewhere without payment of duties and with minimal customs regulation (Murayama and Yokota 2008). The concept of EPZ is said to have originated from free trade zones[14] (FTZ) established in major ports such as Gibraltar, Singapore, and Hong Kong during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early FTZs were normally associated with the provision of services and buildings, usually located in or near to a major port, allowed imports and exports free from custom formalities with the purpose of facilitating the speedy re-export of goods, the victualing of ships, and the development of commercial sector (Currie 1979; Potter *et al.* 1999). Nowadays EPZs differ from free trade zones as the location of an EPZ is not immediately bound by its closeness to a port (Wong and David 1984:1). The term EPZ has been used interchangeably with terms such as 'free trade zone', 'free export zone', 'free industrial zone', or 'special economic zone'. The term *maquiladora* which originated in Mexico is also used to refer to EPZ factories (Frobel *et al.* 1980; Boyenge 2007). The primary goals of these large industrial enclaves include earning foreign exchange through increased exports, employment creation, attracting of foreign direct investment (FDI), technological transfer and

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[14] The concept of the free trade zone has been promoted by United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and it has provided the overall framework (technical, organisational and legal provision) for the promotion of export-oriented industries in the developing countries (Frobel *et al.* 1980).

generating linkage effects beyond the EPZ (Murayama and Yokota 2008). The first EPZ was set up at Shannon Airport in Ireland in 1959. In 1975 there were only 79 EPZs worldwide; by 2006 this figure had increased to 3500 in 130 countries, employing nearly 66 million people, 40 million of whom were located in China (Boyenge 2007).

At the time of writing, Bangladesh has eight EPZs with two more at the implementation stage (Islam and Mukhtar 2011) and these offer various incentives and facilities to attract FDI (see Table 2.1). South Korea is the largest foreign investor in Bangladeshi EPZs, followed by Japan and China including Hong Kong (BEPZA 2013). EPZs are administered by the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) (Board of Investment, 2013).

TABLE 2.1: EPZ INCENTIVES IN BANGLADESH	
Fiscal incentives	(1) Ten-year tax holiday with reduced rates for further five years; (2) duty-free imports of construction material, machinery, spare parts, and equipment; (3) duty-free import and export; (4) subject to bilateral agreement, double taxation relief; (5) GSP facility available; (6) expatriates exempt from income tax on salary for three years; (7) duty and quota free access to EU, Canada, Norway, Australia and USA
Non-fiscal incentives	(1) 100% ownership permitted; (2) enjoys Most Favoured Nation status to USA; (3) no ceiling for foreign or local investment; (4) foreign currency loan from abroad under direct automatic route
Infrastructural facilities	(1) Basic infrastructure e.g. electricity, gas, water, road, ITC; (2) rental-basis factory buildings; (3) warehouses available
Business communication and administrative support services	(1) Courier, offshore bank, police station, post office, fire station, customs office, and shipping agent within EPZ; (2) administrative support services within EPZ; (1) one-window service; (2) same day import-export permit issued on EPZ premises; (3) secured and protected bonded area; (4) customs clearance at factory gate; (5) subcontracting with export-oriented industries inside and outside EPZ allowed
Support services	Other facilities within EPZ include gym, investors club, medical centre, shopping centre, and expatriate accommodation

Source: Compiled from Islam and Mukhtar (2011); Eusuf *et al.* (2007); BGMEA (2013a); EPB (2014).

There are competing views on the efficacy of EPZs. Some argue that they serve as a successful strategy in stimulating growth in national economies in terms of employment, exports, and FDI inflows. From 1980 to 1990, countries without EPZs experienced growth rates of 3.5%, whereas the average in those with EPZs was 5.5%, and the countries with the greatest concentration of

EPZs achieved growth rates of 6.8% (Johansson 1994). However, there has also been widespread criticism regarding labour issues and employment in EPZs including low wages, intensity of work, unsafe working conditions, and suppression of labour rights (Lee 1984). Not all countries with EPZs have taken a negative stance towards trade union activity, for example, Ireland and Singapore apply the same labour regulations to EPZs as to the rest of the country (Shoesmith 1986; ILO 1998).

Increased labour flexibility is cited as one of the negative effects of globalisation on production processes because enterprises in both developed and developing economies have devised means of reducing fixed labour costs by casualisation of labour, subcontracting and using contract workers (Standing 1989). The term 'flexibility' has two distinct meanings. For employers facing increasing competition and market uncertainty, it means they can dismiss employees, reduce the labour force or substitute lower-cost labour for 'core' workers at any time in order to suit company needs (Standing 1989; Ward and Pyle 1995). For workers, flexibility can mean increased employment opportunities, particularly for women, but also brings more precarious employment, greater work intensity, and increasing vulnerability in working conditions (Pearson 2000; Lim 1997; Beneria *et al.* 2000). According to Pearson (2000:13):

> *Women have become the ideal 'flexible' workers in the new global economy, in the sense that their widespread incorporation into global labour markets has given them little security or bargaining power in relation to wages, working conditions, and entitlements to non-wage benefits, and publicly provided reproductive services such as child care, or unemployment benefits or pensions.*

The trend towards more flexible and informal forms of labour was largely a result of deregulation, which sanctioned the weakening of protective mechanisms and institutional safeguards and led to the growth of very low-wage employment, together with low productivity, semi-skilled jobs with little or no chance for skill development (Standing 1989; 1999).

Production processes in flexible labour regimes are typically standardised, repetitious, and are highly labour-intensive, assembly-line operations with a high-volume output (Davin 2004). In assembly line RMG operations, buyers' supplies cut fabrics, threads, buttons, zips, trims, with everything to be assembled according to design prepared by the buyers. Now-a-days manufacturers have shifted from the early stage of assembly oriented production techniques to

own equipment manufacturing (OEM). In this stage, manufacturers undertake additional tasks and offer a wider range of services to buyers, including purchasing the inputs for manufacturing, cutting according to the patterns supplied by the buyer, finishing, warehousing, or even providing limited design (Rahman *et al.* 2008). With added capacities, these manufacturers may become full package suppliers, carrying out the entire production process for a given order (Rossi *et al.* 2014).

The EPZ labour force in this sector has its own characteristics; Elson and Pearson (1981) originally noted that managers like to recruit unskilled or semi-skilled young women between the ages of 14 and 25 for this type of work. However, by the end of the 1990s, Afshar and Barrientos (1999) observed that women of all ages were increasingly being employed in this sector in many developing countries. Educational levels for these workers ranged from primary to high-school (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Chant and McIlwaine 1995). As production workers, they typically accept relatively low wages and are more likely to take orders and embrace company rules (Frobel *et al.* 1980; Standing 1989; Souplet-Wilson 2014). The implications of women's employment in the waged labour market will be detailed in Chapter Three.

Since this thesis makes use of different theories, the next section discusses critical realism (CR) as a meta-theory which helps to make connections between the different theories which this thesis uses.

2.5 Critical Realism as a Meta Theory

Critical Realism is important to this research because it enables labour process, patriarchy and GVC to be seen as mechanisms that may or may not interact in a particular way within a particular context. It allows us to see how the mechanisms of patriarchy and labour process and GVC, which operate at different levels, combine to produce particular outcomes. Thompson and Vincent (2010) have argued that CR acts as both an ontological framework and as a domain-specific meta-theory to make more meaningful connections between the various layers of the political economy and the forms of social agency situated within specific labour processes. More specifically, they demonstrated how labour process theory can be connected to wider theoretical resources in order to obtain a fuller picture of the capitalist political economy, arguing that the multi-layered causal interrelationships which exist within capitalism are simply too complex to be dealt with by any one theoretical tool/resource.

As a philosophy of science, CR functions as a meta-theory for social sciences because it treats both ontological and epistemological issues flexibly. Ontologically, CR is inclusive as to potentially causally relevant levels of reality meaning it can accommodate the insights of various theoretical positions. Epistemologically, CR indicates more clearly the appropriate direction and context for explanatory research, ranging from manifest phenomena to the underlying mechanisms that produce them and their complex co-determination (Bhaskar and Danermark 2006). Arguably, CR acts as a general orientation to research practice, providing concepts which can help create more accurate explanations of social phenomena (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014).

It has been argued that CR started with Bhaskar (1989:12) who asserted that "*the ultimate objects of scientific inquiry exist and act (for the most part) quite independently of scientists and their activity*". However, as a doctrine it assumes not only that things and events exist independently of the knowing subject but also that reality has consequences for events (Ackroyd 2010). CR incorporates a further interpretive thread, which recognises that social life is both generated by the actions of individuals, and also has an external impact on them, thereby creating a conscious compromise between the two extreme positions of positivism and social constructionism (Sayer 2000; Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2012). CR argues that experiences are sensations, images of things in the real world but not the things themselves directly. Thus, there are two steps to experiencing the world. Firstly, there is the thing itself and the sensation it conveys. Secondly, there is the mental processing that takes place sometime after that sensation meets our senses (Saunders *et al.* 2009). CR recognises that many important things exist in the social world i.e. truth, love, organisations that are not known to us directly from sense experiences but are mental constructs created from the interpretation of what people perceive and the concepts available to them (Ackroyd 2010).

CR views the social world as a highly complex and dynamic system, open to a complex array of influences which change both temporally and geographically often in unexpected ways, and can only be partially known, rather than a wholly understandable closed system (Ackroyd 2010). It sees reality as 'multiply determined', with no single mechanism determining the whole result (Bhaskar 1975), meaning in research terms that multiple causes must be teased out from detailed explorations of the setting (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014). Therefore, a key aspect of CR is its focus on causality and the identification of causal mechanisms. Causality is identified via a

triple-level structured or stratified ontology that consists of three domains or levels: (1) the empirical level (consisting of the experiences and perceptions that people have); (2) the actual level (comprising events and actions that take place whether or not they are observed or detected); (3) the real level (composed of causal powers and mechanisms that cannot always be detected directly, but which have real consequences for people and society) (Bhaskar, 1978:13 cited in Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2012:29). O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) note that this distinction is important because it facilitates a better understanding of the interactions between powers which may operate in different locations and/or at different hierarchical levels. Using this ontology, researchers can go beyond empirically-observed events to determine the causal mechanisms in the real domain that result in those events (Raduescu and Vassey 2009).

Causality in CR is closely related to the context (Archer 1995), because different outcomes arise from a set of causal mechanisms due to changes in the context, certain events will be manifested only when a certain set of conditions is present. CR highlights the importance of multi-level study (for example, considering the levels of the individual, the group, and the organisation) since each of these levels has the ability to change the researcher's understanding of the reality being studied (Saunders *et al.* 2009) and it is thus expected that a multi-level description will often emerge from realist research. This research employs CR as a domain specific meta-theory because it allows inferences to be drawn when employing different theories.

Thus, in this research, several different causal processes/theoretical resources have been selected for the purposes of examining the various levels of women's experiences of work in the context of the Bangladeshi RMG industry on the grounds that this cannot be understood by using a single theory. Multiple theoretical concepts and frameworks are required to explore the connections across levels that are "deeper" than the data itself, but emerge from comparison and explanation building. Elder-Vass (2010:23 cited in O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014: 150) stresses the need to analyse "the relation among the parts of an entity that gives that entity as a whole the ability to have a particular […] causal impact". That means greater explanation can be generated in understanding how different entities relate as part of a greater whole (O'mahoney and Vincent 2014).

It is clear, then, that whilst LPT provides a useful framework for looking at production relations within firms, it is not likely to reveal anything about how the value chain influences those relations or how gender intersects with labour process outcomes in different contexts. However,

theoretical concepts such as the value chain (which describes how the different sites of production interact under different systems of regulation) and patriarchy (which focuses on gendered interaction within the workplace and society) can do this. This is why several theories have been drawn upon to develop a stratified understanding of the complexities of the social reality being studied in this research, which involves the intersections of mechanisms relating to patriarchy, labour processes, regulatory systems and GVCs. Using a CR approach is a useful means of addressing the multiplicity of causal dynamics operating within the context of RMG factories.[15]

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed theories that suggest themselves as useful for understanding the situation of women working in the RMG industry. The theory of labour process is useful since it has the ability to offer an insightful analysis of the contemporary workplace practices that constitute diverse forms of workplace control and resistance. Particularly, Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) typology of managerial regimes (low/high trust and low/high regulation) gave a way to explore both the formal and informal dynamics of control that exist in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Also, their framework 'misbehaviour' or worker resistance in the workplace provided an important means to explain the workplace behaviour attested to by interviewees. In addition, Smith's (2006; 2010) concept of labour power mobility helped exploring women's potential bargaining power within contemporary global capitalism.

Although LPT has been useful for analysing contemporary production processes, feminist writers have critiqued LPT for its failure to explain the source of female subordination at work or for having ignored the impact of women's domestic oppression on their work (Beechey 1979; Barrett 1980). These writers, in particular, have argued that the various management control strategies elaborated by Braverman and others, such as Friedman (1977) and Edwards (1979) failed to address the specific ways in which female workers are controlled in the workplace not only by capitalist management but also by men (Webster 1995). Feminist researchers such as Hartmann (1976) and Walby (1986; 1996a) argued that more attention needed to be paid to the concept of patriarchy when seeking to understand female concentration in the de-skilled, low-

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[15] This is not to deny that distinctive theoretical resources underpin the conceptualisations of women's experiences of work and the latter are not reducible to the former.

paid work at the bottom of the hierarchy of production and the specific control strategies to which women were subject.

Therefore, the theory of patriarchy has been used in this thesis which offers us an opportunity to understand existing patriarchal relations and the different ways in which men dominate women both inside and outside the workplace. In conjunction with the concepts of LPT and GVC, Walby's (1990) model of six patriarchal structures which exists in Bangladeshi society, i.e. patriarchal relations in household work, paid work, male violence, sexuality, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, and state used as a means to explain women's oppression, domination, and exploitation both at the workplace and beyond. In particular, her framework helped to explain how patriarchal control is maintained through the appropriation of women's labour within marriage and household relationships; how culture, which includes the different norms and values of expected behaviour for Bangladeshi women, disadvantages factory women within the household, workplace and society; how men's superiority is maintained by means of job segregation by sex in the workplace; how men's power is maintained by the use of male violence which restricts women's possibilities of advancement to higher-ranking positions in the labour market; how sexualised language is often used by managers to control women at the workplace; or, how do state shape patriarchal relations both at the workplace and beyond .

However, despite its usefulness Walby's theory of patriarchy is not beyond criticism. Pollert (1996) criticised Walby (1990) for her overarching tendencies towards structural analysis which loses the tension between structure and agency, necessary to understand social process. Also, CR researcher might be critical of Walby (1990), since she claims to work with an integrated conception of structure and agency in her theory of patriarchy. Archer (1995) criticises that central conflationary approaches preclude the possibility of sociological exploration of the relative influence of each aspect. In addition, patriarchy theory is unable to explain contemporary trends in global production, for example, how production, distribution, and consumption of products are globally interconnected through networks, or how the broader economic conditions impact working conditions and women's lives in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Therefore, the GVC approach has been used which enables us to understand the interaction of different sites of production (raw material, component, production, export, and marketing networks) operating globally and power relationship within the value chain. It allows

us to see connections between the broader political economy of work and specific instances of labour processes and patriarchal relations.

Finally, doing a CR analysis various theoretical resources can be combined in order to obtain a fuller picture of various levels of women's experiences of work since the different causal mechanisms and contextual factors, i.e. employment regulation, labour process, value chain, patriarchy which operate at different levels impact women's experiences are simply too complex to be dealt with by any one theoretical tool. O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) note that in order to develop theoretical explanations CR researcher can often start by reviewing literature by discovering the ideas and theories that already exist and then critique, or attempt to improve them. The review of LPT, patriarchy, GVC have been undertaken in this research which are considered relevant to elements of the domain as they indicate and allude to specific contextual causal mechanisms within that domain and how they impact female workers in particular. The labour process speaks to work processes within firms. GVC literature speaks to power relationships between firms. Patriarchy speaks to the social structure and relations between men and women within that domain. In short, these theories are chosen because they (1) help to identify the mechanisms and understand the relevant circumstances to these workers experiences and (2) can be read as compatible with a CR position, since it can accommodate the insights of various theoretical positions. This combination of different theoretical resources emphasises different aspects of mechanisms which shed lights on the context of these workers experiences in such a way that enabled us to better explain the actual day-to-day events and patterns of events on the grounds. In order to really understand patterns of events on the ground, we need to look at the literature on women's experiences of work, which will be reviewed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE:
WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE WAGED LABOUR MARKET

3.1 Introduction

As noted in Chapter Two, in the 1970s the global economy entered an era of market deregulation and growing labour market flexibility, in which new technologies, labour control systems and forms of work organisation began to transform the patterns of labour force participation throughout the world (Standing 1989; 1999). Numerous scholars have noted that this global restructuring, particularly the implementation of export-oriented development strategies, has had a profound impact on the working lives of women in developing countries (Afshar and Barrientos 1999; Seguino 2000; Pearson 2000; Wills and Hale 2005). According to Pearson (2004), by the beginning of the twenty-first century, rates of female participation in waged labour had doubled on a worldwide basis, since the arrival of what the economists Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye famously referred to as 'the new international division of labour' (1980) in the late 1970s. This reconfiguration of global patterns of trade has been accompanied by an exponential increase in women's participation in waged employment, referred to as the 'feminisation of labour'. As Standing (1989; 1999) has indicated, this phenomenon has also been accompanied by two other trends in workforce participation, namely a relative decline in the numbers of men in employment, together with the deterioration of general working conditions in jobs within those sectors which were traditionally considered to be male-dominated.

Given this shift in the geography of industry and in global employment trends, it is not surprising then that since the early 1980s a growing body of research has been conducted on this phenomenon of feminisation of labour, specifically in the export-oriented sector in developing countries. As this chapter shows, this research has primarily focused on the implications of this for society in general and for women in particular. As an area for study, the consequences of trade liberalisation and the spread of EPZs across a broad range of developing countries situated in Latin America, Asia and Africa has been of particular interest to feminist scholars within the fields of Economics and Development Studies. More recently, their interest has begun to centre on investigating how global forces of power, such as MNCs, interact with local systems of oppression. They have also raised a number of questions about the ability of this restructuring

model to improve women's status, economic or otherwise, relative to that of men in developing countries.

Against the backdrop of these general trends, this literature review focuses on understanding women's employment in waged labour in the specific context of developing economies. More specifically, this chapter will review literature relating to women's work in EPZs within developing countries since most of the studies were conducted within EPZs. As this review will demonstrate, some of these studies compared women's experience of work in EPZs to other sectors such as export-oriented factories outside EPZs (including electronics factory, furniture and handicrafts, fashion accessories, or commercial agriculture-coffee and tea plantations). Other focused on the private sector (offshore and IT sectors), public administration employment or self-employment. These studies have focused on diverse locations including the Philippines (Chant and McIlwaine 1995); Tijuana (Fussell 2000); Kenya (Karega 2002); Mauritius (Blin 2006); and Madagascar (Glick and Roubaud 2006). However, these studies have not yet look at industries holistically comparing experiences between EPZ and non-EPZs. This chapter will also examine gaps in these earlier studies, particularly those lacking analysis of the relationship between women's experiences in the home and work.

3.2 Women's Work in Developing Economies

Although women's integration into the workforce has been seen as a necessary precondition for their empowerment, the impact of women's paid employment on some key aspects of their lives, including their well-being, has always been a hotly contested issue. Since the early 1980s, intense debate has been generated among scholars with regard to the issue of whether women's employment in developing countries offers them opportunities or is merely a form of exploitation.

Numerous studies have explored the extent to which workforce feminisation and trade liberalisation have contributed to providing positive benefits or generating negative outcomes for female employees in the export-oriented sector (Elson and Pearson 1981; Wolf 1990b; Tiano 1994; Ward and Pyle 1995; Pearson 2000; Beneria 2001; Pyle and Ward 2003; Kabeer 2004; Ward *et al.* 2004; Ahmed 2004; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a; 2004b). This work has focused on assessing and analysing the potential longer-term implications of this trend for females within their specific national contexts. Research using country-specific case studies has investigated

these issues in areas as diverse as the strawberry export agribusiness in Mexico (Arizpe and Aranda 1981), the Taiwanese technology sector (Berik 2000) and RMG production in Sri Lanka (Shaw 2007).

Arguably, much of this research is context specific and focused on studies conducted in EPZs in developing countries. However, some of the more general implications of this research, in particular the exploitation of female workers by capital and patriarchal structures, are of direct relevance in examining the Bangladeshi case studies. Therefore, studies which were conducted in a broad range of developing countries have been analysed in this literature review chapter because in some instances, they explore the use of empirical and analytical methods (Wolf 1990b; Tiano 1994; Wright 2006). In other cases, they identify trends or offer critiques which were considered to have relevance, and which go beyond the original context for the research (Elson and Pearson 1981; Ward and Pyle 1995; Beneria *et al.* 2000; Pyle and Ward 2003).

Researchers have noted that the incorporation of females into the paid workforce of a nation has been viewed in a positive light by government agencies and NGOs, international organisations and those with an interest in Development Studies and related academic disciplines (Sen 1999; Connelly *et al.* 2000). However, early development researchers including Boserup (1970) and Jaquette (1982) were already arguing that women were, in fact, being marginalised by development. They claimed that the replacement of a craft-based industry by modern industrial techniques of production, employing predominantly male labour, had resulted in the marginalisation of women (Beneria 2001), effectively challenging the assumption that modernisation was inherently positive for women.

The modernisation approach to economic development was based on a perception of social change as a linear movement from backwardness to modernity. Specifically, it called for the adoption by developing nations of the technology, institutions, and attitudes existing in the advanced capitalist countries of the West (Beneria and Sen 1981). Modernisation theory incorrectly predicted that development would benefit all segments of the population within societies irrespective of race, class, or gender, and therefore, did not consider women separately as a group (Wilson and Whitmore 2000). Moreover, it was assumed that a modern secular society would automatically improve women's situation by freeing women from the constraints of traditional religious cultures (Rahman 1999).

In her ground-breaking book *Women's Role in Economic Development,* Boserup (1970) provided an overview of women's role in the development process, exploring how industrialisation had altered women's traditional social and productive roles (Mammen and Paxson 2000). She argued that the introduction of modern technology and cash crops benefitted men rather than women by creating a productivity gap between the sexes, with women being relegated to the subsistence sector of food production using traditional methods of cultivation (Boserup 1970). So, the integration of women into the paid workforce was seen as one possible means of redressing this balance.

Paid work has tended to be regarded as a key factor in encouraging the empowerment and emancipation of women within societies generally. More specifically with reference to females in developing nations, achieving paid employment has been actively promoted as an important means of challenging their subordinate status within society and of '*integrating women into the development process*' (Connelly *et al.* 2000). In his book-length study *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen (1999) makes a strong case for the importance of women's paid employment as a key factor, not only in the development process itself, but also in improving their status within both the private and the public sphere. He argues that:

> *Working outside the home and earning an independent income tends to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of a woman in the household and the society. Her contribution to the prosperity of the family is then more visible, and she also has more voice, because of being less dependent on others. Further, outside employment often has useful 'educational' effects, in terms of exposure to the world outside the household, thus making her agency more effective* (Sen 1999: 192).

Sen's arguments, which assert that paid work enhances women's position within the household and society, giving them more of a voice within the family or decreasing their dependency on males, have been echoed in much of the writing on this topic. Research has tended to focus on either woman's role in the domestic or so-called reproductive economy of the home (Kibria 1995, 2001; Kabeer 1997; Unni and Bali 2002; Ansell *et al*. 2015) or in the productive economy represented by the workplace (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a, 2004b; Glick and Roubaud 2006; Hancock 2006).

It is important to note here that a significant number of women employed in the export-oriented sector are engaged in home working, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries of Europe, North America, and Australia (Chen *et al.* 1999; Hale 2000). Home-workers, defined as either dependent subcontract workers or independent own account workers play a significant role to the production of goods in key export industries such as clothing, textiles, shoes, carpets, and even in electronics in many developing countries (Chen *et al* 1999; Mehra and Gammage 1999; Hocking and Wilding 2004). This means that the home is also their place of paid employment. This type of employment can be said to blur what have often been treated as the fixed boundaries between these twin spheres of the reproductive and the productive (Chen *et al.* 1999).

The first published study on the phenomenon of home working in developing economies, recognised as a ground-breaking piece of research in this area, was Maria Mies's *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market.* Published in 1982, Mies's book focused on three groups of female home workers based in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It described in detail the real impact of industrial development on women and the way in which they have been used to produce luxury goods for the Western market. In Mies's view, the emergence of export-oriented production in Narsapur relied on the intersection of social organisation (especially the caste system) and a set of patriarchal ideologies and practices, which together had created a particular structure for exploiting female labour. Mies gave a detailed account of the various participants in the lace-making industry and the differences that existed among them (in terms of caste and religion). She also examined the relationships that connected the lace makers (all female), the agents who organised local production by distributing materials and collecting finished piecework from the home workers (mostly men with some women), and the commercial agents and exporters (exclusively men) who connected the Narsapur cluster to global markets (Bair 2010). In her article exploring how feminist scholarship can bridge the gaps between macro and micro-level analysis, Mohanty refers to Mies's work as a "*demonstration of how to do […] multi-layered contextual analysis to reveal how the particular is often universally significant-without using the universal to erase the particular or positing an unbridgeable gulf between the two terms*" (2002: 501). Although on one level there are many differences between Mies's study which focused only on female home workers within the Indian context, and this research which concentrates on the experiences of women working in the export-oriented RMG industry in Bangladesh. However, a similar

approach using multi-layered contextual analysis is also employed in this study to explore the multiplicity of connections and complex relationships which exist between patterns of patriarchy in productive/reproductive spheres, between Bangladeshi RMG factories and vast multinational corporations, and between paid employment for women and social change, helping to shed light not only on the situation of female RMG workers in Bangladesh but also to highlight broader issues relating to women's experience of employment in the waged labour market.

As argued above, published research on women's employment in the waged labour market in EPZs reflects a range of opinion about the extent to which paid employment might be regarded as either exploitative or emancipatory. This difference of opinion can be illustrated by considering the findings of researchers focusing on financial aspects of women's export-oriented employment. Investigating levels of pay in the RMG sector in Bangladesh, Absar (2001) has suggested that the income of all the women workers interviewed fell below the poverty line, their wages being insufficient to survive given the cost of living in Dhaka. However, Kabeer and Mahmud's (2004b) research focusing on a similar topic contradicts Absar's (2001) findings. They claimed that average monthly wages for these female workers were approximately double the monthly per capita poverty-line income, suggesting that they were able to support at least one other adult or two children with their earnings. Whilst acknowledging that monthly income varied because of overtime earnings in the sector, it never fell below the poverty line.

This discrepancy in the conclusions reached by Absar (2001) and Kabeer and Mahmud (2004b) respectively can possibly be explained by the nature of their studies, their data and research methods. The former took a qualitative approach, relying on a small sample of narratives from 35 women workers whereas the latter was a quantitative survey using data from 1322 women workers and their households. This example illustrates something of the difficulties involved in exploring even seemingly basic questions within this area.

It is worth commenting on the fact that the majority of the studies reviewed here used qualitative data and in the conclusion to his study of female workers in a Sri Lankan EPZ, Hancock (2009: 402) makes a compelling case for employing qualitative rather than quantitative methods, arguing that "*only qualitative data can provide insight into women's lived experiences and the complex ways in which women experience empowerment and/or subordination*". Hancock further suggests that the "*empowerment of women in developing nations occurs at levels and realms invisible to current census and national data*" (2009: 415). He demonstrates this in his

article by considering measures such as the UNDP Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), launched at the World Economic Forum in 2006. According to Hancock (2009) both these measures fail to reflect important elements of women's lived experience, focusing instead on data which is easily collected and quantified, such as the number of female representatives in government.

3.3 Women's Experiences of Work in the Export-oriented Production Workplace

This section focuses particularly on the impact of EPZ work on women's lives but it also considers studies based on export-oriented factories situated outside EPZ, since comparing women's experiences of work in EPZ and non-EPZ RMG factories forms an important element of this thesis. Much existing research has a country- or industry-specific focus adopting a qualitative approach to data collection, but the conclusions they reach have a broader relevance applicable to their counterparts elsewhere. The common themes such as occupational segregation, skills, managerial control, double workload burden that emerged from this broad-ranging literature review are later explored via the Bangladeshi case studies.

In her review article, Bair (2010) traces the shifting emphasis in work by feminist scholars focusing on the globalisation of production. She observes that there has been a general tendency in research trends to change perspectives from the macroeconomic to the microeconomic level, leading to a focus on exploring the "*intersection of local contexts and global dynamics*" (2010: 211). As noted previously, Mies's study (1982) of Indian lace makers and a contemporaneous study of *maquiladoras* in northern Mexico by Fernandez-Kelly (1983) have been identified as outstanding examples of research which reveals the nature of this local/global interaction. In her concluding observations, Bair (2010) stresses that country- and sector-specific case studies make an important contribution to this research field because they allow us to understand the particular ways in which gendered production regimes differ between cultures and locations. She also emphasises the crucial importance of identifying similarities between studies dealing with diverse locations on the global assembly line, calling on researchers to account for both similarities and differences.

A significant quantity of the initial research by feminist academics on the export-oriented sector focused on the Mexican *maquiladoras*, which were one of the earliest examples of an export-oriented manufacturing assembly line. *Maquiladoras* appeared mainly in low-wage Mexican

towns and cities situated in areas lying close to the US border. In the 1980s the American and Mexican governments initiated a trade agreement which allowed components for everything from batteries, IV tubes, textiles, electronics equipment to agricultural machinery to be imported free from duties or tariffs into Mexico, assembled, processed and/or manufactured there and then finally exported back duty-free as finished consumer goods for sale in the US or to the country from which the raw materials originated (Bair 2010). When the *maquiladoras* first appeared, nearly 80 per cent of the operatives employed there were women (Fussell, 2000).

One of the most influential of these studies was Melissa W. Wright's (2006) book, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*, in which she explores the ideologies and institutions that help to shape women's experience of employment in the Third World factories of contemporary MNCs based in Latin America and Asia. Wright's fieldwork covered diverse geographical regions, ranging from the *maquiladoras* of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua State, close to the US border in northern Mexico, to the assembly lines of Hong Kong and Guangdong Province, in southern China. In particular, she discusses the concept of female disposability in the context of both Mexican and Chinese subsidiaries of MNCs. Many of the issues which arise from her work reflect broader patterns of exploitation experienced by female workers in other societies and industries. In the following sections, a thematic approach has been used to explore how export-oriented work impacts on women's lives.

3.3.1 New Forms of Gender Subordination and Segregation in the Workplace

In their review article considering research on women's employment in Third World export manufacturing, Elson and Pearson (1981) asserted that factory work tends to affect gender subordination in three ways: intensifying its existing forms, decomposing these existing forms, and recomposing new forms. Other researchers have explored a number of key areas relating to how new forms of gender inequality arise through EPZ work, one of these being gender segregation in the workplace (Wright 2006; Hancock 2006).

Wright (2006), for example, was particularly interested in the physical segregation of males and females within Chinese factories, illustrating how this form of gender segregation was used by managers there as a tool for controlling the female labour force. According to Wright (2006: 33) this gender segregation reveals "*the centrality of sex difference to the organisation of production and of labour*". The managers imposed strict prohibitions on women's mobility and enforced

gender segregation throughout the factories and in the dormitories where they were housed, enabling them to monitor the most intimate details of their female workers' lives.

This case of workplace segregation highlighted by Wright in the Chinese context is particularly interesting since it shows how new forms of gender subordination based on older patriarchal patterns of authority can arise in the workplace. Wright (2006: 17) demonstrates that in the Chinese electronic manufacturing industry "*managers construct local identities around conceptions of corporate kinship that recreate capitalist relations of production and the disposable labour force so crucial to its operation*". She refers to this relationship as one between Factory Fathers and Disposable Daughters with the managers employing traditional 'Chinese daughters', who need strong patriarchal guidance from their 'factory fathers' or managers. Since the factory management are invariably male, they monitor multiple aspects of the integrity of their 'daughters' as would be the case in the traditional Chinese household. Wright (2006: 39) quotes one of the managers, Stephan Chan, who explained: "*We are like their parents, we know everything about them, and it is for their own good*".

However, Chinese managers justify their parental duties using draconian disciplinary measures for controlling their labour force as well as invasive procedures for monitoring female worker mobility and sexuality. These male managers tended to diagnose production problems as the result of "*the reproductive drives and cycles internal to their workers' bodies*" (Wright 2006: 36) which was in turn seen as having a direct link to their status as either good or bad daughters. Thus female workers were subjected to "*the utmost discipline and surveillance in the name of parental duty and of quality control*" (Wright 2006: 41). Thus, Chinese EPZ women experienced new forms of gender subordination beyond their families, pointing to what Elson and Pearson termed the recomposition of patriarchal control on women.

It should be noted that Wright (2006) also observed the formation of other hierarchies in the *maquiladoras,* reflected in the division between 'lesser developed' Mexican employees and 'more developed' US and European employees. Wright notes how surveillance is all-pervasive aspect of life for *maquiladora* workers, with female Mexican assembly-line workers being supervised by male Mexican supervisors who are, in turn, under surveillance from their American or European managers. Sexual behaviour was monitored by periodic pregnancy tests, regular medical examinations and check-ups for regulating workers' menstrual cycles.

Salzinger's[16] (2000) studies in Mexican context explored other mechanism, i.e. supervisorial sexual attention to ensure control of labour and of production itself. In the maquiladora Salzinger studied women were constituted as desirable objects and male managers as desiring subjects, with sexual objectification being part and parcel of the hiring process. Management preferred their female workforce to be slim, wear heels and short skirts, and to be concerned about their appearance (Salzinger 1997; 2000; 2001). The enactment of managerial practices based on men obsessively watching young women and using slightly sexualised discourse around female workers created a sexually charged atmosphere, in which flirtation and sexual competition become the currency through which shop floor power relations were fought over and fixed (Salzinger 2000).

Hancock's (2006) study in Sri Lankan EPZs is another example which articulates that women face new forms of gender inequality and subordination as a result of their roles as 'factory women'. Hancock reported that although women are allowed to work in the factory, they feel completely controlled by in-laws and their husbands. In this case, some existing forms of gender subordination have been intensified by in-laws and husbands who control women's salary and every decision she takes.

Wrights concludes her analysis of the Chinese assembly-line worker experience by explaining why narratives of Factory Fathers and Dutiful Daughters work so well within this context since they draw on pre-existing ideas regarding gender roles and patriarchy:

> *These narratives both justify their invasive managerial techniques as well as function as smokescreens for corporate policies that dismiss workers who become injured, ill, or pregnant during their tenure. These discourses that set the female labourers apart from their managers on the basis of gender while establishing a common ground between them on the basis of the Chinese family are effective technologies for producing the materiality of an exploitable labourer: a young woman worker who must be patrolled for her own good. And these new managers emerge, in her contract, as the good father who can take*

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[16] Leslie Salzinger has published extensively in the area of gender and sexuality, studying female maquiladora workers in Mexico, from 1997 onwards. See, for example, From High Heels to Swathed Bodies: Gendered Meanings under Production in Mexico's Export-Processing Industry. *Feminist Studies.* 23 (3) 1997, pp. 549-574; Manufacturing sexual subjects: 'Harassment', desire and discipline on a Maquiladora shopfloor. *Ethnography.* 1(1) 2000, pp. 67-92 and Making Fantasies Real: Producing Women and Men on the Maquiladora Shop Floor. *NACLA Report on the Americas.* **34** (5) 2001, pp. 13-19.

care of the simultaneously innocent and troublesome young daughter (Wright 2006: 43-44).

This research was particularly interested in exploring the idea that women's paid employment in both EPZ and non-EPZ RMG factories might intensify existing forms of gender subordination or create new forms of inequality and considered this issue in detail using the Bangladeshi case studies.

Another form of gender segregation in the workplace relates to the differential treatment of male and female workers in terms of the sectors in which they work and their respective career trajectories. Bair notes that many of the early studies undertaken by feminist researchers attempted to understand the factors which helped to explain why employers preferred to hire a female work force, seeking answers to the question: "Why are, or why are women believed to be, more docile, more dexterous, and cheaper than men?" (Bair 2010: 211). Whilst it could be argued that women apparently possess a competitive advantage due to the feminisation of the labour force, research has shown that, ironically, to a large extent this advantage stems from negative stereotypical perceptions of females relating to their character, abilities and attributes (Blin 2006). Anker (1998) has identified a number of common stereotypes about women, showing how these are used to keep them in low-paid, low-status jobs to reinforce the subordination. Thus, for example, women are believed, to have 'nimble fingers', to be more docile, to be more willing to take orders, to accept lower wages and to do boring, repetitive jobs on assembly lines (Elson and Pearson 1981). When females are concentrated in certain industries within EPZ they are often employed on a part-time basis, in unskilled or semi-skilled areas (Kothari 1996) meaning that they earn less than their male counterparts, who work in jobs classed as 'skilled'.

Eviota (1992:125) claims that due to the fact that "*industry requires specific groups of women because of their submissiveness, docility and other perceived gender traits, male-dominant and authoritarian structures are reinforced*". She further suggests that young women are confronted with specific definitions of what masculinity and femininity are within the workplace, which sex is superior in skill and confidence, and which has authority and the power to discipline. These definitions then shape women's attitudes and expectations and institutionalise gender differences.

That such gendered ideologies and norms are often used to justify occupational segregation is reflected in Wright's (2006) discussion of the division of labour within the *maquiladoras* where jobs are labelled as skilled (requiring a trained worker) or unskilled (requiring no training). She illustrates this recourse to stereotypes by citing the attempt by Miguel, one of the *maquiladora* managers, to account for the division of labour in the factory: "*Women in assembly and men in supervision. It's how it is in Mexico*" (Wright 2006: 61).

Another study conducted by Chant and McIlwaine (1995) in one of the EPZs in the Philippines, notes that men who are employed as production workers in electronic or clothing manufacturing mainly engage in more mechanised aspects of production as well as undertaking the heavier tasks in packing and warehousing because they are thought to be 'stronger' and more adept at heavy and/or technical jobs. Stereotypical thinking of this kind leaves female workers crowded into a fairly narrow range of occupations within the export sector where they tend to find themselves at the lower end of occupational hierarchies when viewed in terms of salary, status or possibilities for promotion (Blin 2006).

Wright (2006:34) also recorded other differences between the treatment of male and female workers in the factory installations, observing that "*women workers are singled out for particularly severe policies regarding their behaviour, social activities, and sexuality*" whilst their male counterparts were not subjected to the same scrutiny. She discovered it was common for women to face prohibitions on talking, walking, and leaving the compound without permission, as well as restrictions regarding pregnancy, marriage, or engagement, all of which were considered as acceptable grounds for dismissal. In the Philippines Bataan EPZs women are forced to remain single if they wish to keep their jobs (Shivanath 1982 cited in Chant and McIlwaine 1995:25).

It has been widely noted that the jobs for female workers in EPZ are unstable in nature and women can be easily dismissed on any of the above grounds and when it is necessary to retrench the labour force women in their mid- to late twenties are dismissed first (Chant and McIlwaine 1995). Similarly, in Wright's (2006) study conducted in the Chinese electronic industry, the managers commented that worn-out workers suffering from illness and injuries are prone to making more mistakes. Therefore, as soon as they are past their prime they need to be replaced by new workers who are regarded as more valuable to the company.

3.3.2 Skills in the Workplace

With regard to skills, differing views were presented by researchers. After reviewing work on gender, industrialisation, transnational corporations and development, Ward and Pyle (1995) claimed that women workers in export-oriented manufacturing employment gain no marketable skills. Conversely, using stakeholder perspectives,[17] Hancock and Edirisinghe's (2012) study based on Sri-Lankan EPZs showed that women have become empowered as a consequence of their access to new knowledge and skills. Stakeholders, such as the Department of Labour, trade unions, NGOs and factories, conduct training programmes in dress-making, sewing, cookery, and making accessories, in the hope that these women can become self-employed in their own enterprises when they return to their villages. Moreover, women benefit from the skills they develop on the job, such as the ability to work as a team, leadership qualities, organisational and problem-solving skills. Some of the same stakeholders were concerned that women produce only part of a garment in the factory, meaning they do not acquire the skills required to make a full garment and are not adequately equipped to access other sewing-related jobs, thus, not gaining any transferable skills. Eviota (1992:125) claims that "*this type of paid work provides no prospects for alternative employment when the allowed age of productivity is past, and so women are pushed back into the traditional hope of home and marriage*".

Wright (2006) analyses how, on the assembly lines of a Mexican television factory, the hierarchical difference between the skilled mainly male supervisors and the unskilled/untrainable female workers is maintained by various techniques and discourses, including surveillance.[18] From her interactions with the managers, she observed that male workers gain training and promotions which enable them to achieve positions further up the chain of command, with paid vacations, a pension plan, and other benefits. Women were barred from entering upon this pathway, meaning they remained in the least skilled positions, with least pay, and least authority. Moreover, managers assumed that assembly work was women's work because they performed better due to their small hands and were not required to develop any

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[17] Stakeholders included government and semi-government officials, factory managers, industry and trade union representatives and officials from NGOs. Some 59% of these stakeholders were women.

[18] In her analysis Wright (2006) utilises the central notion of the panopticon gaze from French philosopher Michel Foucault and his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995). In his study of the mechanisms of power, Foucault examines how surveillance can be used for disciplinary purposes in all manner of institutions including the control of employees in the workplace, making overt links between the growth of the capitalist economy and disciplinary power.

skills. As a result, their value as workers decreases over time as they are not gaining any skills whilst physically loses their abilities. As Wright explains, the male worker "*maintains his value as he changes and develops in a variety of ways*" whilst his female counterpart "*is stuck in the endless loop of her decline*" (2006: 74). In addition, when women begin to recognise the lack of opportunities and training, this proves demotivating.

Gender segregation was explored in detail in this thesis, with particular attention being paid to whether managers in Bangladeshi RMG factories employed any form of gender segregation and if so, how this was used and, perhaps more importantly, how this was justified by management. This review has also highlighted the importance of skill development in the workplace and the extent to which gender stereotyping can account for the labelling of certain activities and roles as masculine or feminine. Thus female interviewees were asked about the skills they thought they had acquired in the workplace, the extent to which these were valued and whether they perceived these to be transferable. They were also asked to reflect on their career development and any constraints they faced in making progress.

3.3.3 Politicisation and the Workplace

As noted previously, export-oriented production tends to be characterised by a female workforce, many of whom are migrant women, young, single, childless and with only a basic level of education (Fussell 2000). However, the composition of this group was found to be more varied in some of the more established EPZ industries which have seen a shift in the workforce from "*working daughters to working mothers*" (Tiano 1994: 27). Tiano (1994) suggests that this is due to the fact that employers preferred the latter group, assuming that when married women with children become the primary wage earners in a household, they tend to be more worried about losing their jobs. Therefore, they are less likely to become involved in any form of workforce resistance, in particular protests organised by unions. This is a good example of how women working in the same situation may have different priorities depending on their own particular circumstances, reflecting the need to consider factors affecting females, a point stressed by Walby (1996a).

The shift to employing working mothers during the 1990s, and their lack of involvement in workforce resistance and trade unions, highlights an important aspect of women's experience of employment in both EPZ and non-EPZ factories and in the subcontracted homeworkers' sectors.

If female workers do attempt to assert their rights in the workplace, they can encounter very significant risks such as losing their jobs or contracts if factory owners or contractors find out that they have joined any organisation supporting workers' rights. A similar reluctance to unionise has been recorded amongst female workers by researchers working in the Philippines (Chant and McIlwaine 1995; Pineda Ofreneo *et al.* 2002), India (Unni and Bali 2002)[19], Sri Lanka (Shaw 2007), Mauritius (Kothari 1996), and Kenya (Karega 2002).

In their survey of gender and trade in East African countries, Musonda and Kessy (n.d.) observed that, even in sectors where trade unions are traditionally relatively strong, women are often underrepresented in membership numbers and leadership roles. They discovered that this was not usually the result of a lack of interest on the part of female workers, but because they had more limited time to participate than their male counterparts due to their other commitments within the domestic economy. As a consequence, gender-related issues in the workplace including sexual harassment and pay inequality were too often ignored. In their analysis of a Kenyan case study, Musonda and Kessy (n.d.: 5) found that the ratio of female to male members in unions at the time of writing was 3:7, and that at decision-making levels, women occupied only 11.5 per cent of union leadership roles.

In order to understand the framework for employment relations in the RMG sector in Bangladesh, it is helpful to know something of the recent history of the trade union movement. Following Bangladesh's independence, for most of the period 1972-1990, trade union activities and the right to strike, lockout, collective bargaining and freedom of association were banned by the then military regime's policies (Mondal 1992:3 cited in Dannecker 2002:13). In 1991, when Bangladesh moved from military rule to a fragile and somewhat dysfunctional democracy, trade union activities were once more allowed (Kabeer 2004). But during the emergency in 2007-2008 that lasted for 23 months, trade unions and collective bargaining were again prohibited. In 2013, the government finally allowed RMG workers to form trade unions without prior permission from factory owners, a major concession to campaigners lobbying for widespread reforms to the industry following the Rana Plaza collapse (Burke 2013).

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[19] In their study of the Indian RMG sector, Unni and Bali (2002) report the success of SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) with home-based female workers but note that their counterparts in the small-factory sector were afraid to unionise because when factory owners or contractors find out that women have joined any organisation supporting workers' rights, they usually receive no further work.

However, there is still widespread reluctance to accept the trade union movement which has always been perceived as highly politicised and characterised by corruption, nepotism, a lack of democratic culture, and domination by bureaucracy (Rahman and Langford 2012). Trade unions in Bangladesh are affiliated to different political parties and are perceived to represent their interests rather than those of workers; they are not generally thought of as being concerned with the establishment of sound employer-employee relations (Dannecker 2002). Kabeer (2004) also notes that trade unions have largely failed to take the concerns of women workers seriously. Given these commonly held perceptions, it is not surprising that trade unionism has gained a very negative image among urban, educated citizens and civil society groups which also enables employers to justify their resistance to labour unionisation (Rahman and Langford 2012).

More recent research focusing on the gendered organisation of transnational production has become increasingly concerned with exploring issues of subjectivity and agency. More specifically, it has centred on exploring how such female workers seek within their own context "*to negotiate, and frequently find creative ways to resist, their encounters with gendered production regimes*" (Bair 2010: 216). In this study, interviewees were asked to comment on the status and role of trade unions within their workplace. Participants were also asked to comment on forms of resistance that female workers had engaged in to obtain their rights.

3.4 The Broader Impact of Work for Women

Bair (2010) has noted that research on the feminisation of employment in the export-oriented sector within developing countries has also explored how this kind of work impacts on the female employees themselves, their families and also, more broadly, on the communities in which they live. In this context the key question which these researchers pose is: "To what extent does the incorporation of women into the waged labour force have the potential to undermine traditional gender roles and the subordination of women?" (Bair 2010: 211). When women take up paid employment, research has shown that this can have a number of significant effects on many different aspects of their lives, depending on the roles they are expected to play, within their own family, their community and society in general. Some of the broader implications of entering paid employment are examined here.

3.4.1 Paid Work, Domestic Gender Relations and Power

Authors who have studied women's experiences of work by looking at the effect that paid employment has on women's domestic gender relations and domestic power within the family have reached different conclusions on these issues (Kibria 1995; Beek 2001; Meyer 2006; Hancock and Edrisinghe 2012). Meyer (2006), reviewing research on this topic, concluded that paid work provides women with financial independence from men and increases their sense of self-worth as well as class consciousness, leading to more equitable patterns of resource sharing and decision making. Other authors such as Chant and McIlwaine (1995) argue that women's earnings in the Philippine EPZ remain too low to allow them to assert themselves as individuals fully independent of husbands or fathers. Similarly, Ong's study (1987:198) which focused on the Telok Free Trade Zone in Malaysia, noted that "although rural women sought in factory employment a source of independent wealth, in practice their low wages, the unavoidable claims of their families, and insecurity of employment did not provide a sufficient basis for economic independence". However, in her work on export factory workers in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Safa (1990) concluded that employment has offered these women an important new means of contributing to family income, which in turn may help to challenge traditional patterns of patriarchal authority and lead to more egalitarian household structures.

Wolf's (1990b) research in Java, Indonesia, articulates the super-exploitation hypothesis, since she found that although factory work provides women with financial resources these were not adequate enough to even meet the subsistence needs of one person, with parents partly subsidising their daughters for their economic wellbeing. However, Hancock and Edirisinghe's (2006; 2012) research on a Sri Lankan EPZs found that female workers were financially supporting their parents and family members, which is a clear indication that women were not incurring debts simply as result of working. Their study found that women have more economic power within families where wives are stable income earners and husbands are engaged in casual work. Thus, economic power and social exposure enables these women to participate more in decision making process in their homes.

As previously noted, research on Bangladeshi women illustrates the diversity of opinion on this subject area. Kibria (1995) found that a majority of the interviewed women workers viewed their employment in positive terms since they felt it had enhanced their sense of self-esteem and worth in the household. She found that women's ability to control their incomes varies, with a

significant number of young unmarried workers exercising full control over their wages. Other women in the sample, particularly working-class women, stated that they relinquished wage control to men and did not associate their waged work with an enhanced ability to assert more power in family decision making processes. Similarly, income control is not a guarantee of greater female power for women, as highlighted by the experiences of the lower-middle class women. She concluded that Bangladeshi women's ability to control their income does not necessarily mean that they have been emancipated from traditional roles or religious norms.

Kabeer (1997; 2004), however, reports the positive impact of employment on Bangladeshi women, arguing that they are perceived to be earning members of the household and their ability to earn a steady income has enabled some to gain control over their earnings. They have been given a greater voice in household decision making, shifting the balance of power within the family. Fernandez-Kelly's (1983) research in a Mexican context found that, since women hand over their wages to family elders, their work often failed to increase their financial independence. Employment did not increase their domestic power, since they still typically submit to male authority. However, in a later study, Lim (1997) argued that, the financial rewards from the jobs available in multinational and local export factories were useful, allowing women to increase their incomes and consumption levels. She also noted that *maquiladora* work brought them a number of other positive benefits of a non-financial kind. Employment gave them a valid reason for leaving the confines of the home. It also allowed them to delay marriage and childbearing, to improve their mobility, and, in general terms, to expand their individual choices. In this sense, Lim argued, paid employment provided Mexican females with at least partial liberation from the confines and dictates of the traditional patriarchal gender relations operating within society in Mexico, permitting them to exercise a degree of personal independence. Lim's study encouraged other researchers to explore the gendered impact of paid employment outside the home on women's status both within the domestic sphere, including intra-family relations, and more generally within the society in question.

Lim made an important contribution to the bridging of the gap between feminist development researchers and development economists with her work in this area. She challenged feminist scholars to incorporate quantitative methodologies into their work in this area. Taking up Lim's challenge, a decade later Fussell (2000) conducted a multivariate comparative statistical analysis which focused on the Mexican state of Tijuana, which has the highest concentration of

maquiladoras. Fussell compared the wages and length of time in employment of women working in the *maquiladoras* in Tijuana and other women who worked there in commerce and services or were self-employed.

Although Standing (1999) argued that jobs in these kinds of industries offer women only limited economic independence, since the wages which they pay are not sufficient to fully support oneself or one's dependents and offer little hope of advancement, Fussell's findings highlighted the fact that paid employment may serve a number of functions for women, not all of them necessarily of a purely economic nature. She identified three principal reasons why female workers might choose to accept the low wages paid for working in the *maquiladoras*. Inevitably, Fussell concluded that for many workers this employment was an absolute financial necessity due to what she refers to as '*economic distress'* (2000: 60). Other women in the sample were expected to play the role of additional household earners in families with limited economic resources, contributing their *maquiladora* income to either ensure family survival and/or to assist with plans to achieve upward mobility, for example funding education for younger siblings. Some other women believed the fact that employment can bring them personal autonomy.

3.4.2 Female Workers and the Double-Workload Burden

When women take up employment in an EPZ they often find that the division of labour within their household continues to remain rigidly divided along traditional gender lines and thereby become burdened with both productive and reproductive responsibilities (Unni and Bali 2002; Blin 2006). Focusing on working women in the labour-intensive textile and clothing industry in Mauritius, Blin (2006: 21) argues that women working in the EPZ there experienced the "*worst combination of situations*" because when they enter the productive economy they still remain responsible for the reproductive economy and thus often encounter a double-workload scenario. Blin uses the term *care economy* to refer to all the labour (usually unpaid) that women typically undertake in order to ensure that household members not only survive but can also ideally thrive. Domestic work and the care of children is predominantly the responsibility of women in most societies and not only are women not paid for this, but it constrains their participation in labour markets and entrepreneurship. It should be noted that Mauritius remains a male-dominated patriarchal society where gender roles are clearly defined, with men being the main breadwinners and women the main provider of caring activities (Burn 1996). Blin (2006) notes

that women have long working hours and little available assistance in the household economy due to gender role rigidity and male self-exclusion from participation in the household economy, including the most labour-intensive household chore: food production and preparation. From their interactions with subcontracted women workers in the RMG industry in India, Unni and Bali (2002) found that this work had not done anything to change gender roles for most women as the double work-load burden continued. Women claimed to not get any support from men within the household and noted they did not really expect this to change in the traditional society in near future.

This aspect of double-workload burden, which is primarily reinforced by the long hours of working within the factories, makes women's experiences worse. A number of studies have noted that EPZ employment has meant longer, more intensive working hours for female workers in factories in, for example, Mauritius (Blin 2006), Madagascar (Glick and Roubaud 2006), Sri Lanka (Hancock 2006) and China (Wright 2006; Smith and Pun 2006).

Blin's study (2006) of a sample of females working in the Mauritian EPZ indicated that they typically spent an average of 51 hours per week in the factory, in addition to 3.5 hours per weekday spent on household-related tasks and a combined average of 25 hours on Saturdays and Sundays accounted for in a similar way.

Similarly, Glick and Roubaud's (2006) study on the *Zone Franche* (or Free-Trade Zone) in Madagascar found that women had to work much longer hours than their counterparts in non-EPZ jobs, an estimated difference of 40 hours a month in comparison to non-EPZ private sector employment and 60 hours in comparison to public administration employment. Another Mauritian study by Burn (1996) found that some 60 per cent of working women reported having less than 30 minutes of leisure time on weekdays, as compared to 41 per cent of men. Moreover, long hours of work in the factory combined with household responsibilities often led to sustained bouts of intense exertion.

It is important to mention in this context that in Marx's theory of the working day, he explained that the lengthening of the working day is one of the measures used by capitalists to exploit their workers and to help in the creation of 'absolute' surplus value (see Custers 1997). As this research attempts to explore capitalist exploitation of women particularly by managers, owners and in general by MNCs, this issue of long working hours was considered a particularly

important aspect of this research and female interviewees were asked about their experience within their families in terms of their dual-burden and household support.

3.4.3 Working Women, Health and Well-being

For women, aspects of EPZ waged labour employment, including the double-workload burden and long working hours, can interfere with their responsibilities as mothers or potential mothers, as well as having possibly long-term negative consequences for health (Glick and Roubaud 2006). Based on case studies carried out across a wide range of geographical locations, multiple authors have commented on the negative implications of EPZ work for women's health, in places from Mexico (Tiano 1994); to the Philippines (Chant and McIlwaine 1995); and Mauritius (Blin 2006); to Sri-Lanka (Hancock 2006; Hancock and Edirisinghe 2012) and China (Wright 2006; Siu 2015).

Blin's (2006) health survey of the Mauritian textile and clothing industry reveals the strain felt by women in the productive economy, with 83 per cent of those interviewed saying that they encountered health problems directly because of their work, with symptoms including backache, headache, and fatigue. Similarly, Wright's study (2006) of the Chinese electronic industry also illustrates that, as workers experience long hours of repetitive work, they commonly experience injuries from repetitive stress, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, shoulder and back pains and eyestrain. Moreover, Chant and McIlwaine's study (1995) of workers in the RMG and electronics industry in the Philippines, noted that women complain of kidney and urinary tract infections as a result of only being allowed to use toilet facilities at scheduled times. When women are not allowed off the assembly line for four hours at a time in order to achieve high production quotas, menstrual complications can also become a major problem. Although this research was not specifically focused on this aspect of women's work experience, interviewees were asked about any negative consequences of long working hours in Bangladeshi RMG factories.

Working conditions are often unregulated in EPZs. As noted earlier (section 3.3.3), unionisation is often frowned upon by management or even banned. In the few places where regulation or codes of conduct exist to protect women from sexual exploitation and abuse in the workplace these are not usually followed or enforced (Musonda and Kessy, n.d.: 1). Studies in various national contexts have revealed that women face sexual harassment in the workplace (Karega

2002-Kenya; Root 2008-Malaysia; Jordal *et al.* 2013-Sri Lanka; Locke and Hoang 2014-Vietnam). A 2002 report produced by Karega on behalf of the International Labour Rights Fund focused on violence against women in the Kenyan EPZ and discovered that acts of sexual violence and intimidation were routinely committed by males in the workplace against women. Over 90 per cent of the 400 Kenyan females who responded to Karega's survey said they had experienced or observed sexual abuse in the workplace (Karega 2002). When questioned, some 70 per cent of men in the same workplace environments viewed sexual harassment of their female co-workers as '*normal and natural*' behaviour (Karega 2002:1). Karega's workplace research concluded that sexual harassment can have a negative impact on the psychological and economic well-being of women, and on their familial stability.

Moreover, Karega (2002) found numerous examples of women who had left their jobs because of the levels of sexual abuse and harassment they faced in their workplace environment, but some found themselves having to return because there was a lack of alternative employment. In addition, women perceived that management was comprised of men who also harass them whenever the opportunity arises.

Other studies noted that although women face sexual harassment in the workplace, but feel unable to speak out due to the social stigma which is still attached to factory work. Female factory workers who have been sexually harassed are often made to feel that they themselves are at fault and their credibility is questioned (Tatlow 2013; The Society for Labour and Development 2015). As part of this research, women were asked how secure they felt while working on factory premises, whether they have faced any kind of physical harassment or sexual violence inside or outside the factories, and how are they seen by people.

3.4.4 Female Workers and Social Unease

Bair (2010) notes that an early study by Fernández-Kelly (1983) raised issues about the social impact of *maquiladora* work which is relevant to other societies. Fernández-Kelly observed that, during the time she was conducting her research in 1978-79, there were two widely held views in Mexican society about the potential impact of feminisation of employment. On the one hand, some thought that paid employment in the *maquiladoras* would be bound to act as "*a modernising force, ushering in a new era for the Mexican woman*" who would soon find herself "*liberated from the heavy hand of patriarchal authority and attendant gender subordination*"

(Bair 2010: 212). On the other hand, a significant proportion of Mexicans were of the opinion that this feminised workforce would lead to the spread of social disorder, increased immorality and sexual promiscuity (Bair 2010).

The theme of women in paid employment outside the home representing a threat to social order is one which reoccurs in studies from a range of national contexts. It was evident in research that problems arise when women lose their jobs as Ward *et al.* (2004) found in examining women's work in Bangladeshi RMG factories, because this forces at least some of them to migrate to other countries or into the informal sector, taking jobs in domestic service, or into sex work.

It has been also observed in different studies that new gender identities have arisen for women from EPZ work. Rural women migrating to urban areas for factory employment are often accused of inappropriate behaviour and stigmatised socially, with studies revealing similar findings in Malaysia (Ong 2010), Thailand (Mills 2000), Sri Lanka (Jordal *et al.* 2013) and Vietnam (Locke and Hoang 2014). Some Sri Lankan studies conducted by Attanapola (2003), Hewamanne (2003), and Hancock (2006; 2012) claimed that EPZs or 'zones' have been labelled with derogatory labels such as 'whore zone' in national discourse. All three authors have argued that factory work has disempowered women in the sense that they are not accepted by the society which perceives them to be immoral. Moreover female workers themselves feel ashamed to say that they are RMG workers and hide their identity as it is considered to be degrading, especially when they are looking for a marriage partner, attending a medical clinic or talking to people from their village community. Researching Bangladeshi women, Kabeer (2004) found that factory work has damaged the sexual reputation of workers, making them considerably less eligible for marriage (Ahmed 2004).

In addition, female workers are particularly vulnerable in those societies where double standards exist regarding male and female sexuality. In Vietnam, for example, the fact that rural men indulge in pre-marital and extramarital sex is condoned on the grounds that men have 'natural urges' which must be fulfilled for healthy physical functioning (as long as this does not impact on their families) (Nguyen *et al.* 2011). However, women who engage in pre-marital sex face abandonment by boyfriends or future husbands may need abortions after unwanted pregnancies or may find themselves socially excluded (Jordal *et al.* 2013; Locke and Hoang 2014).

Wolf's (1990b) research in Java, Indonesia, however, showed that factory work improved women's marriageability due to them gaining a reputation as hard working, diligent, or having the ability to acquire consumer goods and savings which was considered a productive investment for these women in the future. This can be viewed as being relevant to the situation in Bangladesh where the patriarchal system of *purdah* engenders a powerful element of patriarchal control over women, forcing them to depend on men by denying them direct access to income-earning opportunities (Cain *et al.* 1979). In her analysis of media coverage of gendered violence carried out on *maquiladora* workers in Mexico, Pantaleo (2010: 351) explains the effect of patriarchal beliefs on gender roles in Mexican society:

> *Through their roles as mothers and wives, women are expected to centre their lives on taking care of their family and to not be involved in paid labour [...].The symbolism associated with the female role requires that women become self-sacrificing martyrs who accept violence and abuse from men because of their inferiority to them.*

The next section reviews literature on gender relations in Bangladeshi society in order to understand women's position there.

3.5 Gender Relations in Bangladeshi Society

Culturally, Bangladesh is a relatively homogeneous society, with 90 percent of the population being Muslim, the remainder Hindu, Christian, or Buddhist (Blanchet 1986). Various religious/cultural practices have crossed over between communities, for example, the adoption of dowry among Muslims (Rozario 1992). In local communities, religion often takes on syncretic forms meaning that localised cultural forms become integrated into the social practice of religion (Kabeer 1991).

Religion and religious ideas are part of a general cultural context and one which is manifest in practices, institutions, and organisations. In her article on theorising patriarchy, Chowdhury (2009) argues that patriarchy is maintained in the Bangladeshi family through the misinterpretation of religion, the patriarchal view of Islam being: Man is the breadwinner and woman is the servant of men. In her opinion, this misinterpretation of Islamic beliefs allows men to control and exploit women despite the fact that marriage in Islam should be based on mutual peace, love, and compassion, not just satisfying men's needs. The Qu'ran states that: "*The*

believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another" (9:71). Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister of Pakistan and first woman to lead the government of a Muslim country wrote: "*We learned at an early age that it was men's interpretation of our religion that restricted women's opportunities, not our religion itself*" (1988:31).

Bangladeshi society can be seen as a typical example of patriarchy. Within the household and through local decision-making and legal bodies, men exercise control over women's labour, their sexuality, their choice of marriage partner, their access to labour, their income and assets. Women have little say in decision making in the household, workplace or community. Their access to social, economic, political and legal institutions is mediated by men, who they are dependent on throughout their lives, whether fathers, husbands or sons. Men's authority over women is reinforced by pervasive gender-based violence (Baden *et al.* 1994).

The institution of *purdah* (female seclusion) is also widely misinterpreted in the traditional Bangladeshi family system where it is linked to religious sensibilities in order to control women. Kibria (1995: 293) explains that "*while the outward symbol of purdah is the veil or curtain, it functions as a system of social control that emphasises the separation of women from men and the seclusion of women from the world outside the home*". *Purdah* also defines socially appropriate behaviour for women, expecting them to be modest, submissive, and dependent on men.

All Bangladeshi women experience patriarchal relations but their lived experiences and interests are strongly differentiated by class, education and location. For example, in terms of class, increasing poverty and landlessness have propelled some poorer rural women into activities to increase household income, leading to social opprobrium and their loss of status, because this involves breaking *purdah* whereas household prosperity enables men to keep their women in *Purdah,* claiming social credit. *Purdah* ties the protection of family honour to its ability to enforce seclusion of its women (Cain *et al.* 1979; Oommen 2005), and to control female sexuality and virtue by premarital chastity and post-marital fidelity (Baden *et al.* 1994). Association between unmarried male and female adults is not permissible in Bangladeshi society, as elsewhere in the Muslim world.

Purdah produces a gendered segregation of spheres and division of labour in society with women confined to the domestic responsibilities within the home space with limited rights. Men,

on the other hand, specialise in those economic activities carried out in public spaces, such as trading and other forms of marketplace work (Cain *et al.* 1979). Dominant patriarchal ideology has established male superiority as the 'norm' or natural order of things. Men enjoy greater power and authority simply because they are male. In Bangladeshi society, traditionally women's functions are to give birth, nurse and raise their children and manage the household chores, whilst they are relatively powerless in the public sphere. Patriarchal ideology justifies inequality as the 'norm' (Schuler *et al.* cited in Sultana 2010a: 123).

As mentioned earlier, strict patriarchal authority structures are adhered to within the family (Chowdhury 2009). 'Ideal women' possess the qualities of obedience, endurance, selflessness, and motherliness. They bear and rear children, and maintain bodily purity by behaving and dressing in a particular way, traditional, docile, participating in rather than challenging nation's culture and traditions. Those who fall short of the 'ideal' are classed as 'abnormal', 'deviant', lacking 'appropriate behaviour', even 'perverted' (Azim 2010; Ali 2012).

Marriage is an important social institution in Bangladesh and women depend on male household members to find suitable spouses and arrange their wedding. In the patrilocal and patrilineal kinship system in Bangladesh, extended families have traditionally resided and worked together. Kandiyoti (2002) notes that in classic patriarchy, daughters are married off at a very early age and move to another household where their father-in-law is the family head. In their in-laws' homes, they are under the control of all the men and, at the same time, they are also subordinate to and controlled by senior women, especially mothers-in-law and older sisters-in-law. Given these often conflicting intergenerational interests between females, older women are often instrumental in upholding patriarchal interests (Baden *et al.* 1994).

The life cycle of Bangladeshi women progresses through a series of transitions in status in terms of their relationship to the head of household whether as daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and mother-in-law. A woman gains increasing autonomy with age and motherhood, particularly the bearing of sons (Cain *et al.* 1979). Motherhood increases women's bargaining power with husbands and in-laws, for example, when sons grow up, they support their mothers in negotiating with their fathers or when her sons marry, her position in the family enhances further (Chowdhury 2009).

Chowdhury (2009) argues that women are considered to be passive dependents and property of their husbands in the Bangladeshi family system. Patriarchy is maintained through the non-recognition of unpaid work done by women at home and capital accumulation strengthens patriarchy through the use of dowry system. Women are increasingly seen as an economic burden due to the rise of the dowry-based marriage system, which is linked increasing poverty and landlessness. The decreasing asset base of many households means that women's labour in the household carries limited returns and this, coupled with limited employment opportunities for women, means they are increasingly perceived as an economic burden within households. Increasing incidence of violence against women has also been linked to the phenomenon of dowry, with women being victimised and abused for bringing insufficient resources into the household upon marriage (Wilson-Smillie *et al.* 1990, Kramsjo and Wood 1992).

Following national independence in 1971, the traditional family system in Bangladesh faced the challenge of widespread poverty in the rural areas as landholdings become increasingly fragmented. Traditional familial and village-based mutual aid networks, and extended family systems have declined under the pressures of extreme poverty, with subsistence becoming a largely individual matter (Feldman 1992, Baden *et al.* 1994). According to Blanchet (1986), poverty has weakened the 'patriarchal family as a unit of production'. Against this backdrop, vast numbers of Bangladeshi women have been obliged to go outside the bounds of the traditional family system to gain a livelihood casting off their age-old inhibitions and prejudices by taking up paid employment in RMG factories (Chowdhury 2009; Khosla 2009). In this context, the new roles offered by the RMG industry to its female workers clash with traditional patriarchal ideology as well as the national stereotype of 'ideal' women. This thesis thus examines the extent to which women's role as earner has challenged traditional ideas and gender relations through such dramatic shifts.

3.6 Conclusion

This literature review suggests that research on women's experiences of work within EPZs and beyond presents a complex and contradictory picture and highlights the very diverse range of opinions reflected in the conclusions reached by various researchers concerning the positive and negative experiences women face within these workplaces. Some researchers argue that employment in an EPZ can, to some extent, emancipate women from their subordination, contributing positively to enhancing women's economic and social status. They can escape from

the traditionally restrictive control of the family. They can contribute to household decision making due to the value of their economic contribution. Employment gives them the feeling of greater personal autonomy and increases their self-esteem. However, other researchers maintain that it is exploitative given that women's social status deteriorates due to factory work. They find themselves subject to serious health problems caused predominantly by long hours of work, they have no control over their earnings and they do not gain any new marketable skills.

Therefore, the evidence can be considered to be very mixed and the debate about the implications of paid employment for women working in the export-oriented sector continues between countries and even in the context within countries. Women's participation in the waged labour might prove emancipatory or simply exploitative. This research examines this debate in the context of Bangladeshi RMG industry by examining women's experiences of work relating to these to broader economic and cultural factors in Bangladeshi society and beyond. Therefore, the principal research question selected for this thesis is: ***Which major economic and cultural factors influence employment conditions and quality of life of female workers in the Bangladeshi RMG industry, and how?***

Since previous studies have not yet compared experiences of factory employment within a single industry, the intention of this research is to attempt to compare the work experiences of women within EPZ and non-EPZ RMG factories in order to gain an in depth understanding of the extent to which these experiences differ, which factors account for this variation and how this impacts on women's lives. This review also suggests that there is a gap in studies which have attempted to explore the connections between women's domestic and workplace experiences. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap by examining women's home lives, work lives and societal lives.

The next chapter presents the methodology followed for this research whilst empirical findings are provided in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR:
METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters addressed theory of labour process, patriarchy and the global political economy and women's employment in the waged labour market. It also presented reviews of the research about the Bangladeshi RMG industry. This chapter addresses the research methodology adopted for the thesis and begins by outlining the specific objectives of this study. Later sections discuss the theoretical approach which underpins this research and explain the design and strategy used. This chapter then presents the specific research location, profile of the cases and the socio-demographic profile of the participants. The techniques and procedures used for data sampling, collection, reflexivity in the research process and analysis are also detailed. Finally, issues relating to academic rigour are explored including the validity of research outcomes, ethical concerns and limitations of the study.

4.2 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to investigate and understand the nature of the interaction between labour process regimes and patriarchal relations at the scale of factory and beyond in the export-oriented RMG industry in Bangladesh. Using a comparative case study approach, the study compares internal management practices in a representative sample of four Bangladeshi RMG factories. It also examines key external factors, namely government regulation, trade unions, multi-national retailers and patriarchal norms and values, to investigate their influence on employment practices in the case-study factories. The research also explores the ways in which various aspects of the terms and conditions of employment impact on female workers in the RMG industry, and attempts to determine the ways in which their experience of work influences the quality of their personal lives and well-being beyond the workplace.

It also provides an insight into the perceptions of the largely male senior management and supervisory staff within the four Bangladeshi RMG factories. Since very little of the previous research on the export-oriented RMG sector in Bangladesh has explored management viewpoints, therefore, it was important to combine the viewpoints of female workers as well as

management personnel in order to capture the better picture of the gendered aspects of RMG employment in the Bangladeshi context. The next section discusses critical realism and its links with organisational case study research.

4.3 Critical Realist Research

As noted earlier in Chapter Two, critical realism sees the universe as a naturally multi-layered open system of interrelated parts or entities that interact over time. All entities, whether natural or social, are viewed as *really constituted* in that they have *causal powers*-to affect outcomes in specific ways-and *susceptibilities*- to be affected by the powers of other entities in specific ways and the powers and susceptibilities of entities are irreducible to their constituent parts (Thompson and Vincent 2010). Case studies are the most frequently adopted research design used by realists in organisation studies (Ackroyd 2010). CR inspired organisational case studies not only help to develop novel theories but also aim to provide better explanation of broader social mechanisms, i.e. class-based, racial, religions, sectoral, national, cultural etc. that operate through a case or class of cases (Vincent and Wapshott 2014). These mechanisms interact or intersect and trying to understand the intersections of mechanisms or how they interact is the purpose of the case based research.

From a critical realist point of view, mechanisms operate at "deeper" levels which might not be immediately apparent and can often only be accessed conceptually from a broader analysis of the setting, often through comparison (Vincent and Wapshott 2014). In this research, patriarchy, labour processes and value chain can be considered as separate causal mechanisms in the social world that operate according to their own logics (i.e. social mechanisms that manifest themselves differently in different places) but understanding their interactions would help to better explain women's experiences of work. Therefore, a CR approach is considered to be most suitable for the thesis to examine the complex nature of the stratified social world, especially to understand the interaction of a set of different causal influences that affect female workers and their lives.

In addition, Vincent and Wapshott (2014) suggested that this kind of case study research must look "upwards" to the complex array of contexts or broader context within which they reside that act through and influence patterns of behaviour in the organisational entity studied and "downwards" for how they are constituted of complex sets of interacting subunits. The research

presented here explores the relations between "external entities" (MNCs, government regulation, trade unions) in order to get better causal explanations of women's "experiences" of work. Also, it examined different types of garment factories based in different locations (inside or outside EPZs), of diverse sizes and status (subcontractor or not), to gain a novel insight into the extent to which such "internal" factors impact on working practices. The analytical target is to understand the complex relationship between labour process regimes and patriarchy at the workplace level as well as understanding of patriarchy at family and societal level. The next section focuses on the research design for this study.

4.4 The Case Study

This research adopted comparative case study as a research design/strategy using qualitative data. The case study is "a research strategy which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 2002: 178). The reasons for selecting the case study as the research strategy for this study are discussed in this section.

The case study research design can focus on an individual, a group, a setting, an event, an organisation, etc. (Robson 2002). Bryman and Bell (2007) note that the term 'case' is most commonly associated with a location, such as a workplace, organisation or setting where an intensive examination is carried out. A case study concentrates on a particular case (or small set of cases), with the intention of determining what kind of generalisation is possible from the case and how this might be achieved (Robson 2002). It requires detailed analysis to establish connections between the phenomena and the context being studied (Yin 2009).

The case study strategy has been chosen for this research because it has the ability to provide rich and deeper understanding of the real-life context and complex processes (Robson 2002), in this research, the employment practices applied to female workers in the four Bangladeshi RMG factories. Highlighting the importance of context, Yin and Davis (2007) state that in order to understand any phenomenon in depth, it is also important to understand the context, because such understanding encompasses important conditions which are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of the study. In this research, the work experiences of female workers cannot be isolated from the context of the different garment factories where they are employed because their experiences are embedded into the wider context of Bangladesh and the global economy,

and the internal working conditions of factories influence their relative experiences as individuals or groups.

This study uses qualitative approach to collect data within case study research design. A qualitative approach to research is mainly interested in the social meanings people attribute to their experiences, circumstances and situations, as well as the meanings that become embedded in words, texts and other objects (Hasse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Unlike a quantitative approach, it does not generally focuses on analysing numbers or statistics. So, its objective is to discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity (Rubin and Rubin 2005). A qualitative approach to data collection is appropriate for this study because, primarily, the research questions designed for the thesis requires qualitative data. This method of data collection is useful for exploring issues, delivering more detailed description of phenomena in order to understand these better, potentially generating further insights and answering questions (Bryman 2001; 2004). In this study, qualitative data facilitated a better understanding of the interaction between patriarchal relations and labour process regimes that influence women's experiences of work.

From the critical realist position, gaining direct access to 'reality' involves the adoption of multiple perspectives, which requires both triangulation of methods and the examination of the views and experiences of large samples of individuals (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2008). This is reflected in case study research, which requires researchers to use different sources of data, such as interviews, observation, survey and documentary analysis (Saunders *et al.* 2009). For the purposes of this study, different data collection techniques, including semi-structured interviews, field notes and documentary analysis, were used for data gathering. Interviews were conducted with female workers as well as managers working at various levels, such as helpers, operators, top managers, line managers, and middle managers. Field notes were taken during interviews and visits to the case study factories. Besides this, documentary evidence such as company profiles, company policies, i.e. recruitment and selection, quality control, wage and benefits, leave and training, and other internal factory documents such as employee service books, and newspaper articles, and information from websites were collected throughout the periods of the interviews (see more details in section 4.5 on data collection techniques).

Within the Bangladeshi RMG industry, four firms (garment factories) were investigated and each garment factory is the subject of an individual case study, but the study as a whole covers

four garment factories and, in this way, the research uses a multiple case design. In addition, this study included two forms of analysis within each garment factory: analysis of external factors (government regulation, MNCs, trade unions, patriarchal norms and values) on current working practices as well as analysis of women's experiences of work at the workplace, home and beyond. The connections to external factors/mechanisms such as regulation of government, MNCs, trade unions, and patriarchal relations that make it an 'embedded' case study design (Yin 2009).

It can be argued that multiple-case designs have distinct advantages. The evidence they provide is often considered more compelling, meaning that the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriott and Firestone 1983). Blaikie (2000) agrees that the use of comparative case studies adds greater weight to a study and makes findings more convincing. The rationale for using multiple cases allows researcher to consider whether the findings of the first case occur in the other cases and, as a consequence, helps to generalise from these findings (Saunders *et al.* 2009). Bryman (2004: 53) argues that this comparative element helps researchers to "understand social phenomena better" and is supported by Kessler and Bach (2014) who assert that choosing multiple-cases helps to identify cross-cutting patterns, indicate possible causes and allow opportunities to follow these up with deeper analysis.

4.4.1 Case selection

Several writers emphasise the importance of case selection. Pettigrew (1990) argued that, given the limited number of cases which can be usually be studied, it makes sense to choose cases which represent extreme situations and polar types, in which the process of interest can be easily observed. Eisenhardt (1989:545) argued that as there is no ideal number of cases, a number between four and ten cases usually works well. With fewer than four cases it is often difficult to generate theory with much complexity, and its empirical grounding is likely to be unconvincing, unless the case has several mini-cases within it and with more than ten cases, it quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of the data. She further suggested that, in order to build theory from case studies, cases should be chosen to replicate previous cases, extend emergent theory or fill theoretical categories and such research should rely on theoretical sampling instead of random sampling.

Yin (2009:54) places particular emphasis on "replication" and selection for difference or similarity. According to him, in multiple-case studies each case must be carefully selected so with the aim of it producing either (a) similar results (a *literal replication*) or (b) contrasting results (a *theoretical replication*). Yin (2009:56) stresses that each individual case study consists of a "whole" study, in which convergent evidence is sought regarding the facts and each case's conclusions are then considered to be the information needing replication by other individual cases. Both the individual and the multiple-case results can and should be the focus of a summary report. For each individual case, the report should indicate how and why particular causal mechanisms were demonstrated (or not). Across cases, the report should indicate the extent of the replication logic and why certain cases were predicted to have certain results, whereas other cases, if any, were predicted to have contrasting results.

Kessler and Bach (2014) stress that in order to contribute to the explanation of a phenomenon; case selection should be directed, purposeful and underpinned by some rationale. This rationale might emerge from some selection process or from review of literature. This rationale might be labelled as 'light theorization': a tentative but plausible account of similarities or difference that might be revealed by the case comparison. They argue that 'light theorization' is the second essential feature of multiple-case design. Within this research, the four garment factories were chosen in order to see whether the four cases produces similar results or any of them provides contrasting results.

4.4.2 Selection of Four Case-Study Factories

Since this research intends to compare the internal management practices as well as exploring the work experiences of female workers, four firms were specifically chosen to represent different locations, sizes and status within a single industry. As noted in Chapter Three, previous research compared implications of waged employment on women working in different export-oriented industries of the developing world, therefore, the choice of single industry setting will help to bring out the industry-specific complexities, scenarios, and the choice of four cases will further lead to generalisations about the RMG industry in Bangladesh.

Firstly with regard to location, factories situated both inside and outside the EPZ areas were purposefully chosen. In the study, the factory location is designated as being EPZ (situated inside the EPZ areas) or non-EPZ (outside). Dhaka EPZ (DEPZ), the second largest EPZ, is

situated at Savar, some 35km from Bangladesh's capital city, and 25 km from Hazrat Shahjalal international airport and 304 km from the important sea port of Chittagong (BEPZA, 2013). Outside the DEPZ numerous export-oriented garment factories have also been established at Farmgate, Mirpur, Sepaibagh and Tejgaon. The areas of Savar and Mirpur formed the focus of this study because of the high concentration of RMG factories there. Among the four factories, one factory was chosen from Dhaka EPZ, situated at Savar and three other factories were chosen outside the EPZ from Mirpur, Dhaka.

The primary rationale for choosing EPZ and non-EPZ case study factories is that no substantial evidence found on the Bangladeshi RMG industry that exclusively compared the experiences of women working in the EPZ and non-EPZ factories. Secondly, as the EPZ and non-EPZ RMG factories are regulated by separate government agencies, this research aims to see how different forms of regulation impact on working conditions at the chosen factories. Moreover, McCallum (2011) points out that EPZs are more efficient outfits, since the multinational character of EPZ investors and their size and economic importance afford them greater benefits than comparable non-EPZ factories, including access to government policy makers and important information flows. Such benefits are likely to create more streamlined business models for EPZ factories, with better knowledge of world market fluctuations that will ultimately enhance their profit margins. Therefore, in order to understand the variation in structures of EPZ and non-EPZ factories in Bangladesh, this kind of comparative research is important to bring out how the consequences of different organisational contexts, regulatory context, labour market context, and how these influence the outcomes of women within a single industry.

Secondly, with regard to size, a variety of sizes were included in the sample to examine whether size had any implications on women's experiences. The researcher got access to four garment factories, whose manpower was 3383, 2250, 1017 and 318 respectively during the time of interview.

Finally with regard to factory status, a subcontracting chain operates within the RMG industry in Bangladesh. When large manufacturing units receive orders from major brand names and international retailers, some of these manufacturers subcontract either all or part of the garment production and trade processes to medium-sized factories, which, in turn, subcontract these out to smaller units (Khatun *et al.* 2008). As such, it is important to understand the impact of a

factory's position in the subcontracting chain. Table 4.1 summarises the information about the four Bangladeshi RMG factories chosen to participate in this study.

TABLE 4.1: SAMPLE OF EXPORT-ORIENTED BANGLADESHI GARMENT FACTORIES

Factory Identifier	Factory Location	Factory Size/Manpower Status	Factory Status
New Era	Inside EPZ	3,383 employees	Not subcontractor
Trendmaker	Outside EPZ	2,250 employees	Subcontracts to medium-sized
Fashionwise	Outside EPZ	1,017 employees	Subcontracts to small-sized factories
Style Star	Outside EPZ	318 employees	

The identity of the factories remains anonymous in order to protect workers who volunteered to take part in the study. Short descriptions of the four case-study factories are given below.

4.4.3 Profile of the Cases
4.4.3.1 New Era

Established in 2000, New Era is a Korean-Bangladesh joint venture company, is regarded to be among the best knit and woven RMG providers in Bangladesh. This is a large RMG factory situated in Ashulia in the new DEPZ. Due to its investment in the EPZ, the factory is provided with many privileges by the government of Bangladesh on tax exemption, infrastructural facilities, duty free import and export of raw materials along with many other facilities. Unlike their non-EPZ counterparts, all DEPZ factories have well-planned modern production lines on a single floor rather than being spread over several storeys within a compound. New Era had two two-storey buildings with 12 operational production lines and had an attached administrative building for the office of the management staff, meetings and conference purposes.

As a joint-venture company, the business was shared by a Korean corporation and a local investor in Bangladesh: they had 70 per cent and 30 per cent of share respectively. The Bangladeshi counterpart took land in the new DEPZ and construction costs, machines and equipment were provided by the Korean company, thereby authorising them to have a substantial share. The factory was mainly under the control of a Korean managing director, and

seven Korean managers, supplemented by another 292 Bangladeshi managerial staff, who were in charge of daily management and the operation of production. As Table 4.2 shows, New Era employed 3,383 staff in total (production workers and management). Production workers comprised workers who worked in the production line, such as helpers, operators, ironing man, etc. and management included line managers (supervisor, line in charge, assistant production manager, production manager) as well as senior managers (assistant general manager, general manager), who assisted to accomplish the production. Of the 300 people in managerial positions, 150 (50%) were women with female workers also making up 2,466 (80%) of the production workers.

FIGURE 4.1 MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF FOUR CASE-STUDY FACTORIES
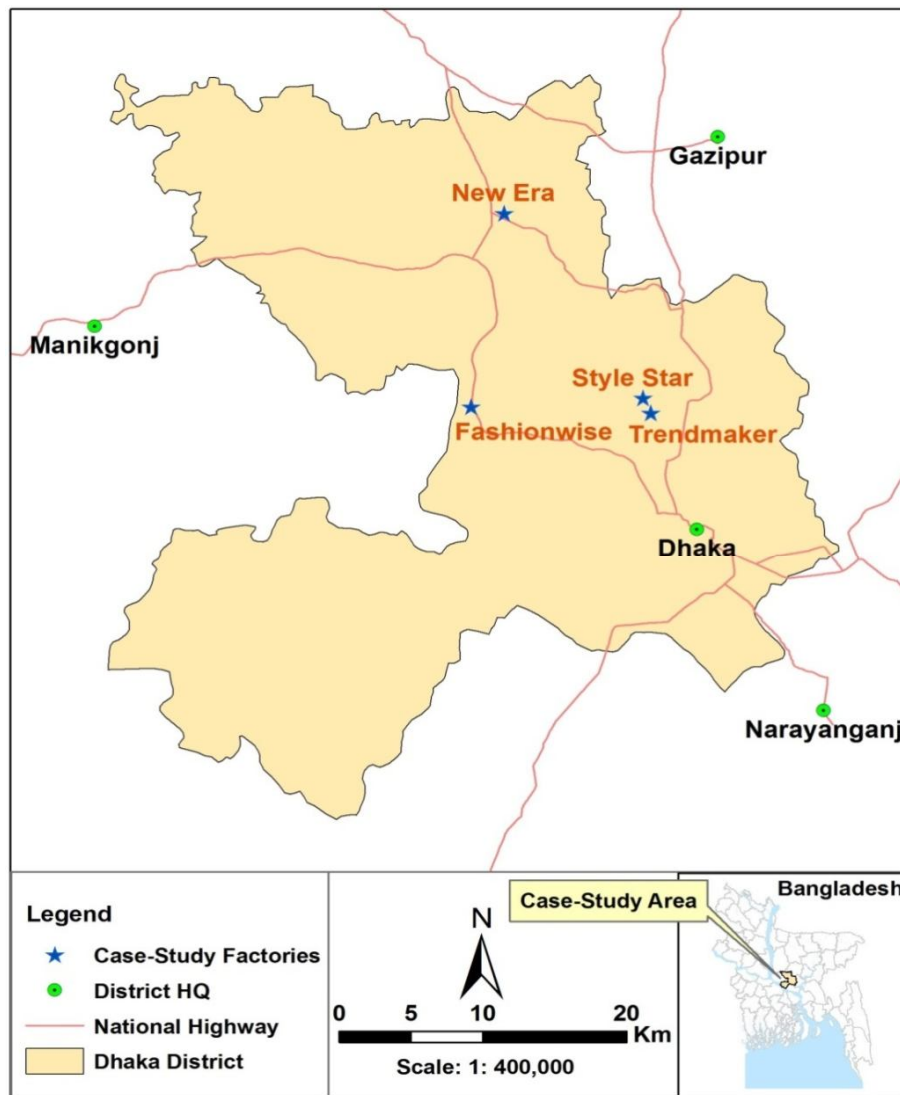
Table 4.2 shows that New Era had more managers (300) than the other big cases. Also, these managers were exactly divided between men and women. This thesis highlights that the information provided by managers to the researcher regarding factory management might be inaccurate or exaggerated. This is because unlike, Trendmaker and Fashionwise, managers in the New Era did not provide any published documents; therefore the researcher could not verify the exact numbers employed in the management. DeLyser (2001) noted that the process of interviewing can be complicated by the assumption among their participants that the researcher already knows the answers and thus probing for information by the researcher sometimes leads participants to exaggerate them. Since management at New Era knew that the researcher had links with senior management in the other two factories (Trendmaker and Fashionwise) and had already interviewed managers there, they might thought that researcher know all the information regarding the readymade garment industry and their working practices, therefore their answers might be exaggerating to some extent.

Therefore, the researcher used online sources such as their official websites to clarify information but was also mindful when interpreting interview data and documentary evidence since they might not reflect the everyday reality of the factory.

Figure 4.2: Outside View of New Era

New Era obtains raw materials from China and Korea with a large volume of the fabrics, thread, buttons, and labels coming from the Korean firm with its other sister factories in Vietnam and

Dominican Republic. Since almost 95% of knitted fabrics were produced in Bangladesh, these can be sourced from local mills. New Era was only involved in assembling the products such as cutting, stitching, decorating with embroidery work, ironing, quality checking and packing within this unit and sending the final product to the particular buyers. Other activities such as marketing of the products or securing of the orders were executed by the Korean firm because of its having considerable power and holding business interests in other countries, such as in Vietnam, Dominican Republic.

New Era produced high value products and exported to markets worldwide, especially to internationally recognised brands based on EU, USA, and Asia-Pacific. Table 4.3 shows the list of products manufactured and the final destinations of the products of the case-study factories. New Era was producing fewer items compared to that of Trendmaker, though both of them had nearly similar manpower status, it might be the fact that its production of high value end products enabled them to have greater output in value (see Table 4.3). For New Era supplying of quality products was considered to be the prime determinant for competing in the world market.

TABLE 4.2: NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN THE FACTORIES

Factory	Employees	Production Workers			Management		
	Total	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
NEW ERA	3,383	3,083	617 (20%)	2,466 (80%)	300	150 (50%)	150 (50%)
TRENDMAKER	2,250	2,190	657 (30%)	1,533 (70 %)	60	55 (92%)	5 (8%)
FASHIONWISE	1,017	977	391 (40%)	586 (60%)	40	38 (95%)	2 (5%)
STYLE STAR	318	300	60 (20%)	240 (80%)	18	17 (96%)	1 (4%)

4.4.3.2 Trendmaker

Trendmaker is a large RMG factory located in Mirpur, Dhaka. It opened in 1985 with the aim of achieving excellence in every aspect of its business. This factory had 15 production lines comprising separate sewing, cutting and finishing sections. Trendmaker became one of the largest companies in the RMG sector in Bangladesh by exporting large volumes of product to the US market. This factory is supplying to some leading clothing brands as well fashion retailers mainly based on USA (see its manufactured items in Table 4.3). As Table 4.2 shows,

Trendmaker employed 2,250 staff in total (production workers and management). The level of female participation in managerial positions was very small, at only eight per cent. Of the 2,190 production workers 70 per cent were female. Figure 4.3 shows below a non-EPZ up front view.

Depending on buyers' requirements, Trendmaker imported 60% of its fabrics from India, China, and Pakistan, with the rest coming from large textile mills in Bangladesh. Trims and accessories (pocketing fabric, buttons, zipper, and thread) were also acquired locally. Sometimes, metal items were imported from Hong Kong in order to ensure high quality, depending on the buyers' specification. Garments were manufactured within each unit using an assembly-line production system. Trendmaker maintained on-going contracts with buyers, its policy being to work with those who provided a flow of contracts. Orders were usually obtained by dealing directly with buyers or their liaison offices (for example, JC Penny and VF Asia were situated in Dhaka).

Figure 4.3: Trendmaker Factory Building

Trendmaker was involved in partial subcontracting to Fashionwise, particularly when it was required to meet buyers' deadlines. Around 5 to 7% of the production process was subcontracted out to Fashionwise. Some of its orders were either subcontracted out for final processing and packaging jobs or some of its orders were for assembling the different parts of the clothes.

TABLE 4.3: ORDER AND PRODUCTION DATA FOR THE FACTORIES

	Factory	Main Source of Orders	Daily/ Monthly Production	Items Manufactured
Export Processing Zone (EPZ)	NEW ERA	Nike, Adidas, American Eagle, Volcom (USA, Australia), Quick Silver	10,000/ 260,000 pieces	Knit and woven items: T-shirts, polo shirts, tops, women's items, children's shirts, pants, and trousers
Non-Export Processing Zones (non-EPZ)	TRENDMAKER	Levi's, Next, JC Penney, H&M, Sears, GAP, American Eagle S'Oliver, Target, TCP, Wal-Mart, George & Martha, Disney Store	12,000/ 312,000 pieces	Woven and denim items: garments for men, women and children including shirts, skirts, shorts, trousers, dresses, vests, jackets
	FASHIONWISE	Next, Stanley Stella (France), Wal-Mart (Jordache, Land N Sea), Cintas, C&A (Mondial), Tesco, Smartware Printable (Germany)	8,000/ 208,000 pieces	Knit and woven items: T-shirts, polo shirts, tank tops, cut and sewn t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, jumpers, turtle necks, strap tees, shorts, trousers, and all kinds of woven garments.
	STYLE STAR	LPP (Poland), STZ (USA), SRG apparel (UK), JC Penney, K-Mart, Movistar (USA), Dolce Vita (USA), Wal-Mart	2,000/ 52,000 pieces (estimate)	Knit and woven items: shirts, pants, garments for women and children, trousers etc.

4.4.3.3 Fashionwise

Fashionwise is situated at Savar. In 1993, it started knitwear production with two separate production units for knitted and woven products. This factory claims to be one of the leading manufacturer and exporters of RMG in Bangladesh. Since its inception in 1984, this factory had created a distinctive image amongst European RMG buyers as producers of high quality garments. This factory was supplying to mainly departmental stores, retail stores in the

European countries (see table 4.3). This factory manufactured men's, ladies, children's shirts, skirts, shorts, trousers, dresses, and vests, jackets made out of woven and denim fabrics. Fashionwise employed 1,017 staff in total, among them, 977 were production workers and 40 in managerial roles (see Table 4.2). Female participation at managerial level was only 5%, whilst the gender division amongst production workers was 391 (40%) male and 586 (60%) female.

Raw materials were obtained from China (95% of fabrics), Pakistan and India, with twill fabrics being sourced from Bangladesh. Accessories and trims were acquired locally unless buyers specified their origin and, then, these were imported accordingly. Fashionwise had consecutive contracts with its buyers'. They placed the next one when the previous order was nearly finished, each order taking 90-120 days to execute. Orders were usually obtained by dealing directly with buyers but agents or buying houses[20] (both multinational and local) were also used.

Figure 4.4: Sample Section of Fashionwise (non-EPZ)

When Fashionwise had sufficient time between shipments and could obtain the right rate, they operated as a subcontractor to large Bangladeshi factories (such as Trendmaker) who needed to fill big orders. Sometimes they completed the whole manufacturing process, with the larger

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[20] Buying houses broker deals between buyers and factories, facilitating successful delivery of the order by identifying products, sourcing raw materials (both from abroad and locally), checking quality, and ensuring competitive prices.

factory providing fabrics and accessories to be cut, sewn, packed, and finished at Fashionwise; sometimes they were only responsible for cutting and sewing. Sometimes Fashionwise also needed to subcontract out to small factories to fulfil shipment deadlines due to delays caused by political unrest or strikes, using them to reduce production costs.

4.4.3.4 Style Star

Style Star is a small RMG factory situated in Mirpur, Dhaka. The three-storey factory was opened in 1984. Style Star had 318 employees and of the 300 production workers, 80% (240) were female and 20% (60) male. Eighteen people were employed in managerial positions with female participation at this level of only 4% (only one female working as a supervisor; See Table 4.2).

At Style Star, fabrics were imported according to buyers' choice, from China (80% due to lower costs), India, Pakistan and Taiwan. Other materials and accessories were imported from India, China, and Indonesia or purchased locally. To secure orders, Style Star either dealt directly with buyers (e.g. Movistar and Dolce Vita) or used Bangladeshi liaison offices (e.g. SRG apparel) and buying agents (e.g. LPP). Importers were mid-range buyers and retail stores, where prices were relatively lower compared to the top global brands.

Figure 4.5: Iron Section of Style Star

Style Star also operated as a subcontracting unit for Fashionwise and other large Bangladeshi factories, some 30-40% of its work being of this type. Typically these factories contacted Style Star when they needed to subcontract out due to shipment deadlines or Style Star contacted them when it had spare capacity.

All the four factories were situated in different locations in Bangladesh. New Era was situated within the EPZ and the other three cases, i.e. Trendmaker, Fashionwise, and Style Star, were situated outside the EPZ areas. All the case study factories were supplying to different segment of the global market. This sample of cases have been selected on the basis of difference in terms of their location, size, status, regulatory context, as well as their choice of buyers', in the hope that this study will generate an opportunity to understand how context affects women's experiences within and beyond the workplace. This sample was then used to reflect on differences in patriarchy and labour process regimes to see how this differences in terms of connectivity within global value chain results in different outcomes of the labour process and patriarchal relations.

4.4.4 Selection of Interviewees

Sampling is a necessary step in terms of choosing respondents to interview in any research project (Tracy 2013), since it is rarely practical to study whole populations (Marshall 1996). Therefore, researchers select samples and well developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study's soundness (Marshall and Rossman 1999). A total of 60 interviews were conducted within two units of respondents from both the EPZ and the three non-EPZ factories, namely female employees and management personnel. Some 20 managers and 40 female workers in total were interviewed. The interview schedule is outlined in Table 4.4 below. The researcher also interviewed two trade union leaders to help explore how an external factor such as the presence of trade unions influences internal working conditions of the factories. Two different sampling strategies were used to find appropriate samples for this study, namely, purposive and snowball sampling.

4.4.4.1 Management Interviewees: Purposive Sampling

In order to achieve the research objectives, non-probability purposive sampling was used for line managers and higher rank managers. This technique enables researchers to choose the sample based on their own judgement regarding which individuals they think would be appropriate for

the study. This type of sampling is primarily used when there are limited numbers of particularly relevant and informative people who are able to answer the research questions and meet the study's objectives (Saunders *et al.* 2009). In this study, for the management personnel, the position of the individuals, their knowledge and experience regarding work, their availability and willingness to participate in the study was used for the basis of purposive selection.

Initially two gatekeepers, a merchandise manager from Trendmaker and an executive director from Fashionwise were identified, who facilitated access to other new contacts, i.e. managers and female employees inside the factory and also contacts in New Era, and Style Star factories. Among the 20 managers interviewed, the sample included both males and females of various ranks from the four factories (from line managers/supervisors to high-ranking executives e.g. chairman, CEO or managing director). Most of the interviews with management personnel were conducted in their respective offices during office hours.

Amongst management personnel, interviews were first conducted with the senior managers, such as executive directors, managing directors, general managers and merchandise managers of the respective factories who deal with MNCs, and relevant government officials. Secondly, interviews were conducted with line managers, such as supervisors, line chiefs, and production managers for detailed understanding of the employment practices of their factories. They were asked about issues regarding appointment, working hours, leave, wages, promotion, training, safety and security, discharge and dismissal.

4.4.4.2 Female Interviewees: Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling, another form of non-probability sampling, was used to find a sample from the female workers at the chosen factories, which according to Saunders *et al.* (2009) is the most frequently used sampling technique for case study research. It is also used when it is difficult to identify members of the desired population. Snowball sampling starts by identifying a contact, who suggests another contact to the researcher, who in turn identifies a new contact and so the sample 'snowballs' (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 240). The rationale for choosing this sampling strategy was that it enabled contact with difficult-to-access populations (Tracy 2013).

TABLE 4.4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

FACTORIES		PARTICIPANTS		TIME
Type	Name/size	Female Workers (N=40)	Managers (N=20)	
EPZ	New Era	Single=3 Married: -no children=Nil -with children=8 Deserted=Nil Widowed=Nil Separated =1 **TOTAL=12**	Executive Director (M) Senior Manager(M) Officer (HR &Compliance) (M) Assistant Manager (Quality) (M) Senior Officer (HR) (F) Unit-in-Charge (M) **TOTAL= 6** (M=5, F=1)	c.22 hours
NON-EPZ	Trendmaker	Single=4 Married: -no children=3 -with children=2 Deserted=1 Widowed=1 Separated =1 **TOTAL=12**	Executive Director (M) Merchandise Manager (M) General Manager (Production, Compliance & HR) (M) Production Manager (M) Line Chief (M) Supervisor (M) **TOTAL=6** (M=6, F=Nil)	c.22 hours
NON-EPZ	Fashionwise	Single=4 Married: -no children=3 -with children=3 Deserted=Nil Widowed=Nil Separated =Nil **TOTAL=10**	General Manager (Production)(M) AGM (HR, Administration & Compliance) (M) Line Chief (M) Supervisor (F) **TOTAL=4** (M=3, F=1)	c.16 hours
NON-EPZ	Style Star	Single=1 Married: -no children=3 -with children=1 Deserted=Nil Widowed=1 Separated =Nil **TOTAL=6**	General Manager (M) Production Manager (M) Supervisor (M, F) **TOTAL=4** (M=3, F=1)	c.12 hours
Total	4	40	20	c.72 hours

(Note: M=Male, F=Female)

It proved difficult to obtain a wholly representative sample since there are different categories of workers in RMG factories (helper, operator, folder man, iron man, cutting master, packing man, electrician, mechanic and sample designer). Women are over-represented in the helper and

operator job categories and very few females work in supervisory or other categories (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000). For this reason, the researcher choose to interview 40 females working as helpers or operators and endeavoured to interview different women at different points in their life trajectories, namely unmarried, married, and married with children, separated, widowed, deserted to get multiple viewpoints. It should be noted that five of the participants (one assistant general manager, HR, Administration, and Compliance from Fashionwise, and four female workers from four factories) were interviewed for the second time to get more data and to clarify some of the information they provided in the first time interview.

Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008) argue that snowball sampling is also appropriate in a situation where the target sample members are involved in a kind of network, sharing common characteristics with others. Similarly, it was found that garment workers often live in the same neighbourhood near their factories, to cut transport costs and travelling time, which enabled the researcher to choose snowball sampling technique to get data from them.

4.4.5 Socio-demographic Profile of the Participants

This section provides the socio-demographic profile of the female RMG workers, including their age, marital composition, schooling and level of educational attainment, and some basic information of the senior managers and line managers, such as their educational background and service length in the RMG production.

4.4.5.1 Age

The age structure of the female workers employed in the EPZ (New Era) was different from that of the female workers employed in the other three non-EPZ factories. Ages of female workers in the non-EPZ RMG factories ranged from 18 to 30 with 93% falling into this grouping, whereas 100% of their female counterparts at the New Era were aged 20 to 30 (see table 4.5). The average age of non-EPZ and New Era female workers was 24 years and 26 years respectively. That means female workers employed in the New Era were older than their counterparts in the non-EPZ factories by one and half years, on average. Table 4.5 shows that the participation of female workers aged 26-30 was slightly higher (50%) at New Era compared to that of non-EPZ factories (18%). This difference in age profile is also reflected in their marital status, with the New Era employing more married female workers than the other three non-EPZ factories (see

below). The most striking thing is that this is still an industry for young women who were mainly 18 to 30-year-olds.

4.4.5.2 Marital Composition

Among the total forty respondents in all four RMG factories, in the EPZ 67% were married (and married with children) whereas the number was lower (54%) for non-EPZ factories. The figures for the unmarried female workers in EPZ and non-EPZ factories were 25% and 32% respectively. A small proportion of women (8% from EPZ and 14% from non-EPZ) were widowed, separated and deserted. With regard to the marital composition of the women, reflecting previous findings, more married women with children were employed in New Era than in non-EPZ factories. Interestingly, even within the non-EPZ case factories, the proportion of married women and women having children were also higher (54%) compared to the unmarried women (32%) (See table 4.5). In these four cases, the garment employers' now prefer to employ married women and women with children because of their skills and work performance. The married women who had children (only 14 of the 40 women in this study) made their own arrangements regarding childcare. These women kept their children with their parents-in-law or with their parents back in the village since they did not have any relatives to look after them in the Dhaka city.

4.4.5.3 Education

In this study, the average years of schooling were different for women from the New Era and those from the non-EPZ factories: 10 years versus 6 years respectively. New Era interviewees had a higher level of educational attainment than the other female factory workers. This is because workers at non-EPZ factories did not need any specific educational qualifications, as they were only required to read and write Bengali and to recognise English numbers. At New Era, the minimum educational requirements for entry level/ or helper and quality controller was secondary school certificate (SSC).

None of the New Era women were illiterate but there were few illiterate female workers in the non-EPZ factories, as only about 16% could not read or write and had never been to school (see Table 4.5). However, these illiterate female workers had learnt to write and sign their names. It should be noted that in Bangladesh, the literacy rate for men is 58.9% while female literacy rate was 50.4% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2009). In this regard, the literacy rate of female

RMG workers in the case-study factories was much higher (92%) than that of the general female population (50.4%) of Bangladesh.

TABLE 4.5: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF FEMALE RMG WORKERS INTERVIEWED

(EPZ sample was calculated into 100% and non-EPZ sample was calculated the same as EPZ sample into 100%).

Socio-Demographic Factors	EPZ Factory (N =12)	Non-EPZ Factories (N =28)
Age (Years)	(%) (Number)	(%) (Number)
17-19	0.0 (0)	25.0 (7)
20-25	50.0 (6)	50.0 (14)
26-30	50.0 (6)	18.0 (5)
31 +	0.0 (0)	7.0 (2)
Average age (in years)	26	24
Educational Attainment [21]		
Illiterate	0.0 (0)	16.0 (4)
Primary	0.0 (0)	48.0 (13)
Junior Secondary	37.0 (5)	20.0 (6)
Secondary School Certificate (SSC)	36.0 (4)	12.0 (3)
Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and above	27.0 (3)	4.0 (2)
Average Number of Years in education	10.0	6.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	25.0 (3)	32.0 (9)
Married (no children)	Nil	32.0 (9)
Married (with children)	67.0 (8)	22.0 (6)
Widowed/separated/deserted	8.0 (1)	14.0 (4)
Migratory Status		
From Dhaka city	0.0 (0)	11.0 (3)
From rural districts of Dhaka	25.0 (3)	36.0 (10)
From elsewhere in Bangladesh	75.0 (9)	53.0 (15)
TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE WORKERS	**100.0**	**100.0**

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[21] In Bangladesh, the first or primary level of education comprises 5 years of formal schooling (class/grades I-V). Primary education normally begins at 6+ and lasts to 11. Secondary level is made up of 7 years of formal schooling (3+2+2). The first 3 years (grades VI-VIII) is known as junior secondary; the next 2 years (grades IX-X) as secondary and last 2 years (grades XI - XII) as higher secondary.

4.4.5.4 Profile of the Managers

Twenty managers from four garment factories were interviewed. Among them only three respondents were women. The senior managers had Masters Degrees from different educational backgrounds, but rarely from a business background. All twelve of the senior management interviewees worked as junior manager or senior manager in the RMG production and joined as a manager in the current case factories. The majority of them possessed lots of experience in this sector and had practical knowledge of successfully running a business. They had been working in this sector for long time, ranging between a minimum of five and a maximum of 26 years. Eight line managers were interviewed and their level of education ranged from primary to higher secondary school certificate education.

4.5 Data collection
4.5.1 Field notes

In this study, data collection involved both primary and secondary sources of data. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with management personnel of various ranks and different categories of female workers and these served as the primary means of data collection because individual interviews provide an invaluable insight into attitudes, values and opinions, particularly how individuals choose to explain and contextualise these issues (Miller and Glassner 1997). However, before the interviews with participants took place, extensive field notes were taken during visits to the case study factories which could be used to further supplement the interview and documentary evidence.

Thorpe and Holt (2008) define field notes as contemporaneous notes of observation or conversation taken during the conduct of qualitative research. Wolfinger (2002) states that researchers can either make notes only when observations strike them as being particularly noteworthy or interesting, or they can record everything that happened during a particular period of time in a more comprehensive fashion. Sanjek (1990) and Emerson *et al.* (1995) commend the practice of making 'scratch notes' or 'jottings', whenever possible during periods of observation, sometimes with verbatim quotes where necessary.

Throughout the fieldwork stage of this research, striking events and informal conversations together with more general observations were recorded in writing, both during the initial visits and during later discussions and interviews. Field notes covered my thoughts and reflections as

well as a range of observations, particularly concerning the attitudes of the male managers towards their female workers, and how these were conveyed in the body language of male line managers towards women, the behaviour of employees on the factory floor, women's involvement in the production process (the activities they carry out and what these entail), the physical work environment, the emotions felt and expressed by women, and women's housing conditions. Thus, these field notes provided much valuable information regarding women's experiences of work and reviewing these notes on a daily basis proved to be an extremely useful method at the same time of reflecting on the research experience. These notes and observations also served later as an invaluable data source when interpreting the interview data and attempting to produce accurate and reliable explanation of the women's working conditions and experiences.

4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were used to gather data relevant to research questions and objectives. An interview can be defined "*as an exchange of information and ideas between two or more people through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic*" (Janesick 2004:72). The interviewer and the interviewee collaborate in the 'co-construction of knowledge' emphasising a more fundamental sense of the shared task, which becomes a form of 'collaboration' in the production of meaning (Holstein and Gubrium 2003:19).

In most qualitative studies, data collection using interviews is structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Structured interviews are highly formalised and based on a carefully prepared set of questions piloted and refined by the researcher (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2008:142-143). Unstructured interviews are based on a brief set of prompts to deal with a certain range of topics where researcher may just use one single question and the interviewee is then allowed to respond freely, with the former simply responding to points for continuation of the conversation (Bryman and Bell 2003). Semi-structured interviews, however, are non-standardised, although the interviewer usually has a list of themes and questions to be covered in the interview. Another possibility is the use of an intended interview guide by which a core list of questions or topics within the framework of the research questions can be adequately covered (Bryman and Bell 2003; Myers and Newman 2007). In this type of interview, questions may be prepared in advance or may occur to the researcher during the interview depending on the interviewee's

response. The order of the questions can be altered and the choice of questions can vary slightly between different interviews depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders *et al.* 2009). This means that interesting issues which emerge from interviewee responses to specific questions can immediately be probed to obtain further insight (Bryman and Bell 2003). Semi-structured interviews were therefore selected instead of highly structured and unstructured interviews.

This type of interview encourages a more 'genuine' human interaction, seeks to develop interpersonal relationship based on rapport, trust, commitment and 'warmth' between researcher and interviewee, such that the latter feels free to express themselves openly (Alvesson and Lee Ashcraft 2012). Miller and Glassner (1997:103) note that the objective of such interviews is to accomplish "*deeper, fuller conceptualisations of those aspects of our subjects' lives we are most interested in understanding*". The rationale for choosing this type of interview is to gain a greater understanding of women's experiences as workers through the identification of the underlying causes and explanations of events. Another reason for choosing the interview method with female workers as opposed to written questionnaires related to the high rates of illiteracy in Bangladesh amongst female factory workers.

An interview guide was designed based on the literature review and a range of issues were included in order to gain understanding from respondents regarding employment practices and women's experiences of work. In this research, three sets of interview questions were prepared for different groups of respondents, i.e. female workers, line management and top management respectively (see Appendix II-IV for interview themes). The duration of the interviews ranged between one hour to about one and half hours with a maximum length of two hours. A total of 80 hours semi-structured interviews were recorded.

Although interviews are an excellent means of collecting rich qualitative data, the process of interviewing itself contains a number of difficulties (Myers and Newman 2007). In terms of disadvantages, interviews are time-consuming, and subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall and inaccuracy (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2008). In addition, interviewees may not properly comprehend the question posed. Making the interaction natural between interviewer and interviewee requires effective communication and interpersonal skills on the part of the interviewer, who may lack these essential skills (Fielding and Thomas 2008). Interviewing requires a number of communication skills including listening, question framing, encouraging

and directing discourse (Marshall and Rossman 1999; Myers and Newman 2007). Interpersonal skills are equally important, including the ability to put interviewees at ease, ask questions in a straightforward but interesting manner, and build trust in the respondent (Kaufman 1994; Longhurst 2009).

Though some criticisms are attached to interviews as a method, their capability for exploring, discovering, explaining and describing a phenomenon make them highly appropriate for addressing the stated research questions, and it enabled a richer understanding of the accounts of women's experiences, their opinions, feelings and reasons for having particular viewpoints. Necessary precautions were taken to minimise the risks during interviews. In order to minimise poor recall and inaccuracy, interviews were audio-recorded and notes taken. Moreover, prior to the actual interview, reassuring informants about the confidentiality of their opinions helped to build trust (Kaufman 1994).

Before starting the interview, participants were informed that their responses would be taped for transcription later. No interviewees refused to be recorded. Notes were also taken during the interviews. Written consent was obtained before the interview started because it was thought that if any participant was illiterate, verbal consent could be audio-taped after explaining the contents of the consent form. However, it was not required as all the respondents could sign their names. Interview questions were prepared in English and then translated into Bengali during interviews. After the interviews, audio tapes were transcribed in Bengali and the quotes for use in this thesis translated into English.

4.6 The Challenges of Interviewing in the Readymade Garment Industry in Bangladesh
4.6.1 Coping with the Unexpected

This research provided certain challenges when interviewing various ranks of management personnel and different categories of female workers in the readymade garment industry in Bangladesh which are explored here in detail. The most significant of these challenges could not have been anticipated since it involved the collapse of the Rana Plaza in April 2013, an industry disaster which had important repercussions for this research. On the negative side, gaining initial access to the factories became particularly challenging, delaying the start of data collection by nearly two months. Negotiating access with the management personnel at the case study factories required emails, phone calls, letters, and follow-up phone calls to explain the aim of the

research and its significance, and to provide details about the interviews. Letters of introduction sent to the appropriate department of the selected factories emphasised that any findings would be used strictly for research and academic purposes, and that anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed for all participants. Even then, gatekeepers at Trendmaker and Fashionwise asked to see questions/interview themes and were concerned about those which related to trade union membership and activities. The merchandise manager at Trendmaker specifically advised me not to ask the Executive Director questions regarding trade union activities as this might arouse suspicions that I was an undercover journalist or a member of an international NGO.

In addition, some of the middle managers at Style Star and New Era were reluctant to be interviewed, assuming I had been sent in on a fact-finding mission by one of the multinationals they worked with or by an international NGO and that anything they said might in some way harm their business. I had to repeatedly reassure these interviewees that the information they provided was to be used purely for the purposes of academic research and that all the data provided would be anonymised.

On the positive side, the Rana Plaza incident meant female employees were more willing to talk, wishing to share their grief but also express their anger about issues such as poor working conditions and abusive treatment towards women within the workplace.

4.6.2 Positionality

A great deal has been written about the issue of researcher positionality and how being positioned as an 'insider' or 'outsider' can impact on the outcome of an interview (Coloma 2008; Naples 1996; Smith 1999). Initially it was argued that researchers adopted either an 'insider' or 'outsider' position in relation to their research domain (Bonner and Tolhurst 2002) but more recently it has been suggested that this dichotomy is an overly simplistic distinction (Breen 2007) since researchers must navigate complex and multi-faceted insider/outsider issues in every research project (DeLyser 2001). Instead, the role of researcher is better conceptualised as a continuum since "it is acknowledged that people have multiple overlapping identities and people make meaning from various aspects of their identity" (Kezar 2002: 96).

Scholars have also argued that the degree of distance or closeness between researcher and study participants can affect the richness and quality of data, with variables such as gender, race,

ethnicity, class, religion, political stance, socio-economic status and educational background potentially influencing these interactions and affecting the research process (Johnson-Bailey 2001; Al-Natour 2011; Kee 2001; Bourke 2014). Young (2004) points out that as a result of this insider vs. outsider debate it was generally assumed that researcher who does not share categories, such as gender, race, and class with their participants will find it more difficult to gain their trust.

Contact details for potential participant factories were initially sourced from the BGMEA and the Bangladesh Trades websites, but personal contact with the Executive Director of Fashionwise and the Merchandise Manager of Trendmaker enabled the researcher to gain access to these two case study factories. These same individuals also suggested other factories, matching the desired profile for this study, and provided contact details for New Era and Style Star.

This personal contact with senior managers at Fashionwise and Trendmaker had important implications in terms of the relative ease or difficulty of collecting data. These gatekeepers introduced me to the middle and line managers in their respective factories. I was worried that they might not trust me or disclose information regarding working conditions, since they were interviewed on factory premises. However, links with senior managers at Fashionwise and Trendmaker meant that some of the middle management and line managers were remarkably forthcoming during interviews regarding non-compliance and management of the audit process. It was assumed that I understood how audit really worked, and that therefore there was no sense in presenting an ideal image of this process. Therefore, managers in these two factories positioned me as a semi-insider within the factory.

During interviews, the shifting nature of my own positionality became apparent. As noted earlier, management interviewees at Trendmaker and Fashionwise positioned me as a semi-insider due to my personal connections with senior managers in these two factories, which had a positive impact on the research process since some of the middle managers were happy to share usually confidential information regarding factory working conditions and practices, and audit processes. However, I was not wholly an insider because the interviews were conducted formally, maintaining a distance between researcher and management interviewees in these two factories. This semi-insider positionality made it easier when I was required to ask more probing questions to ensure the clarity and veracity of responses.

4.6.3 The Relationship with Interviewees

The fact that I had established links through personal contact with senior managers at Trendmaker and Fashionwise also facilitated links with senior management at New Era and Style Star and helped to establish my credentials, meaning that this group were generally welcoming and happy to be interviewed. At each case study factory, the gatekeeper introduced me to middle managers who in turn introduced me to line managers. However, since I had no direct management connections at New Era and Style Star, interviewees framed me as an 'outsider', and the fact that I was a female placed further doubts over my status.

In these two factories, all but two of the management interviewees were male and according to Young (2004), women interviewing men are already positioned as 'outsider'. As noted earlier, some middle managers at Style Star and New Era remained suspicious about my researcher status and were reluctant to be interviewed in the aftermath of the press coverage of the Rana Plaza disaster and the response of Western multinationals. As a result, some managers initially refused to participate in interviews and I had to work hard to establish trust and build rapport with these participants (Breen 2007; Saunders *et al.* 2009). This involved clear articulation of research purpose and expectations from the management interviewees, and a commitment to ensure the anonymity of both company and individual.

4.6.4 Factory Floor Interviewing

It proved particularly difficult to get more in-depth responses from line managers in all the case study factories, with many of these interviewees initially answering questions with a curt 'yes' or 'no' or simply citing company policy so the researcher used laddering technique to encourage them to elaborate. This involved following up any yes/no or statement of fact response given by the interviewee with 'why' questions to encourage more detailed answers (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2012:129). In addition, middle managers sometimes appeared while the interview was in progress to tell line managers to keep their responses short because their absence from the production floor was interfering with the production process. The presence of a third person in interviews necessarily affects the participant's ability to speak and in this case it proved extremely disruptive because participants also felt they were being observed by their bosses. However, since I was reliant on the permission of these managers to gain access to line

managers, it was difficult to challenge this behaviour and I simply had to persist with my questioning strategy.

Interviewing factory floor employees within an organisation involves encroaching on an individual's work time and in some cases no other worker might be replaceable for their work, therefore managers are usually unwilling to grant time away from productive activity that is needed to conduct an interview (Bryman and Bell 2003). It became clear that line managers would not allow any worker interviews during production hours so, to avoid disrupting the production line, potential interviewees provided their mobile phone numbers during factory visits and were later contacted about their preferred time/place for the interview. Most opted to be interviewed in the private space of home since this means they are outside management supervision and control (Absar 2001).

4.6.5 Interviews with Female Employees

There is a significant body of feminist literature that addresses the intimacy that occurs when women interview women (Coterrill 1992; Johnson-Bailey 2001; Minister 1991; Ribbens 1989) and, in this context, it was easy to establish rapport with female interviewees and gain their trust as an 'insider', despite differences in class, status and age. The fact that I shared a common language, cultural norms and values with the participants was extremely important. Knowing the nuances of the language enabled me to ask probing questions while remaining sensitive. It is generally assumed that a common culture between interviewer and interviewee can provide a fertile ground for gaining access, nurturing rapport, asking meaningful questions and reaching empathetic understanding (Lee 2001). Often, as Johnson-Bailey (2001: 406) found, during an interview there are "silent understandings, culture-bound phrases that [do] not need interpretation, and non-verbalised answers conveyed with hand gestures and facial expressions". However, as Kondo (1990: 300-1) cautioned: "these cultural meanings are themselves multiple and contradictory […] they cannot be understood without reference to historical, political and economic discourses". Therefore, in analysing the interview transcripts this information needed to brought into play.

Most female interviewees spoke freely about factory working conditions, their work experiences and their personal lives. However, due to cultural values and taboos in Bangladesh, female interviewees clearly felt uncomfortable about discussing the issue of sexual harassment, either in

the workplace or outside it. Most denied having any first-hand experience of sexual harassment but many would refer to other women they knew who had faced this and this strategy was possibly a means of recounting incidents they themselves had been involved in. In this case, "being an insider of the experience enabled the researcher to understand what some women have to say in a way that no outsider could" (Reinharz 1992: 261).

4.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Transcriptions from 60 semi-structured interviews together with further secondary materials such as documents from the factories and fieldwork notes constituted a large amount of data. These data then were coded and analysed using Eisenhardt's (1989) theory building approach. On the basis of the sample factories, three comparisons were made: (1) a thematic comparison between the internal management practices in terms of appointment, working hours, leave, payment, safety and security, discharge, and dismissal issues in the EPZ and non-EPZ factories (2) a thematic comparison of the experiences of female workers with respect to control and surveillance; skills and opportunities; occupational segregation; health, safety and well-being issues between the EPZ and non-EPZ factories, and (3) a thematic comparison of experiences of work of female workers outside the workplace in terms of dual-burden and leisure, household support, money and finance including pay and control of money, their role in decision making and key life decisions, as well as change in attitudes and life styles.

After transcribing the data, the transcripts were read several times to gain a close familiarity with the data of each case, as well as to have an overview of each case as a stand-alone entity. Notes were made of the first impression of reading data from each case factory transcript. These notes were purely descriptive regarding management practices and women's experiences of work of each case which helped to generate insights from the enormous volume of data (Eisenhardt 1989). Then the researcher very carefully began to label codes within these transcripts. Codes were highlighted that the researcher thought relevant and found something similar to the extant literature and termed the codes with regard to the issue discussed in the transcript. These were applied to all the transcripts and then typed as codes or concepts on MS word to identify the reoccurring codes from the each transcript. At the end of the each transcript twenty to twenty five codes emerged. Several codes relevant to research questions were selected and grouped together to form five categories or under the five main themes.

With regard to generation of themes, for example, codes relating to background information of the factories were brought together under one theme. The main heading for this was "Code A: Factory Profiles" and this contained background information on all the case-study factories. The Codes B and C related to employment practices and the influence of other different actors, such as trade union, government regulation and multi-national retailers. Codes D and E related to women's experiences inside and outside the workplace. All the main headings or themes contained subsequent coding which are provided in Appendix V. The researcher then searched for cross-case patterns through the selection of pairs of cases (EPZ factory as one pair and three non-EPZ factories as another pair) to list similarities and differences between the cases which enhanced the probability to capture the novel findings existed in the data (Eisenhardt 1989). Eisenhardt (1989:544) further noted that an important feature of theory building from case studies is the comparison of emergent concepts, theory with the extant literature by asking "what is this similar to, what does it contradict and why" and therefore this research compared findings with conflicting and similar literature to raise the theoretical level of understanding.

4.8 Validity of the Research

Crewwell and Miller (2000) define validity as how accurately an account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them. As Miller and Glassner (1997) note, exclusive reliance on interviews as a research method can result in potential bias. Interviewees may say what they think the interviewer wants to hear on the grounds of social acceptability or may respond differently based on the identity of the interviewer. In addition, it emerged fairly early on in the research process that companies in this sector are subject to a variety of interview-based audits and that consequently local managers have become adept at presenting information in a manner that shows the company in a positive light. Factory workers, too, are often coached by management to tell visiting auditors what they want to hear. For all these reasons, the information provided by interviewees can be biased, to some extent.

A number of techniques were employed to reduce this potential bias. All interviewees were made aware of my status as a researcher and the purpose of the interviews to ensure this was fully understood. When judged necessary, initial questions were followed by more probing questions to help to tease out possible underlying issues. Finally, the information obtained through semi-structured interviews was verified by other data collection techniques, including my own field notes and documentary evidence.

Data collection from multiple sources of evidence is suggested by various scholars as one of the strategies to maximise validity (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Creswell 2013). Yin (2009) notes that documentary materials are an essential type of secondary data to corroborate evidence gathered from primary sources. For the purposes of this study, available materials were collected and reviewed throughout the periods of the interviews. These included company profiles; company policies covering recruitment and selection, quality control, wage and benefits, leave and training; other internal factory documents such as employee service books; newspaper articles, and information from websites. These documents supplemented interview data and played an important role in the analysis, but as with the primary data I was mindful when reviewing these documents that they might not reflect the everyday reality of the factory but may have been produced to provide a positive image of the factory specifically for the purposes of attracting multinational retailers or satisfying auditors in order.

In this thesis, the use of multiple sources of evidence through interviewing different level of managers, i.e. senior managers, line managers and female workers of the four case-study factories and different documentary materials from those factories helped to view and capture evidence from various perspectives to validate data and added deeper level of understanding of women's lived experiences. Gaining meaningful insights about the experiences of female workers in Bangladeshi readymade garment industry thus involved a constant process of triangulation of data which involved comparing and contrasting multiple sources of evidence gained from first-hand impressions, interview data and documentary materials. This, in turn, strengthened the validity of this study (Yin 2009).

Although being an 'insider' researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding of a population, it may also raise questions about the objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of the results (Kanuha 2000). Burnard (1991) argues that in qualitative enquiry difficulties often arise in analysing the transcripts and presenting findings in an honest and reliable way. He recommends two methods for checking validity and guarding against researcher bias. The first consist of asking two colleagues who are not involved in the study but who are familiar with the process of category generation to read through three transcripts to identify a category system. The second is to ask three interviewees to read the transcripts of their interviews and write down the main points that emerged from the interview. In order to ensure the further validity of this study, the involvement of colleagues was required so as to verify whether the inferences have

been drawn accurately. Therefore, interviews were recorded and care taken to ensure this material was rigorously coded so that researcher preconceptions or familiarity with participants did not overly affect the interpretation of the data. Then, the interview data and narratives were given to two colleagues who were not involved in the study so that they can confirm the validity of the information and the narrative account. This process allows peer de-briefers to act as a sounding board for ideas by providing written comments on its accuracy and truthfulness. By seeking the assistance of peer de-briefers, the validity of the study was enhanced (Crewwell and Miller 2000). The next sections discuss ethical issues and present the limitations of the study.

4.9 Ethical Issues

4.9.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

All the ethical issues outlined by the University guidelines were considered. The main ethical issue that was considered in the research is the need to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The interviewees in the study were individuals who are employers, production workers and union members from four RMG factories in Bangladesh. It was made clear to respondents being interviewed that they were not under any pressure to provide information to the questions if they felt uncomfortable. They did not need to provide their names, but were required to mention their role within the organisation, their length of service with the organisation, their responsibilities, their experiences regarding work, the problems they face in the workplace etc. Participants were reassured that the study was strictly for academic purposes and their responses would be anonymised, and would not be shared with other respondents and names would not be attached to any quotes. Following the University of Leeds ethical guidelines, collected data from the interview records were downloaded, encrypted and stored on the University's secure M drive.

4.9.2 Written Consent and Written Information Sheets

Participation in the interview was dependent upon obtaining the consent of respondents using the University consent forms which were made available on the interview date. Respondents were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study whenever they wish. With regard to interview briefing sheets, detailed information regarding research objectives, interview prompts and structure were explained rather than requiring them to read this due to their low literacy levels. The time and venue for the interview was fixed at the convenience of the respondents that took place in the weekly day offs at their homes. At the end of the interview,

the respondents were thanked for their involvement and the researcher asked for their time for further clarification if needed after the interviews were over.

4.10 Limitations of the Study

Though rich data was generated regarding women's experiences of work, the study has a number of limitations. In this research, other external agents who have influence on the internal management of RMG factories, including the relevant government officials (such as labour inspectors), and MNCs were not interviewed. Although representatives from the government and MNCs were not interviewed, their influence was examined by means of the views of the top managers of the case-study factories. The two RMG factory owners associations, namely BGMEA (Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association) and BKMEA (Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association) were also not interviewed, though both these organisations have an immense influence in the RMG industry, for example in terms of wages. However, the main focus of the research is the different internal management practices within the four RMG factories and the experiences of female workers within them. Another limitation might relate to the selection of cases used for the case studies. Two complete subcontracting chains within and outside EPZ would be better for comparison instead of only one subcontracting chain. Due to time constraints, only four factories were considered for this research.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided detailed information regarding the research methodology chosen and a rationale for this. The theoretical position adopted as being most appropriate for this study is critical realism. This thesis uses multiple-case study as research design to answer the research questions and meet the objectives of the study. Data obtained from employers and female workers through semi-structured interviews was verified by other data collection techniques, including field notes and documentary evidence. The challenges to gain access into the factories, ethical issues, analysis of transcripts were addressed. Finally, the validity and limitations of the research findings were discussed. The following four chapters present detailed analysis and discussion of the thesis generated by this methodology.

CHAPTER FIVE:
REGULATION, COMPLIANCE AND WORKING CONDITIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the RMG industry is regulated in Bangladesh and how this regulation impacts on every day working conditions for those employed. The chapter begins by clarifying the different forms and scales of regulation and the degree of similarity and difference between the various levels of regulation which apply to the case-studies within and outside the EPZ. The focus then shifts to exploring issues relating to Corporate Social Responsibility, discussing how this issue and ethical concerns have underpinned some of the more recent improvements in working conditions as a result of demands made by MNCs. Instances are highlighted which demonstrate the degree to which this regulatory compliance is enforced in practice and its effectiveness, and the possible advantages and disadvantages of regulatory compliance for various stakeholders are considered. Everyday working practices in the Bangladeshi RMG sector are then examined, exploring how factors relating to regulation contribute to influencing these working practices negatively or positively. The various other mechanisms which help to explain variation in working practices and conditions in the case-study factories are also discussed. The concluding section of the chapter provides a critical summary of the impact of regulatory compliance on working conditions in the four case-study factories. This chapter demonstrates that it is the RMG owners and MNCs who have the agency to determine the working practices and conditions rather than women who work in the case-study factories.

5.2 Regulation of the Bangladeshi RMG Sector
5.2.1 Current Regulation

This section clarifies the different forms and scales of regulation and the degree to which these may overlap or differ, since the RMG industry in Bangladesh is subject to two separate regulatory regimes, depending on whether the factory is within an EPZ or not. Most non-EPZ factories are Bangladeshi owned and all are covered by the provisions of the Bangladesh Labour Law (2006). This Law was hailed as a landmark achievement for Bangladeshi factory workers and was intended to help develop positive working relationships between employees and employers (War on Want 2009). It is wide-ranging, covering employment of workers,

determination of minimum wages, compensation for industrial injuries, formation of trade unions, resolution of industrial disputes, worker health, safety and welfare issues, and apprenticeships (Faruk 2009). The Ministry of Labour and Employment has the primary responsibility for monitoring Labour Law enforcement via two state agencies: the Directorate of Labour (DL) and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments (CIFE).

The EPZ factory, New Era, however, is regulated by the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) (Instructions No. 1 and 2 (1989)), which are enforced by BEPZA itself. These detail minimum wage rate and various elements of labour compliance, such as appointment letters, working environment, termination procedure for owners and a Code of Conduct for workers (Eusuf *et al.* 2007). As an autonomous body, under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office, BEPZA is the agency currently responsible for overseeing the management, control, operation and development of the eight EPZs in Bangladesh (BEPZA 2013). Much of the investment in the EPZs comes from foreign companies, which gives EPZ factory owners and employers significant bargaining power in relation to labour legislation (Murayama and Yokoto 2008).

Finally, both non-EPZ and EPZ factories and the suppliers that produce goods for them are also expected to meet the Codes of Practice/Conduct established by specific MNCs (e.g. Next, Tesco, GAP, Primark), most of which are based on core principles from ILO conventions and aligned with the Ethical Trading Initiative's Base Code. Each multinational buyer takes responsibility for assuring compliance with the terms of its own Codes of Practice, using this as a tool to assist buyers in selecting and retaining suppliers (Baral 2010). In addition, associations set up by the industry itself were also originally intended to enforce labour standards in the RMG sector. The BGMEA and BKMEA were established to monitor and report on the implementation of relevant legislation in factories. However, both associations operate outside any enforceable legal framework, and have proven unwilling to pursue cases of non-compliance in their member factories (War and Want 2009).

5.2.2 Similarities and Differences in Regulation

The overlap between the various issues addressed by the three forms of regulation currently in force in Bangladeshi RMG factories is detailed in Appendix VI. With regard to the general differences between the two key pieces of legislation, the Labour Law (2006) is more thorough

and wide-ranging than BEPZA Instructions 1 & 2, which do not provide coverage of topics such as working hours and overtime, safety and security issues, discriminatory/ indecent behaviour, forced labour or child labour. In such cases, EPZ factories are expected to follow the relevant national labour laws. BEPZA Instructions 1 & 2 also state that each firm operating in the zone may have their own rules regulating the terms and conditions of employment but these company rules may not be less favourable than those contained in the Instructions.

On paper, leave entitlements appear more generous for non-EPZ workers, with more earned leave, higher sick leave pay, and more public holidays. However, in practice, interviews revealed that these workers do not receive any of the benefits to which they are legally entitled except public holidays. BEPZA Instructions 1 & 2 also highlight a range of additional benefits for EPZ employees, including higher wages and more wage-related benefits. A comparison of monthly minimum wages, wage scales and job descriptions applicable in both areas is provided in Table 5.1. This shows that EPZ workers have five minimum wage grades whilst the non-EPZ factories have seven, and it is evident that a large difference exists between these wage grades for EPZ and non-EPZ factories, with EPZ workers entitled to larger monthly salaries than their non-EPZ counterparts.

As noted earlier, BEPZA Instructions 1 & 2 highlight additional benefits for EPZ employees, with employers liable to pay a minimum of 10% annual increment on basic wages and a production and attendance bonus, and also to provide a food allowance and transport facilities. The re-calibration of minimum wages in 2013 awarded some of these benefits for the first time to non-EPZ workers including a 5% annual increment, transport and food allowance. At the same time, allowances for the EPZ workers were also adjusted upwards. In addition, New Era workers enjoy provident fund benefits not available in the other non-EPZ factories. Under this scheme, a sum equal to 20% of their basic wage is deposited each month into a provident fund providing a lump sum on retirement. This consists of 10% deducted from the worker's basic wage and another 10% provided by the company. Women in New Era are paid one extra day's basic wage as a so-called menses bonus by the management, which is provided only to women to encourage them for participating in waged work.

TABLE 5.1: MINIMUM WAGE SCALES FOR WORKERS IN THE EPZ AND NON-EPZ FACTORIES

EPZ (NEW ERA)			Non-EPZ (TRENDMAKER, FASHIONWISE, AND STYLE STAR)		
GRADE	Minimum monthly wage (2010)	Minimum monthly wage (2013)	GRADE	Minimum monthly wage (2010)	Minimum monthly wage (2013)
Apprentice (Trainee)	Tk. 2700 (US$ 39)[22]	Tk. 4480 (US$ 56)[23]	Apprentice (Trainee)	Tk. 2500 (US$ 36)	Tk. 4180 (US$ 52.25)
Helper	Tk. 3350 (US$ 48)	Tk. 5600 (US$ 70)	Assistant Sewing Machine Operator, Assistant Cutter, Line Iron Man and Other Assistants/Helpers	Tk. 3000 (US$ 43)	Tk. 5300 (US$66.25)
NO EQUIVALENT			General Sewing Machine Operator, General Button Machine Operator and Other Machine Operators	Tk. 3322 (US$ 48)	Tk. 5678 (US$70.97)
Junior Operator	Tk. 3855 (US$ 55)	Tk. 6440 (US$ 80.50)	Junior Sewing Operator, Junior Cutter, Folder (Finishing Section), Junior Packer, Junior Marker and Others	Tk. 3553 (US$ 51)	Tk. 6042 (US$75.52)
Operator	Tk. 4263 (US$ 61)	Tk. 6860 (US$ 85.75)	Sewing Machine Operator, Cutter, Marker, Quality Inspector, Packer and Others	Tk. 3861 (US$ 55)	Tk. 6420 (US$80.25)
Senior Operator	Tk. 4720 (US$ 67)	Tk. 7280 (US$ 91)	Senior Sewing Machine Operator, Senior Cutter, Senior Quality Inspector, Senior Line Leader and Others	Tk. 4218 (US$ 60)	Tk. 6805 (US$ 85.06)
Highly Skilled	Tk. 7600 (US$ 109)	Tk. 11200 (US$ 140)	Mechanic, Electrician, Cutting Master	Tk. 7200 (US$ 103)	Tk. 10900 (US$ 136.25)
NO EQUIVALENT			Pattern Master, Chief Quality Controller, Chief Cutting Master, Chief Mechanic	Tk. 9300 (US$ 133)	Tk. 13000 (US$ 162.5)

Source: Bangladesh Gazette from Ministry of Labour and Employment 2010; 2013, BEPZA circular from Prime Minister's Office 2010; 2013.

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[22] Calculations were made at the exchange rate on 31 October 2010: US$ 1= Tk. 69.72.

[23] Calculations were made at the exchange rate 24 December, 2013: US$ 1= Tk. 80.

Appendix VII illustrates how the Primark Code of Conduct compares with the ETI Base Code and also cross-references this to the relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations. For the most part, the UK-based clothes retailer's Code of Conduct (like those of many of its competitors) matches the ETI Base Code virtually word for word. MNCs normally inform the factories about their code of conduct early in the purchasing process, presenting these in a written form together with quality requirements. Management are also asked to display a poster in the factory to inform workers about the code and these were visible on factory premises in both Bangla and English.

In theory, all factories that produce goods for the big multinational brands, whether EPZ or non-EPZ, must operate in full compliance with all applicable national laws (2006), rules and regulations including those relating to labour, worker health and safety and the environment of the respective country along with specific buyers code of practice provided by the buyers (Code of Practice: GAP 2007). Where the provisions of local/national law and the buyer's own code of practice/conduct address the same subject suppliers are expected to apply the provision which affords the greater protection to its workforce (Code of Conduct of ETI; Next). The codes also specify that buyers or their representatives should get unrestricted access to all relevant factory records at all times, whether or not advance notice is provided (Code of Practice: GAP 2007). However, suppliers are generally vague in terms of auditing arrangements, and frequently do not provide sufficient detail. The next section examines the degree to which regulatory compliance is enforced in practice by MNCs and considers how the case-study factories respond to this.

5.3 CSR and Response of Case-studies
5.3.1 The Auditing Process

In order to check if a factory is complying with its code of conduct, an importer conducts an audit of the factory. These inspections are carried out by buyer's own compliance staff and/or third-party auditors nominated by them, who can either be locally based or international. Some MNCs start auditing even before contracts have been signed, checking that labour standards are adequate before they start sourcing from a factory. Usually the process begins with a detailed questionnaire for factory

management which assesses labour standards and if there are shortcomings, buyers outline measures to be taken with a time frame for improvement. This paper exercise is then followed by actual monitoring on the ground. The factories must sign a contract agreeing to abide by the relevant Code of Conduct prior to receiving orders.

Importers often operate with a grading system which means that certain baseline requirements must be satisfied before they will work with a firm, but new suppliers are not required to comply with all these demands immediately. Instead, these requirements are introduced gradually, as noted by the General Manager (GM) of Style Star:

> *Before signing the contract for any order, buyers want to check that some basic requirements regarding physical working conditions and health and safety issues are being met. Their list of requirements is endless. But they don't expect you to meet all the requirements immediately and allow time to meet these. We assure buyers that we will consider the specified requirements within a specific time frame, otherwise they won't confirm the contract.*

> *Mr. Asad, GM, Style Star*

During inspections auditors typically walk through the factory visually inspecting the physical working environment from a health and safety perspective (including emergency exits, fire extinguishers, canteen provision, toilet facilities, passageways, ventilation, cleaning, safety equipment, and noise levels) and relevant documentation (payroll and bonus records, working hours, time cards, personnel files, application of internal regulations and collective bargaining agreements). They also select a random sample of workers from the factory floor, and ask them questions and allow them to raise any issues of concern about the factory. Auditors can also interview workers off the factory premises, to check if they are being paid the legal minimum wage and overtime rate, whether management has prevented union activities, etc. Management should not be present during these interviews but in practice this is not always the case (see below). A compliance failure would usually be triggered by:

- Evidence of use of verbal, physical abuse, psychological or sexual harassment.
- Evidence of inadequate health and safety measures or equipment, i.e. fire safety, electrical safety.

- Evidence that necessary protective equipment or clothing is not being used by workers, i.e. masks, gloves, or ear plugs.

According to Mr. Alam, New Era Officer (HR and Compliance), in the case of serious violations, a factory is usually given 30 days to take action with a follow-up inspection taking place within 60 days.

Interviews with managers confirmed that multinational buyers do create some pressure in which labour codes have favourable outcomes within their factories, to certain extent. In the case of New Era and Fashionwise, a representative from one buyer also works on the factory premises to ensure product quality. Although this individual has no direct monitoring responsibility, they do play a role in compliance issues regarding working conditions within the factories. Auditors can make multiple visits to factory premises and, to certain extent, this helps to improve working conditions in the factory, as the New Era Manager explained:

For the yearly building audit, the factory is informed 5-7 days in advance so that necessary papers, such as planning building permission and construction approval,[24] can be made available. Unannounced visits to the factory by compliance audit inspectors, either by the local representatives of the buyers or foreign representatives of specific buyers can also take place at any time unannounced so that management can't prepare to hide violations. Following the Savar disaster, buyers now send their own technical team for compliance audit. If buyers didn't push for their codes of conduct to be implemented, working conditions in the factories wouldn't improve. After [Savar], some buyers wanted to see our building construction papers. Our factory building load test was carried out by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and we've submitted this to our buyers to prove the report is fine.

Expert views vary concerning whether audits should be announced or not. Auditors often prefer announced audits because the factory can then prepare for the visit, ensuring, for example, that the managers required are available for interview or that relevant documentation is accessible (Stern 2002). The not-for-profit social audit

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[24] Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK), the Capital Development Authority of the Government of Bangladesh, is a Bangladeshi public agency responsible for coordinating urban development, for building permission and construction approval in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

organisation GMIES, based in El Salvador, argues that announced visits "are rich in information because they are top-to-bottom inspections, while unannounced visits are reserved for follow up on specific points so that monitors can count on the surprise effect" (Stern 2002: 35). More advanced approaches currently use a combination approach depending on where they are in the cycle of auditing and remediation (i.e. the initial audit might be announced, but not the follow-up visits). In Romania, research found that in factories where one buyer was allowed to make unannounced visits, better labour conditions seemed to prevail (Clean Clothes Campaign 2005).

Two similar accounts of buyer visits were given by the management at New Era and Trendmaker respectively which illustrate the extent to which the auditing process is central to ensuring compliance and ultimately in improving working conditions:

The factory has consistently adhered to national and multinationals regulation and is therefore able to provide improved working conditions for workers according to compliance standards. Multinationals always insist on legal minimum wages and overtime rate being paid. We give more than that because we provide food and transport allowances for workers which aren't provided by non-EPZ factories. We're very concerned about our factory working environment. We've installed a fuse system which means if there's a short circuit the machine cuts out automatically so it can't cause fires or other hazards. Buyers' requirements regarding working conditions such as adequate lighting and ventilation, safe drinking water, enough toilets for men and women, canteen facilities, childcare facilities, have all been very strictly maintained since the factory opened.

Mr. John, Senior Manager, New Era

We strictly conform to buyer's requirements regarding the safety of personnel, machinery and working practices. Buyers do frequent announced or unannounced inspection every six or twelve months to check the working conditions in the factories. Due to this audit, we always try to keep on top of safety issues and ensure other facilities are operational such as the nursing room for new mothers, the health centre, and crèche.

Mr. Harun, Officer-in-Charge (O-i-C), Trendmaker

The New Era and Trendmaker account reflects a much more rigorous approach to the auditing process and suggests that this does have an impact on the provision of facilities for employees. On the other hand, when the management at Style Star were questioned regarding audit, very different accounts of buyer visits were given by the management there:

Buyers visit once a year. Usually we conduct meetings in a hotel or they can visit the factory if they wish. In that case we clean up the factory and decorate so that they like it when they come. They know we're a non-compliant factory. They mainly come to see whether their product is being manufactured to a standard quality or not, whether clothes are being left on the floor where someone can walk on them. They mostly want to see the quality of the finished product. They know this is a non-compliance factory, but they also inspect for fire safety [...], whether there is any child labour, whether we have sufficient staircases [...], medical facilities [...], a lunch room for workers. Buyers find many faults when they visit this factory, for example, we don't have enough fire extinguishers; staircases are too narrow; we use child labour; there are no medical facilities inside the factory; and clothes are left on the floor.

Mr. Asad, GM, Style Star

The Style Star interviewee perceives that the emphasis of the infrequent visits is on quality control in production and therefore focuses on cleanliness and décor rather than core compliance issues such as Health and Safety. His reference to conducting meetings with buyers in a hotel rather than on factory premises seems to confirm that this is largely a paper exercise. It should be noted that auditors do not conduct regular inspection in the small factories knowing the fact that these small factories are not even covered by national legislation.

Managers confirmed that factories are monitored multiple times a year on behalf of each of the global brands they work for, therefore labour codes are more genuinely followed in some areas, such as in terms of health and safety provisions, legal employment entitlements, use of child labour, with regard to gender discrimination, and treatment of labour in all the case study factories, except Style Star. The clearest benefits to workers from codes of practice related to improvements in areas linked to occupational health and safety, including fire drill and safety training, use of personal protective equipment,

safer use of chemicals, and provision of adequate lighting, ventilation, toilets and drinking water, as most of the women at New Era, Trendmaker, and Fashionwise mentioned:

Every month we do two or three training courses such as orientation for newcomers, training on fire drill and fire fighting, use of personal protective equipment and health awareness. Training lasts from half an hour to an hour. Each floor has some male and female workers who receive fire fighting training. Only representatives [25% of the total workforce] receive fire fighting training. If there's a fire I know what to do and I'd be able to protect myself and help other workers escape. I also know how to use a needle guard so my finger's never been needled while sewing.

Afroja, Senior Operator, Fashionwise

I remember when I first joined a non-EPZ factory; the drinking water and the toilets were very dirty. But in this factory there's a water cooler on each floor providing clean drinking water. Health awareness training taught me not to share glasses for drinking water. We've got enough toilets and separate facilities for men and women. Liquid soap is provided in the toilets. The factory floor and toilets are cleaned at regular intervals. We're happy with the physical working conditions at the factory.

Farzana, High Skilled Operator, New Era

Besides improved health and safety provisions, this study found significant changes in the use of child labour in all the case-study factories, except Style Star. This is largely due to a bill placed before the US Congress in 1992 by Senator Tom Harkin calling for a ban on the importation of goods to the USA which had been produced abroad by child labour (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2006; Amin *et al.* 1998). When The Child Labour Deterrence Act of 1993 came into force, employers greatly reduced child labour levels in the RMG industry. Interviews with management confirmed that fear of losing contracts from multinationals forced employers to adhere to codes of practice regarding child labour. Although the data suggests that nearly a third of the female interviewees began working in the RMG industry as children or adolescents when the interviews were conducted there were no female workers under 18 (with one exception at Style Star).

Some improvements were also noticeable in terms of provision of legal employment entitlements due to managers' awareness of buyers' code of conduct. The legal minimum wage was paid to all workers within the specified time frame (except for Style Star) whereas Paul-Majumder and Begum (2000) previously found that employers not only failed to pay the legal minimum but also commonly withheld money owed to workers. The latter is a management strategy designed to prevent workers from seeking better employment elsewhere. However, despite these improvements there was no evidence that codes of practice had led to a substantial increase in income, such as a living wage.

As Chapter Six will show this study found minimal changes with regard to gender discrimination and treatment of labour. Buyers' non-tolerance of abuses has helped to reduce discrimination and harsh treatment towards workers, to some extent. Around 70% of the female interviewees in all the non-EPZ case study factories claimed that their employers paid wages according to government-fixed minimum rates and that most female and male workers in the same job category received equal pay. New Era workers reported that there was no wage differential for males and females within a particular grade.

Also, a limited positive effect on supervisory relations was noted at Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star. Managers are not only aware of buyers' codes but also much of this change had been achieved by women's resistance at the workplace, labour mobility and labour market flexibility. The majority of interviewees in all non-EPZ factories (90%) reported that verbal abuse had greatly reduced in the last two or three years. No abusive attitudes on the part of supervisors or managers were reported at New Era.

Cursory visits by auditors, who may not be well briefed in advance, can identify obvious breaches of codes but short interviews (limited to 15 minutes per worker) may fail to identify less visible but more serious workplace issues such as discrimination, harassment or limitations of the right to organise (Clean Clothes Campaign 2005). Barrientos and Smith (2007) argued that codes are viewed as part of the managerial prerogative, often from a paternalist perspective of 'knowing' what is in the best interests of workers. They are rarely seen as a means of providing workers with agency

or empowering them to access or collectively negotiate their rights. As the next section shows, when compliance with the Code of Conduct itself becomes the major focus, companies can lose sight of the fact that the process is intended to improve working conditions for employees and, instead, managers get better at cheating.

5.3.2 Mock Compliance

Interviewees, both management and workers, revealed the extent to which the non-EPZ factories in the RMG sector ignore legislation or merely pay lip service to it. Some managers were extremely frank about the audit process, revealing the sophisticated games they played with auditors and their 'audit talk' exposed struggles, manipulation and drama, which are analysed in this section. Female workers also revealed confidential information when interviewed outside the workplace beyond the reach of management. Two non-EPZ factories, Trendmaker and Fashionwise, claimed to be compliant with relevant regulation/Codes of Practice but it became apparent from interviewees and their day-to-day experience of working conditions that, in reality, this is not the case. Interviewees from these two factories highlighted the fact that workers are coached in preparation for audits, and that in the latter case, contrary to auditing best practice, workers were expected to talk to visitors in front of managers:

> *They told us: If buyers ask "How long are your working hours?", then reply: "The factory closes at 7.00pm and we don't do any work after 7.00pm". If they ask: "What did you have for tiffin* [snack break] *yesterday: cake, banana or egg?", then reply: "I didn't have anything because the factory closed at 7pm". If they ask if the factory was open on Friday* [the weekly day off]*, tell them: "No".*
>
> *Tumpa, Operator, Fashionwise*

The Clean Clothes Campaign's report (2005) notes that in Chinese factories all supervisors have a coaching manual which covers how to prepare production line workers for audit so that they will give the auditors standard answers complying with labour law. This does not appear to be the case in the Bangladeshi RMG context but most women at Trendmaker and Fashionwise explained that prior to audit they were briefed by supervisors or line managers about how to behave and answer questions from the auditors if they were picked for interview:

We can't tell buyers the truth because when they visit and talk to workers, our management's also there. We only say what they've taught us to the buyer. We tell them that we get a salary within five working days. We can't say that we don't get the leave we've earned. I haven't had any for two years. If I leave this job I don't think I'll even get that because many workers have resigned but they still haven't received what's due to them.

<div align="right">Moni, operator, Trendmaker</div>

Sometimes auditors are simply careless in their approach, making basic errors, such as allowing factory managers to select the workers for interview. Moreover, Mr. Alam (New Era) noted that although most auditors who need interpreters usually bring their own, sometimes they use a manager in this role. Worker interviews are intended to play an important role in social audit because they enable auditors to 'dig deeper' beyond the visual inspection and to cross-check claims made by employers about labour conditions and working practices in their factories. Therefore, they should take place in an atmosphere which encourages workers to trust the auditor and speak openly. However, management were present at these interviews in New Era, Trendmaker and Fashionwise. Some female workers at the non-EPZ factories expressed concerns about speaking openly in audit interviews, even if management were not present:

If I don't answer the questions correctly or if I tell the truth I could risk losing my job. If I say I didn't get sick leave when required then management will find out. The auditor will discuss this with management afterwards and they will know my ID number. Then, the supervisor will tell me not to come back to work.

<div align="right">Rehana, Operator, Trendmaker</div>

Female interviewees from all the non-EPZ case factories and even EPZ women clearly understood the message from management that obtaining orders from buyers was dependent on maintaining the factory's reputation and that any individual who threatened that reputation would be dismissed. Moreover, these women actually saw it as being their duty to convince the auditors since without orders, there would be no more work. Not surprisingly, most women, like Rehana, were worried about the

implications of being selected and preferred to lie to protect their jobs and future income.

As the Clean Clothes Campaign (2005) and Frank (2008) note, although social audits are meant to expose violations of workers' rights, factory managers can employ a wide range of techniques to deceive auditors, including coaching employees on how to lie during interviews, and showing false time cards and payroll records. Some even maintain a model factory where auditors are welcomed, whilst subcontracting out most work to other factories. Failing to disclose subcontractors is a very common industry practice.

In addition to coaching workers on how to respond to auditors, interviewees at non-EPZ factories revealed that management prepared for audit by cleaning up the workplace, and ensuring that toilets met hygiene requirements by providing paper towels and soap on the day of the visit. For the duration of the visit, workers were also compelled by supervisors to use legally required protective equipment such as needle guards, masks, and goggles, even though they usually failed to enforce this since the women themselves preferred to work without them due to the discomfort they caused in high temperatures. Managers also temporarily unlock first aid boxes and fire exits during visits and then re-lock them afterwards.

Two other interviewees, both of whom would have been classed as child labourers, recounted how they had been helped by other staff during inspection visits by buyers. In the first case this was achieved simply by keeping the child out of sight:

When I started at the garment factory I was ten years old. […] An aunty of mine working in a garment factory helped me get a job. When the buyers used to come they kept me hidden in the toilet so they wouldn't see me.

Rita, Operator, Trendmaker

In the second case, a line chief was involved in what essentially amounted to emotional blackmail of the visiting buyers:

When I started as a helper in this factory, I was 14 years old. One day buyers came to the factory and realised I was a child. […] They said I was too young and should finish secondary school and then return to the factory. Following their instructions, I returned

home. However, the line chief appeared the following day, telling me I was needed at the factory. […] So I returned. The same buyers returned to the factory one day and recognised me. When they asked why I'd returned, I said nothing. Then the line chief explained that they needed workers and, in tears, she told them that my parents couldn't work and we had no land of our own. She added that my family were very poor and if I didn't work, my younger sister's education would be stopped. So, I needed to work somewhere. After listening to her, the buyers told me to carry on working at the factory.

Afroja, Operator, Fashionwise

Management at Trendmaker revealed their scepticism about their factory's commitment to compliance, providing two specific examples of initiatives they believed were merely attempts to impress the auditors. The first related to the provision of a non-existent training centre:

We have a training centre for the purposes of compliance. In reality, we don't have time to train workers and generally recruit skilled workers. But on paper, there is a training centre […] in this complex which consists of one room. Sometimes we set it up to show buyers.

Mr. Harun, O-i-C, Trendmaker

The second example concerned a scholarship scheme for the children of production workers at Trendmaker (although this only applied to managerial level supervisors). This was awarded annually on the basis of children's results covering studies up to higher secondary level. Trendmaker's production manager questioned his company's motives for this:

Factory management only pay a few children's educational expenses. This is just to show buyers that we are doing some good work. Awarding these scholarships is in the company's best interests to show buyers so they can get more orders.

Mr Masud, Production Manager, Trendmaker

Fraud is a major problem in the field of social audits. Elsewhere the practice of document-falsification has been well-noted: double book-keeping, especially of payroll documents and time cards, has become common practice in countries producing

garments and shoes. Kahn (2003) revealed that 'counter compliance' has become a sophisticated art in Chinese factories where overtime and wage records are routinely falsified to avoid revealing illegal labour practices. A Clean Clothes Campaign's (2005) report showed that in Kenya, the amount of overtime shown on worker timecards is reduced to meet the national legal maximum of 60 hours.

Mr. Zakir, a manager at Fashionwise, acknowledged that "*For audit we do some cheating with buyers like many non-EPZ factories*". This entailed falsifying overtime records to hide real working hours from buyers. The factory produces two different sheets for recording overtime: one for buyers showing only two hours of overtime per day whilst the other carries details of the actual overtime worked for HR. Payslips never show more than 52 hours overtime in a month.

The findings of this study demonstrate the inadequacies of the buyers' auditing process as well as managers' attempt to appear to be committed to compliance with labour standards. Allowing managers to be present when workers are being interviewed is against auditing best practice (Murshid *et al.* 2003), and workers are unlikely to complain about their treatment in front of management and risk losing their jobs. Equally, managers at these non-EPZ factories have become adept at developing systems to ensure mock compliance, such as reassuring buyers they comply with regulations concerning training facilities even though no training is provided.

In the context of the rise of 'fast fashion' which is associated with tight production lead times and frequent fashion changes in the international market and in a context where manufacturers, whether large or small, compete to get whatever order they can, managers claimed that multinational buyers themselves effectively encourage labour right violations such as a rise in double book-keeping, long working hours or overtime:

We know that more than two hours' overtime breaks national legislation and the buyers' code of conduct, so why do we violate labour laws? We keep double documents because there are few options available to us. If we followed the codes of practice we wouldn't be able to deliver order on time because we're given such short lead times. If we miss shipment, then we have to pay airfreight, which is more costly and then we're left with

very limited profit or none at all. So, we need workers to do overtime to meet the production deadlines set by buyers.

Mr. Taher, Merchandise Manager, Trendmaker

The next section discusses buyer demands and supplier responses in the case study factories.

5.3.3 Buyer Demands and Supplier Responses

In terms of negotiating prices with multinational buyers, senior managers at all the case study factories stated that buyers are demanding by nature. They always pressurise the companies they deal with by threatening to move production elsewhere, if the price is not reduced or their offer is not accepted. Moreover, they can bring extreme pressure to bear on factories in order to complete orders before the deadline. If there is a production delay, then the factory is held responsible so, in order to meet the exact order lead time, a company may be forced to send the order by air instead of sea, adding significant costs and lowering profit margins. Senior managers at the case-study factories explained that if the shipment is not ready by the deadline, buyers may reject the order completely, require a discount of five to ten percent off the total price, or, in the worst case scenario, order the factory to destroy the whole order without providing any compensation. The following example illustrates the extent to which the major multinational brands are able to exercise power over the Bangladeshi providers:

We've stopped working with X [a multinational sportswear company]. *They're very critical and put lots of pressure on to get their order done. Their orders also tend to be very complicated. For example, they ordered one item consisting of five pieces in which five different designs and colours needed to be used to manufacture the products. They told us to sew on different tags, for different market prices, and use different sized polyester. It takes extra workers to complete this type of production. […]. There's also pressure for on-time shipment. Once* [in 2007] *we couldn't send what we'd produced by the deadline, so they told us to destroy their order and forbade us to sell these products on the local market. They didn't provide any compensation.* [...]. *They don't understand the difficulties this creates for us. They just want their product delivered. However, we now try to avoid them because if we refused directly we would stand to lose orders from five other multinational retailers.*

Mr. Mohidul, Manager, New Era

This example reflects the typical contradictions in the stance of certain high-profile buyers who insist on higher standards, whilst at the same time attempting to make unreasonable demands within shorter lead times. Freidberg's (2004) study of the ethical complexities of food retailing has drawn attention to the double-standards displayed by buyers. Even though suppliers bear the cost of improved welfare, they are rarely rewarded by retailers with higher prices or even guaranteed business or consistently large orders (Ruwanpura and Wrigley 2011). Retailers focus on price rather than ethical standards since many companies still want to deal with the lowest bidder meaning that 'ethical sourcing' often becomes a game where suppliers constantly compete to provide the best quality and most competitive garments to multinationals for the lowest price.

5.3.4 Compliance Winners and Losers

A senior manager at Style Star mentioned that the cost of compliance creates greater difficulties for medium and small firms than large ones. For large factories, these are not regarded as important since they are fixed overheads which do not significantly increase per unit cost. However, it may be too expensive for a small firm to comply by making new investments, particularly since many often rent buildings with low standards, and may have to let orders go, and ultimately, go out of business. As previously noted, there is evidence that buyers are aware that for factories at the lower end of the supply chain, compliance with certain aspects of the codes is too expensive and that, at least initially, they settle for fulfilment of minimum safety requirements, as the following example illustrates:

> [A UK brand buyer] *told me: "We've placed orders and will place more next year but you've got to make the factory semi-compliant with regulation. You'll have to fulfil minimum requirements. If we don't see that then we won't place any more orders […] You've got to keep vehicles inside your compound, not blocking employee access outside". […] I'll have to pull down a wall to do this. I told them I need time to do it. If we take orders from big brand buyers, their requirements are huge. […] X* [a UK brand buyer] *want me to complete their requirements within six months. One of their buyers told me: "Your factory must have two wide staircases inside and outside. All machines must be set up according to our layout. Each worker must have a box to keep clothes*

clean. Medical and childcare facilities have to be provided". I'll add another floor to make two new rooms for these facilities.

<div align="right">

Mr Asad, GM, Style Star

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Although the General Manager seemed confident that he would be able to meet this company's requirements, such demands are likely to increase and it is unclear how small factories of this type can remain profitable as the level of investment escalates. If the small subcontracting firms close down the real losers are the poorest female workers who do not receive severance pay or their due salaries. Sometimes they will be forced into jobs with even worse working conditions such as domestic servants or day labourers because of very limited employment opportunities open to Bangladeshi women, as a New Era interviewee explained:

There are many jobs available for men who can work as rickshaw pullers, car drivers, day labourers, street vendors, construction workers and many others but women can only work as domestic maids, agricultural labourers or in brick crushing on construction sites. There's no better job available for women with low educational levels.

<div align="right">

Mr. Mamun, Unit-in-Charge, New Era

</div>

Adhering to buyer requirements clearly has important implications for the cost structures of entrepreneurs. For obvious reasons, subcontracting firms such as Style Star find it difficult to ensure compliance with labour standards because of their limited capacity to cover the additional associated costs and it is unlikely that the orders they might receive would cover the outlay required by MNCs.

5.4 Working Conditions

5.4.1 Comparing Conditions in Case-study Factories

The aim of this section is to examine every day working practices in the Bangladeshi RMG sector, exploring the extent to which factors relating to regulation influence working practices negatively or positively for employees at the four case-study factories. Table 5.2 provides a comparative overview outlining the extent to which case-study factories are compliant with applicable national, BEPZA or MNCs regulations. With respect to the final two items (in Table 5.2), provision of transportation and HR departments are not obligatory under the current terms of the Labour Law (2006). It is

worth noting that the new minimum wages for RMG workers published by the Minimum Wage Board on 21 November 2013 included a travel allowance for non-EPZ workers of Tk. 200.

TABLE 5.2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT IN CASE-STUDY FACTORIES

Terms and Conditions of Employment	BEPZA Instructions 1 & 2 (1989)	Labour Law (2006)		
	New Era	Trendmaker	Fashionwise	Style Star
Appointment letter provided indicating Terms and Conditions of Service	✓	✓	✓	✗
Identity card (or equivalent) provided	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conforms to requirements regarding length of working day and overtime	✓	✗	✗	✗
Conforms to requirements regarding night shift work for females	✓	✗	✗	✗
Pays legal rate of pay within specified time frame	✓	✓	✓	✗
Overtime rate paid as appropriate	✓	✓	✓	✗
Termination and dismissal procedures	✓	✗	✓	✗
Severance pay given	✓	✗	✓	✗
One day off per week or equivalent given	✓	✗	✓	✗
Casual leave/paid leave facilities (except for religious festivals)	✓	✗	✗	✗
Fire alarm testing in operation	✓	✓	✓	✗
Fire safety training for representatives	✓	✓	✓	✗
Lunch room in factory	✓	✓	✓	✗
Access to factory doctor	✓	✓	✓	✗
Childcare facilities available in factory	✓	✓	✓	✗
Worker's Welfare/Participatory Committee in operation	✓	✓	✓	✗
Factory provides transport facilities	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Has HR department	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A

Key: ✓ = Compliant with regulation ✗ = Non-compliant with regulations

Stone (2002) has highlighted the important role that an HR department can play when the majority of the female RMG workers are from rural areas, largely illiterate and with little knowledge of human rights or labour rights and standards. When there is no HR department and trade union activities are restricted, workers have limited opportunities to make claims to management regarding pay levels, or to raise issues relating to Health and Safety. Stone (2002) argues that this communication gap can be bridged by the adoption of healthy HR practices.

Table 5.2 illustrates the similarities and differences regarding terms and conditions of employment in the four case-study factories. The only common feature amongst them all is the provision of an identity card (or equivalent) to employees. Some variations in terms and conditions of employment were evident amongst the three non-EPZ factories, although none of them conformed to legal requirements regarding length of the working day, overtime, night shift work for females, and casual leave/paid leave facilities. Overall Style Star's profile with regards to legislation was the worst since, unlike Trendmaker and Fashionwise, it did not provide an appointment letter for new staff or pay the legal minimum or appropriate overtime rate within specified time frame. It was also worst on health and safety with no fire alarm testing or fire safety training in operation. It also had no participatory committee. There were similarities found in employment conditions between one EPZ case (New Era) and one non-EPZ case (Fashionwise) since both complied with termination and dismissal procedures, provided severance pay and gain one day off per week or equivalent to employees.

According to Table 5.2 data, three categories of case-studies can be found in terms of working conditions and working practices. Two 'outlier extreme cases', i.e. New Era and Style Star were very different from all the other cases. New Era had better terms and conditions of employment and is compliant on more safety and security issues than all the other cases; and Style Star was non-compliant in every aspect save for providing some form of ID for workers. Between these two extremes there were two 'middling cases' (Trendmaker and Fashionwise). Both of these had similar levels of compliance to each other, but were considerably less compliant than New Era and much better than the smallest non-EPZ factory, Style Star. This section will compare these three groups

distinguishing similarities and differences in their working conditions and working practices.

5.4.2 Appointment and Conditions of Employment

Interviewees at New Era confirmed they had received appointment letters detailing work standards and regulations, wage benefits, working hours, overtime and other relevant information, together with identity cards which acted as a swipe card in a computerised clocking in and out system. Women at Trendmaker and Fashionwise also received contract letters and their identity cards doubled as swipe cards. Style Star provided neither:

> *I didn't get any appointment letter or documents; no one gets an appointment letter in this factory. Every month we get an attendance card, which gives our name, position, joining date, time of entry into work, late arrival in hours/minutes, overtime hours etc.*
>
> *Nipa, Quality Control (QC), Style Star*

At the end of each month the card must be returned to the time keeper and is retained in case of worker complaints regarding unpaid wages or unrecorded overtime. According to War on Want (2009), an appointment letter serves as a de facto contract and enables workers to prove their status as employees with entitlement to the full range of rights. Women at Style Star, therefore, had no legal standing in relation to their employer and their employer can avoid giving them what is legally due to them by not providing contract letters to them.

5.4.3 Termination and Dismissal

Comments from interviewees suggested that only New Era followed the whole dismissal procedure correctly. To some extent, terms and conditions of employment were better at Fashionwise compared to Trendmaker, since the former gave workers written notice, held enquiry committees and paid dismissed workers any benefits due. In the RMG industry, due to lack of enforcement of regulations by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, staff are often dependent on the owner's personal moral qualms about what constitutes acceptable treatment of workers; some are more considerate than others. At Trendmaker and Style Star labour laws regarding dismissal procedures are

not to follow, neither of which had any HR department, there was no process for termination or dismissal, or for paying workers any benefits due.

Any worker not showing improvement, or frequently being absent is discharged by the supervisor but no written notice is provided to workers.

Naznin, Operator, Style Star

Trendmaker's Production Manager was aware of the shortcomings in their treatment of workers:

Management fires workers without giving any notice or showing due cause. Workers don't even get their dues after dismissal. Frequent absentees should be given written notice but we can't do that in every case. We call and tell them: "You're dismissed from the factory". However, we get something in writing from them before dismissal […] so we have a written record if the dismissed worker goes to Labour Court […]. We keep that record in order to protect ourselves.

Mr. Masud, PM, Trendmaker

Primarily, employers at Trendmaker and Style Star violate the labour law (2006) by not following the dismissal procedure. However, they get their workers to sign that they have received the benefits they are entitled to. This prevents workers going to the labour court to claim their due benefits and employers therefore avoid any legal penalties.

5.4.4 Excessive Working Hours and Obligatory Overtime

Extending the working day beyond the legal maximum is highly characteristic of the RMG sector and although legislation limits the working week to 60 hours of work and overtime, this was a common feature in all the factories except New Era. Female interviewees at Trendmaker and Fashionwise were regularly working more than 11 hours a day, depending on the task required. The Officer-in-Charge at Trendmaker confirmed that many factories, including their own, ignored the law when it was deemed necessary:

Although Bangladesh Labour Law (2006) states that no female workers are allowed to work after 10.00pm most of the RMG factories in Bangladesh ignore this rule; many female workers also do night shifts. In our factory, female workers work after 10.00pm at

night. This is against the law but in case of emergency we need to keep workers on the finishing section. They stay at work willingly.

Mr. Islam, O-i-C (Production, Compliance, and HR), Trendmaker

Although Mr. Islam at Trendmaker stated that female workers did overtime and night shifts willingly, interviewees did not perceive this work as voluntary. Whilst they welcomed occasional overtime as it increased their take-home pay, providing extra money for the household, even when they did not want to do overtime, they felt they had no choice but to work:

There's nothing we can do if we don't feel like doing overtime. My monthly salary is tk.5000. If I don't do overtime, how will I keep my family? Even if I feel tired there's no choice: I have to work. As a worker I have to listen to the company. We work however much overtime they want. They won't allow anyone to leave. If they say "You have to work till 10.00pm today", then that's what we have to do.

Nasima, Helper, Trendmaker

If one day I don't feel like doing overtime, firstly the supervisor checks work pressure and if he's got an extra operator who can replace me, then he'll let me leave the factory; otherwise he won't consider it. He'll force me to do overtime. He'll say: "You have to work overtime until today's target is finished". We don't have any alternative: if a supervisor won't allow us to leave the factory, we have to work. If anyone leaves the factory against their wishes, they lose their job.

Afroja, Operator, Fashionwise

Although overtime work was common at Trendmaker and Fashionwise, they did not face the same degree of pressure as Style Star worker who often had to complete night shifts, working to a punishing schedule when there is shipment pressure:

If we do nights from 10.00pm to 3.00am then we go back to work at 9.00am the same morning for another day's work; that's just one hour later than usual. If it's a full night which is 10.00pm until 6.00am then we start work at 2.00pm that day. If there's shipment pressure we need to start work at 7.00am the same morning and work until it's finished

in the evening. Naturally, workers can't open their eyes during the day but they carry on working due to their supervisor's pressure.[25]

Rina, QC, Style Star

Another worker at Style Star confirmed this mode of working at the small factory:

Before Eid I had to work every day till 10.00pm and I did two night shifts as well. When we have to do that many shifts, we don't get any rest.

Naznin, QC, Style Star

These quotes from workers at Trendmaker and Fashionwise and Style Star confirm the all-important role of the supervisor in ensuring that productions targets are met, by enforcing overtime if necessary. Although the Bangladeshi Constitution (Article 34) states that *"All forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence and shall be punishable in accordance with law"*, neither the Labour Law (2006) nor the Constitution attempt to define what the term 'forced labour' covers (SEBA 2007), thus providing a legal loophole which can be exploited by RMG sector employers to force workers to fulfil production targets by extending the working day as necessary. Managers from Fashionwise and Style Star admitted that overtime in their factories was effectively obligatory:

Multinational retailers are very concerned about overtime hours and told us not to give workers more than two hours of overtime, not to force them to do overtime. But normally we do to fulfil the production target. For example, the workers will have to work overtime till 8.00pm today: that's more than two hours.

Mr. Asad, GM, Style Star

Officially there's no pressure to work but unofficially many things are done to ensure work gets finished [...]. They have to stay till 9.00 or 10.00pm until they reach today's target. Supervisors say "If you don't do your work, then who will?" If a worker won't listen then she gets shouted at. They don't have any choice if supervisors don't allow

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[25] Her description recalls scenes from the documentary film *China Blue* (2005) in which a factory owner agrees to a deal which means his female teenage employees are forced to work round the clock sewing jeans under close supervision in order to fulfil an order. They employ all kinds of methods to try and keep themselves awake.

them to leave the factory. If someone leaves the factory against their wishes, she might risk losing her job.

<div align="right">*Mr. Zakir, AGM, Fashionwise*</div>

Managers gave the reasons for overtime as being the seasonal nature of RMG production, frequent changes in fashion and design in the international market meaning that manufactured products can only be sold for one season. Although they did not say that they take orders beyond their capacity and that tight deadlines enforced by buyers put workers under pressure it is obvious from these quotes that women have to work overtime due to huge production pressure and short lead times. This suggests that, on the one hand, buyers are forcing their suppliers to comply with Codes of Conduct that limit working hours, whilst at the same time, their unethical buying practices are creating the very conditions (such as shorter lead time requires the extension of the working day) that prevents suppliers from complying with these Codes. This finding answers those who questioned that whether fast fashion sourcing strategies of retailers are incompatible with ethical policies at the sites of production (Hale 2000; Barrientos and Smith 2007).

According to the management the situation was apparently very different at New Era:

Though overtime is only two hours, we don't put pressure on any workers to do it. It depends on them. We put up a list on the board for overtime. If any workers don't want to do overtime, they don't have to sign up. There's no pressure to do it.

<div align="right">*Mr. Alam, Officer (HR and Compliance), New Era*</div>

Management at New Era were kin to paint a positive picture of their factory working practices and conditions but given the level of cheating on the part of factory managers at Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star during audits, workers were interviewed outside the workplace about working practices and conditions to ensure they were free to comment without managerial pressure on any negative experiences regarding overtime, withholding of wages, medical and sick leave facilities, incorrect procedures, or abusive management attitudes. Women at New Era confirmed that the factory complies with all of the regulations and that employee welfare was valued by

employers. When asked about working hours and overtime, most New Era women echoed what management had said:

Overtime never exceeds two hours and is totally voluntary. If anyone does not want to do overtime, transport is kept ready for them outside the factory compound so they can go home. […] Supervisors never force us to do overtime. Generally most workers do overtime; only those with personal problems don't. In the morning we sign up for overtime if we wish. They [management] need to know numbers for snacks/tiffin for those working overtime.

Sabiha, Operator, New Era

A key reason for overtime is supplier dependence on imported raw materials. After winning an order, they may have to wait up to a month or longer for raw materials but then RMG production must be completed within the time limit specified by the multinational buyers. Since New Era was able to save time by importing fabrics and raw materials from its sister factory in Korea, it was better able to manage deadlines but elsewhere, keeping to such tight deadlines meant workers becoming overburdened by long working hours. The subject of working hours in the non-EPZ factories clearly serves to reflect the split which exists between the legislative theory and the practical reality of working practices in non-EPZ factories in the RMG sector.

5.4.5 Days off and Paid Leave

Women at Trendmaker and Fashionwise never received paid leave facilities except religious festival holidays. This practice was also followed at Style Star. The nature of production line work involved in RMG manufacture poses some particular problems which are exacerbated by the fact that the factories are working to very tight deadlines, largely the result of the trend for fast fashion (as previously explained in Chapter Two). A Fashionwise manager admitted that tight deadlines can mean workers are prevented from taking leave unless there are exceptional circumstances and an interviewee from Trendmaker stated they were expected to work on their weekly rest day, despite the fact that this contravenes regulations:

If any worker is absent […] then we've got output problems. We have to find another worker for that machine and new workers take time to get up to speed in that process.

Supervisors and line chiefs check targets every hour; that's why they don't allow any workers to take leave. But due to compliance issues, sometimes we have to allow workers leave. If there are serious problems, such as sick parents or sudden accidents involving relatives, or a daughter's marriage etc. Depending on the seriousness of the problem, the supervisor may allow the worker to leave the workplace.

Mr. Zakir, AGM (HR, Administration and Compliance), Fashionwise

Supervisors and line chiefs don't allow leave. I haven't taken any leave for eighteen months, even though every year we're entitled to 14 days' sick leave not counting the weekly day off. Since they don't allow leave we go absent if we feel sick or have any personal problems.

Rokhshana, Operator, Trendmaker

Female interviewees in the non-EPZ factories were not granted casual leave or sick leave or earned leave[26]; most shockingly, Style Star women did not even know about earned leave. New Era female interviewees were granted the leave they required.

A manager at Trendmaker admitted that he deliberately prevented female workers who said they felt ill from going to see the company doctor in order to avoid the possibility of them being granted a period of sick leave, instead taking it upon himself to 'diagnose' the seriousness of the complaint:

If I send [a female worker] *for a medical and the doctor finds that she's really got a problem, then she'll give her seven days' rest. Then I won't get work from her for seven days'. If she comes to me I'll give her one day's leave, she'll go home, take some medicine and be back to work the next day. That's why we don't want to send workers to the doctor if the problem isn't very serious. If a worker has a temperature, the doctor will allow three days' rest. In that case, I tell the worker to take some Paracetamol, rest for two hours and if she feels better, return to work. I do this favour for any worker who I can see is very ill, and not able to sit at a machine and sew.*

Mr. Harun, O-i-C (Production, Compliance, and HR), Trendmaker

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[26] Earned leave refers to leave which employees are due but have not taken. At the end of the year they can take all this leave if they want or receive cash in lieu. In the EPZ factories, one day's earned leave is given for every 22 days' work whereas in the non-EPZ factories, it is 18 days' work. See Appendix VI for differences between leave entitlement in the EPZ and non-EPZ factories.

These examples illustrate that even in supposedly 'compliant' factories employers pay little heed to legal restrictions, to the extent of putting the health and well-being of their workers at risk whether for the sake of minimising wage bills or meeting impossibly tight deadlines.

5.4.6 Wages and Overtime Pay

Interviews revealed that New Era complied with legally prescribed minimum wages and payment dates. Female interviewees at Trendmaker and Fashionwise confirmed that their factories also complied with legally prescribed minimum wages and payment dates, money due should be made within seven working days of the expiry of a wage period. However Style Star was the exception. At New Era, payment took place within five working days of the month, at Trendmaker and Fashionwise this was seven working days while Style Star delayed payment for up to 15 working days. In addition, New Era, Trendmaker and Fashionwise conformed to the law regarding overtime payment to their workers, paying this along with the monthly wages. However, female interviewees from Style Star complained about the irregularity of payment of both wages and overtime, claiming that management often paid their overtime wages late and that this was not paid at double the basic hourly rate as prescribed by Bangladeshi Labour Law (2006). At Style Star the overtime rate was actually only 70% of the regular hourly rate. Irregularity in wage payment is a common phenomenon in Style Star, as the following quotation illustrates:

> *In our factory we always have problems regarding wages;* [the employers] *don't pay overtime wages with the salary. They pay it on a different date and even then, they don't pay the whole amount due. They pay our overtime wages by spreading them over two or three time periods. There's no set pattern and we don't know when we'll get the rest of the overtime money. If we ask about it, they say that they didn't get the shipment out in time, that buyers are delaying payment etc.*
>
> *Naznin, QC, Style Star*

The employment practices in terms of wages and overtime payment are extremely poor in Style Star which is a subcontractor and usually has to wait for payment from the buyers to pay their salary to the workers as they do not have any surplus. Moreover, due

to their non-compliance status, buyers offer this factory lower price for cutting and making, which are sometimes insufficient to cover their production costs and to make profits. Making cuts to these charges impacts on worker earnings since labour cost constitute an important share of the cutting and making charges. This indicates to how power moves down the subcontracting chain.

Legally, employers are entitled to make deductions from wages for various reasons such as absence from duty or damage or loss of goods entrusted to a worker, but section 25 (Labour Law 2006) states that no fine shall be allowed which is more than one-tenth of the total wages receivable by a worker in a particular wage period. However, it was found that employers at Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star imposed deductions which seemed disproportionately large or unfair. For example, if any worker is late for three days, one full day's wages (8 hours) are deducted. If buyers require alterations to be made for any order then deductions are made from overtime wages for *all* quality control workers. If a worker makes a mistake three times s/he may lose up to the total overtime pay for that day as punishment. Finally, if a worker has worked for 10 days and then leaves the factory or resigns from his/her post they are legally due wages. However, the process for recovering these wages means travelling several times to the factory, meaning that many workers simply fail to claim this money.[27] There is no fixed system of deductions, as one female worker explained:

> *Last month I did 94 hours of overtime* […] *Then when all the factories were shut down as a result of the Rana Plaza collapse, they deducted two days' pay because workers didn't work 16 hours during that period. If they increase our holidays they deduct this from our overtime wages. If the factory closes early at 1.00pm due to insufficient work, they deduct the overtime wages for rest of the day. There's no system in this factory. They make up their own system to suit themselves.*

> *Mitu, QC, Style Star*

Deduction of overtime wages as punishment is widespread in many non-EPZ garment factories in Bangladesh. It could be argued that this is a deliberate management strategy to improve profits. Managers' determined the payment system by subtracting from

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[27] According to Mr. Asad at Style Star, this money is donated to the local *madrasa* (where Islamic theology and Qu'ranic recitation is taught) and mosques.

overtime wages where workers are entitled to get double the basic hourly rate for overtime.

5.4.7 Safety and Security Issues

This was probably one of the most concerning aspects of the study's results. The Labour Law (2006) laid down various provisions regarding worker safety and precautions in case of fire. New Era, Trendmaker, and Fashionwise all met these standards. However it was a different story at Style Star. The factory had no arrangements in place to warn workers in the case of a fire. Although there were two possible exits, one consisted of a narrow stairway which would be difficult to access. Bales of fabric or piles of clothes sometimes blocked access between aisles and passageways.

The most disturbing aspect of the lack of fire prevention arrangements at Style Star, and a blatant breach of the Labour Law (2006), was revealed by one of the interviewees when relating her experience of working night shifts at the factory:

*On those days we have to do the night shift, we usually return home from work at 8.00pm, have dinner and then start work again at 10.00pm. If we work till 3.00am, they don't allow us to return home after that. The day I did my first night shift, it was awful. Management told us that if anyone wanted to go home, we had to take responsibility; if anything happened en route, management would not take any responsibility for it.[28] So after the night shift, the factory arranged separate rooms for men and women. **Male workers slept on the first floor beside their machines and both males and females were locked in. The ground floor was allocated for females and this was also locked so that no workers could move around at night.** I thought that if there'd been a fire or an accident like the Rana Plaza building collapse that night, none of the workers would have survived.*

Rina, QC, Style Star

Rina referred to the collapse of the infamous eight-storey Rana Plaza building at Savar. Consumers were alerted to non-compliant working practices in the RMG sector in

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[28] Factories do not provide transportation for female workers, as it is not considered safe for them to go home alone after dark. Bangladeshi society places an extremely high value on women's chastity. Women are expected to be away from public places after sundown. If a woman goes outside alone after dark, she may face harassment, molestation or even rape (Zaman 2001).

Bangladesh and there were calls to force major High Street fashion retailers to audit their supply chain (Clean Clothes Campaign 2013). The collapse also highlighted the failings and inadequacies within the Bangladeshi building inspection system and sparked demonstrations in Dhaka as workers demanded their wages and compensation for the families of the dead (*The Guardian* 2014).

The Style Star practice was particularly worrying, given the poor safety record of the Bangladeshi RMG industry with regard to fires. There is some disagreement about the exact number of deaths but according to the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, 431 workers died in 14 major fire incidents between 1990 and 2012 (Tazreen and Sabet 2013). The most recent major incident took place at Tazreen Fashions, an eight-storey RMG factory in the Ashulia district on the outskirts of Dhaka. On the night of 24 November 2012, a fire broke out and of the estimated 1,150 people working that night to fill orders for various international brands, 113 were killed and another 200 injured. The fire reportedly originated from an electrical malfunction on the ground floor, where bales of yarn and fabric were improperly stored. While many workers managed to escape to an adjacent building, others were burned to death or suffocated. Sixty nine bodies were recovered from the worst affected area, the third-floor sewing unit (Tazreen and Sabet 2013).[29]

When interviewed, neither managers nor female workers referred to any serious accidents having taken place in any of the factories. Minor cuts and scratches are seen as an occupational hazard and on rare occasions workers get 'needled' due to their own carelessness or there are problems involving a snap button machine[30] which is running on automatic or has become loose.

The findings of this study regarding physical working environment are relatively better than those of previous studies conducted in the Bangladeshi RMG industry (Zohir and Paul-Majumder 1996; Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Ward *et al.* 2004). These studies mentioned that most of the factories they visited were inadequately ventilated.

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[29] Since then another fire at Aswad composite mills in Gazipur on 8 October 2013, led to nine deaths (*Star* online October 9, 2013).

[30] This device is used for inserting studs etc. onto tough material such as denim.

Regular buildings were quickly converted into RMG factories and were not built for manufacturing purposes. They also lacked safety equipment such as fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and fire exits, and toilet facilities were inadequate. Based on the statement of the majority of the women and my observations, all four case study factories, except Style Star, were purpose-built buildings with relatively good working conditions. They had adequate space for workers, machines and storage, and had sufficiently powerful ventilation systems to maintain a comfortable temperature for the workers. Production floors were also equipped with ceiling fans whilst overhead lighting provided correct levels of illumination for close work and avoided undue glare. The factory management ensured the premises were kept clean by removing dirt and refuse, with cleaners sweeping the floor at regular intervals and disposing of waste in appropriately situated dustbins. So, there are some signs that physical working conditions are changing in the RMG sector, although it is not clear to what extent this is due to fears about compliance, or awareness of managers or possibly staff demands.

5.4.8 Representation in Trade Unions

Although Bangladesh Labour Law (2006 section 176) guarantees freedom of association to facilitate industrial relations between workers and employers, in practice, there has been active hostility to trade unions by employers in the case studies who have adopted various strategies to discourage their activities, including maintaining internal network, offering workers short-term increases in wages, bonuses or overtime rates. Interviews with factory managers revealed that senior managers, particularly had little positive to say about the role of trade unions. When asked directly about the role of trade unions within their own factories, two interviewees gave responses which indicated overt hostility to trade union activity. The initial response from Mr. Taher at Trendmaker was simply: "*Trade unions are not allowed in this factory*". However he then corrected his original statement but made it clear that for a series of reasons he thought it unlikely that workers would be involved in such activities:

Workers have the right to be involved in trade union activities but when can they do these? Workers have no time to be involved in unions. If they were involved in this activity and not work they wouldn't get a salary so how would they survive? They

wouldn't be given extra time for trade union activities. If they want to, they can do them outside working hours.

<div align="right">*Mr. Taher, Merchandise Manager, Trendmaker*</div>

He also followed this up by mentioning that *"On every floor there is a female HR officer and a male assistant HR officer who listen to the problems of workers and keep record of [these]"*. The response from Style Star's General Manager indicated not only his firm opposition to trade unions but also appeared to carry an underlying threat:

Workers aren't allowed to form a trade union. In Bangladesh most of the factory owners have recruited their own relatives to their factory. So if any worker is planning to demonstrate, management will know immediately and the relatives can control the workers.

<div align="right">*Mr. Asad, GM, Style Star*</div>

Another General Manager claimed that an internal network was a useful way of informally solving issues, and protecting his own interests and those of the company:

Internally I have a network with some workers in this factory so if any problems occur I get to know in advance and try to solve issues through them. As I run one whole floor I can maintain this technique and I think it is necessary for all managers at my level in the RMG sector. At my level many officers [in-charge] *get beaten up by workers. If there is any possibility of anti-management activities or outside agitation, I protect the factory from any type of agitation.*

<div align="right">*Mr. Harun, O-i-C (Production, Compliance and HR), Trendmaker*</div>

Senior managers make use of their own internal networks or relatives, who are constantly alert to prevent worker demonstration. Feldman (1992: 123) stated that certain village kin are selected as "*informers who rat on workers engaged in worker actions in exchange for pay increases and promotion*".

However, the manager of the only EPZ factory included in this study was not totally anti-trade unions. Whilst he believed that they had a useful role in play in industrial relations elsewhere, he argued that they were not appropriate in Bangladesh because workers did not have the level of education and skill required to operate as negotiators:

We're not in favour of trade union because of our situation. The workers don't know what's meant by a trade union, although the educational level [here] *is high in comparison to non-EPZ factories. Trade unions haven't brought any positive changes to Bangladesh. The trade union leaders I've met in other countries are educated and can negotiate for their workers' rights but in* [Bangladesh] *the level of knowledge a trade union member requires, such as legal knowledge to negotiate, they don't have that knowledge and they even don't know how to communicate with owners or top management at the factory.*

Mr. Mohidul, Manager, New Era

Though senior managers tried to suggest that there is no positive role for trade unions, on the other hand, many line managers who were in daily contact with the workforce were in favour of active trade unions in the factories. They explained that they had a role to play in ensuring workers' rights were upheld and in reducing labour unrest. However, they were also convinced that the BGMEA leaders would prevent this, fearing that they would lose their control over the RMG workers.

None of the four case studies were unionised but had established workers' committees as alternatives. New Era had a Workers' Welfare Association (WWA) with all the elected members being production workers voted for by their fellow workers. The WWA mainly worked on behalf of production workers, solving any problems rapidly, as the following quotation of Sabiha illustrates that:

If any worker argues with any supervisor during production, then a WWA member solves that problem. If any worker faces problem in getting extra leave after taking all their paid leave, they help workers to get extra leave. If workers become ill, they're taken to the factory doctor or even to BEPZA medical central. Few days ago a pregnant worker was crossing the road and had an accident with a motor bike while returning home. Then she gave call to WWA member and one of the members went there and took her to BEPZA medical. He was there until her check-up finished.

Sabiha, QC, New Era

Trendmaker and Fashionwise had welfare or Participatory Committees (PCs) consisting of management and workers' representatives chosen by management. Nothing existed at Style Star. Female workers from non-EPZ factories generally thought that the PC served

little practical purpose and some voiced a concern that committee members take management's side and do nothing about complaints. She provided an example from her own experience regarding payment of overtime wages:

When I got my salary I saw that an hour's overtime wage hadn't been added. I asked a PC member to help me get my money. He said that he'd see but I know he won't do anything about it. That's why female workers don't tell their problems to committee members.

Husneara, Operator, Trendmaker

As these members are facilitated by management, they themselves do not want to act or speak out against any factory malpractice. Interviews with female workers revealed that none are active trade unionists and most have no understanding of trade unions.

As Table 5.2 shows, research findings suggest that New Era complies with all the regulations and generally offer conditions of work which are better than those in the non-EPZ factories. Kabeer and Mahmud (2004b) carried out a survey in 2001 which undertook a systematic comparison of wages and working conditions for female employees in the EPZ, non-EPZ, self-employed and other waged workers and they concluded that among all categories of women, EPZ female workers enjoyed the best working conditions. They were more likely than female workers in non-EPZ factories to be tested on entry, issued with a contract letter, and given permanent status; to know about labour laws and to be offered benefits including childcare facilities, paid leave, medical facilities at work, and transport facilities.

As Table 5.2 also shows, non-EPZ factories can vary considerably in their level of compliance. Management at Trendmaker and Fashionwise comply with some regulations, meaning that their female workers enjoy some of the benefits of better working conditions but are still subject to exploitative working practices. They rarely enjoy paid leave and are frequently expected to work overtime, including night shifts.

The smallest factory, Style Star, offers the worst working practices and conditions and is non-compliant with most regulation as Table 5.2 illustrates. This means there is no medical care, no childcare facilities, no lunch room, and no clean drinking water inside

the factory. Female workers at Style Star recounted not only having to work night shifts but also being kept locked in on the premises when they finished their shift. They also explained how irregular or late payment of wages or overtime deductions creates major financial difficulties and insecurity for female workers. The following section will explain the underlying mechanisms which were responsible for producing the differentiation and similarities within the 'outliers' and 'middling' cases.

5.5 Factors Underpinning Differences and Similarities in Working Conditions among the Case-Study Factories

The variation in working practices and conditions across the two 'outlier' and the two 'middling' cases appears to be due to key causal mechanisms effecting outcomes. These factors include factory status (EPZ or non-EPZ), regulatory environment, specific ownership characteristics, size, position within the supply chain, contracting relationship with multinationals, educational level of workforce, and type/complexity/price of the product manufactured. Some of these factors, i.e. regulatory framework, contracting relationship, ownership characteristics, and firm position within the supply chain might be considered as more important than others, which have significant effects in creating the conditions within the four cases. In particular, regulatory framework enables us to see exactly how different forms of regulation (either by Ministry of Labour and Employment, or BEPZA or MNCs) impact labour conditions positively or negatively. Contracting relationship (either ACR or OCR) is useful for understanding how multinational contractual arrangements facilitate employers to improve/deteriorate working conditions at their respective factories. Ownership of firms (either domestic or foreign owned) offers us an opportunity to understand how it works within the case studies to manage short lead times. Also, position of the firms within the value chain is important since it helps us to identify whether employers have considerable power to negotiate with buyers or not for better product prices, which in turn, has impact on working conditions. All the factors are discussed below.

5.5.1 Zone-Location

As noted earlier, export-oriented garment factories in Bangladesh are situated both inside and outside EPZ areas. New Era was chosen from the EPZ whilst Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star are all in non-EZP areas. The EPZ is of key importance for the Bangladeshi economy in terms of investment; it is thus under direct supervision by the Prime Minister's office and governmental authorities ensure these areas operate well in order to attract foreign direct investment.

The findings of this study shows that in terms of working practices and conditions New Era was superior to all the non-EPZ factories because being located within an EPZ means it already has many facilities provided by the government, which in turn, helped to improve working conditions there. For example, even though Bangladesh has a serious energy crisis, EPZ companies get cheap, reliable power, as well as generous 10-year tax holidays, freedom from red tape, duty-free imports, protection from national laws, cheap labour and low rents (Vidal 2012). Non-EPZ factories rarely receive incentives or bonuses from government; indeed, the senior managers of these factories claimed that they are severely affected by issues such as shortages of electricity or gas, politically motivated strikes, and problems in the port:

> *Although the government is now giving a 5% incentive to the knitted sector, there is nothing for the woven sector. Production can't be completed on schedule due to inadequate government support such as lack of electricity and gas, poor quality transport, institutional weaknesses, political unrest and strikes when products can't be shipped, loading and unloading problems in the ports, delays in shipping raw materials, setting up letters of credit and financial bureaucracy which means multiple trips to set up bank loans.*
>
> *Mr. Mosharraf, GM (Production), Fashionwise*

New Era had better working practices and conditions than all the non-EPZ factories, but amongst these, Trendmaker and Fashionwise were better than Style Star, the smallest factory in this study. Like many of the small factories in the Bangladeshi RMG sector, Style Star merges imperceptibly into the informal economy, characterised by low pay and poor working conditions.

5.5.2 Regulatory Environment

The ability of the labour inspectorate to enforce labour laws and standards also impacts on the working practices and conditions at New Era where the terms and conditions of Instructions No. 1 and 2 (1989) are strictly enforced by management and BEPZA (which has responsibility for monitoring labour conditions in all its member firms) a fact attested to by New Era workers. Murayama and Yokoto (2008) noted that the enclave nature of the EPZ makes it easier to carry out audits and inspections, ensuring compliance, which leads to more favourable terms and conditions of employment for EPZ workers such as the women at New Era.

On the other hand, management failure to abide by labour laws as well as lack of enforcement of these by the Ministry of Labour and Employment personnel helps to create unfavourable working conditions in the non-EPZ case-study factories. Both of the state agencies responsible for monitoring working conditions at these factories are widely regarded as being financially corrupt and under the influence of factory owners, meaning that in reality they do not work on behalf of the workers but rather maintain an overly close relationship with business owners (Rahman and Langford 2012).

A second major problem with Labour Law enforcement is that the Office of the CIFE has woefully inadequate resources to carry out its mission. In the past it has been suggested that this non-enforcement could be intentional, in order to sustain investment (Parr and Dhanarajan 2002 cited in Murshid *et al.* 2003). In 2007 this office had only 48 factory inspectors responsible for inspecting conditions in 22,000 factories, including the 4,000 RMG factories that lie outside the EPZs (Rahman and Langford 2012). Recently, the Ministry of Labour and Employment announced that they intend to hire 200 inspectors for RMG factories following pressure from international trade unions and the US senate in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster (Westhead 2014). Although the introduction of the Labour Law (2006) represented a major and much needed advance in workplace regulation, the Bangladeshi government needs to do more to implement and enforce existing legislation to protect workers' rights.

Therefore, findings suggest that introduction of the Labour Law (2006) has had minimal impact on worker terms and conditions in the non-EPZ factories but pressures from

MNCs to implement their codes of conduct have helped improve the physical working conditions at Trendmaker and Fashionwise. Because they deal directly with buyers, these two non-EPZ factories have to observe certain minimum labour standards. The management there believe that compliance with local law and buyers' codes of practice will help them maintain existing contracts and obtain further orders. As they need a continuous flow of orders from foreign buyers to remain competitive in the world market, they try to impress auditors by considering their demands, which ultimately compel them to improve their working practices and conditions at their respective factories.

Regulation (either by government or MNCs) has virtually no impact on Style Star, which is positioned at the lower end of the supply chain. Small firms of this type are not even covered by national regulation and usually this does not come to the attention of multinationals. Pressure from multinational buyers can vary considerably (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b) and working conditions are generally very poor in these small factories.

5.5.3 Specific Ownership Characteristics

The three non-EPZ factories were owned by local manufacturers whereas New Era had a partnership with a Korean firm. Smith *et al.* (1990) stated that such joint ventures not only transfer technology but also help disseminate knowledge of advanced techniques for labour control and productivity improvement. New Era's Korean partnership made them a more efficient outfit, since it upgraded their technology and meant there were no delays to their raw material supply which helped to improve working practices and conditions at New Era. However, after getting an order from buyers, the non-EPZ factories have to wait for imported raw materials for at least 25 days which puts pressure on workers to complete production target with short lead times. Since New Era saves time by importing fabrics and raw materials from its Korean factory partner, it does not have to pressurise workers about overtime whilst non-EPZ factories overburden female workers with long working hours in order to make their deadlines.

Some authors have speculated that workers in factories owned or managed by foreigners are not treat as well[31] as those owned or managed by locals (Hart 2002; Locke *et al.* 2006; Lee 2008). In this research, the opposite was found to be true since New Era workers were treated well by the Korean managers and enjoyed better labour conditions. Some women at New Era noted that when Korean managers visited the floor they had less interaction with these managers due to linguistic difficulties. Korean managers spend relatively little time on the factory floor monitoring, generally leaving the daily operation of the firm to local line and mid-level managers.

However, at Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star which were domestically owned, non-EPZ factories, women were treated less well by the local managers. Supervisors were largely left to their own devices in managing their lines, meaning they sometimes abused workers verbally to ensure production targets were met (see Chapter Six).

5.5.4 Firm's Position within the Global Value Chain

New Era's position in the global value chain due to its partnership with a Korean firm and its relationship with the buyers, who are internationally recognised brands, means it is in a better bargaining position than the three non-EPZ factories. Acquiring textiles and other accessories required without delay as a result of its Korean partnership allows it to manage short lead times more easily. As noted previously, New Era only assembles the products since its Korean partner carried out marketing activities and secures orders since it has considerable power due to its business interests in other countries, such as in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Its favourable relationships with MNCs allows it to negotiate better product prices and make higher profits, which ultimately enable them to afford the costs of full compliance. As Baral (2010) observed, fully compliant factories enjoy a number of benefits, including winning direct orders from prestigious buyers, a more consistent flow of orders, enhanced company image, improved labour relations and reduced turnover rate.

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[31] Hart's research on Taiwanese apparel manufacturers in South Africa refers to them as continually complaining about the 'low productivity' of their African workers' which they attributed to "laziness, low levels of education, and ingratitude". Not surprisingly, Hart found that workers were deeply resentful of such treatment (Hart 2002:166-67, 190-191). Furthermore, research by Lee (2008) points to stark differences between mainland Chinese managers and African workers with regard to attitudes to work that emphasised cultural difference and stirred up antagonism.

Two of the non-EPZ factories, Trendmaker and Fashionwise, deal directly with buyers and have been able to develop their relationship with them by proving themselves capable of reaching the required standards in terms of product quality and working conditions required by MNCs. This has led to a degree of reliability in orders. However, the fact that Style Star, like many small factories, mainly depends on subcontracted work from larger factories impacts negatively on working conditions there (Khatun *et al.* 2008). Style Star is at the mercy of larger factories wanting to maximise their profits by placing orders with small factories at the lowest price possible. If work is plentiful, managers in Style Star could ask for a reasonable price, but when they needed orders, they accepted whatever they were offered.

This situation persists because MNCs are continuously competing to make profits in a highly competitive labour market (Dicken 2007), rather than think about the interests of the workers at the bottom end of the supply chain. It is difficult for small firms to increase their capital investment on minimum safety requirements if they are trying to remain profitable in the competitive world market.

5.5.5 Factory Size

Moran (2002:16) has claimed that larger, more bureaucratic, "modern" factories are better placed to introduce modern management and personnel systems and thus, it would be expected that they would generally treat their workers better than smaller, less formally managed plants. This statement is consistent with the findings of this study. The larger the factories were, the better the working conditions. New Era, Trendmaker, and Fashionwise were all comparatively large in terms of manpower in comparison to Style Star, and working conditions there were better than in the smallest non-EPZ factory.

5.5.6 Contracting Relationship

The type of contracting relationship between factories and buyers, whether transactional or relational (Sako 1992), can impact on the working practices and conditions for women workers in the RMG factories. This research shows considerable variation in trading practices among the case-studies investigated. Three non-EPZ suppliers (Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star) had more ACR practices and OCR supplier

found in EPZ. Interviews with managers in non-EPZ case studies revealed they had a somewhat distrustful trading relationship with buyers. As previously noted, managers were adept at developing systems to ensure mock compliance, such as reassuring buyers they were compliant with regulations when in reality this was not the case. Buyers may also have known that they were being cheated by managers to some extent; therefore they did not place all their orders at once.

Mr. Mosharaf, General Manager at Fashionwise noted that '*although we have consecutive contracts with our buyers they place the next one when the previous order is nearly finished, each order taking 90-120 days to execute*'. On the other hand, the New Era manager, Mr. Mohidul highlighted their long term relationship with buyers, noting: '*We don't have to think about contract from buyers we deal with but we do have to renew compliance agreements every year. There is an implicit guarantee of steady orders from buyers we deal with*'. Long-term mutual relationships with suppliers motivate both parties to behave: the New Era wants to preserve the relationship, and the multinational wants to preserve its reputation. Due to long term relationship with buyers New Era had a more consistent flow of orders from buyers they deal with, which allowed New Era to save transaction costs[32] and spend more on worker welfare. On the other hand, short-term engagement with various multinationals increased transaction costs, which negatively influenced the working conditions and working practices of non-EPZ factories.

5.5.7 An Educated Workforce

As seen in Chapter Four, New Era workers were more educated in comparison to those at non-EPZ factories. In this study, on average, women from the New Era had more years of schooling than those at the non-EPZ factories: 10 as opposed to 6 years respectively. The higher level of education of the EPZ workforce was one of the key

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[32] Transaction costs include search cost (associated with finding new trading partners), negotiation cost (involve in arriving at agreements over prices, quality and delivery and other terms and conditions of trade), inventory cost (associated with managing the product flow from the supplier to the buyer), monitoring costs (associated with inducing compliance and mutual observation of contractual terms), trust building cost (which are for investment into creating convergent expectations about mutual competence, ethical codes and business norms), and adjustment costs associated with changing design, market conditions, etc.(Sako 1992).

factors underpinning and safeguarding improved levels of labour standards in the New Era. Due to their higher level of education they were better able to adapt factory rules and regulations. Findings of this research confirmed another study conducted in Sri Lankan EPZ by Wrigley and Ruwanpura (2011), who suggested that the relatively high levels of education amongst Sri Lankan garment workers played a major role in developing and maintaining labour standards in Sri Lankan factories.

5.5.8 Type/Complexity/Price of the Product being Manufactured

Much has been written about the importance of skill and tacit knowledge in the production of high value added and differentiated products. Many authors suggest that factories producing more complex (and expensive) products, requiring greater skill, are more likely to treat their factory workers as valuable assets (Kochan *et al.* 1986; Piore and Sable 1984; Locke *et al.* 2006). Since New Era produces high-end rather than basic garments, they have to invest time and effect in training workers and attempt to retain them by providing better working conditions. Managers at New Era noted that they prioritise efficiency which means quality production with minimum wastage. To this end it employs experienced industrial engineers, production technicians, quality assurance teams, and human resources and administration teams together with thousands of semi-skilled and skilled workers. Engineers use new technique regarding line balancing, wastage control and constant monitoring to constantly improve efficiency levels, enhancing their competitiveness in the global arena.

All of the factors addressed above have impacted positively on labour conditions at New Era. New Era's approach to people management gives it a "high profile", and this is similar to other firms such as John Lewis and, historically, Cadbury's in the UK[33] (see Smith, C., Child, J., and Rowlinson, M. 1990). New Era has achieved a public

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[33] Cadburys not only had a purpose-built 'model' factory, but also tried to build a reputation for themselves as 'model' employers. The company developed a strong identity based on its personnel policies, which included welfare and recreational provisions (for example, recreational facilities for both males and females, sick pay at fixed rates, pension schemes, training for slow and inefficient girls, a complaints and suggestions scheme, and composite grading that gave every female worker on the plant the same grade and rate, a policy intended to encourage team building and break down a legacy of individual or small-group piece working that saturated the production culture in the factory). Cadburys also enjoyed harmonious relations with their own workforce and the wider union movement (Smith, C. *et al.* 1990). Both male and female workers were well satisfied with the manner in which they were treated, and deemed themselves fortunate to be employed at Bournville (Cadbury 1892: 72-73 cited in Smith, C. *et al.* p.56).

reputation for managing its labour force differently. A documentary on the company was broadcast on a popular Bangladeshi TV programme, celebrating the fact it is considered one of the best factories in Dhaka EPZ, particularly in terms of management-worker relationships. Management interviewees commented on this positive interaction at New Era:

Most of the time I stay on the line and interact with workers on a frequent basis to find out what pressing problems they may have and what we can do to improve the factory. Lot of interaction and familiarity with workers leads them to feel free to raise any concerns. We try to create a cooperative atmosphere between management and workers because this ultimately boosts productivity.

Mr. Farhad, QC Assistant Manager, New Era

Mr John, senior manager, stated: "W*e deeply value our human resources and endeavour to offer the best working environment in this factory. We also pay the maximum wages and bonuses to our workers for their benefit*". New Era had more sophisticated human resource management techniques that helped to make business run more smoothly and has arranged welfare provisions for their workers which were much higher than any offered to non-EPZ employees. It is held up within Bangladeshi society as a kind of template for more progressive management since management there is deliberately following an alternative way of approaching management-labour and work-home relations. It can therefore be said to constitute a 'special' or 'archetypal case'. Not surprisingly, the direction of travel for women garment workers was demonstrated to be towards New Era rather than Style Star (see Chapter Six, section 6.3.3 for a more detailed discussion of this point).

5.6 Conclusion

In terms of the impact of regulation and compliance on working conditions in the four case-study factories, the findings of this research suggest that regulation (both government and MNC regulation) has a variable impact on the working conditions for female RMG workers. It shows that regulation has led to considerable improvements in the working conditions at the EPZ factory compared to the three non-EPZ factories in terms of payment and the provision of other wage-related benefits and bonuses. The key

causal mechanisms such as zone-location, regulatory environment, specific ownership characteristics, size, position in the global value chain, contracting relationship with multinationals, educational level of the workforce and type of product being manufactured have all had a positive impact on labour conditions at New Era.

On the other hand, among the non-EPZ factories, the working conditions at Trendmaker and Fashionwise are better than those at Style Star, the smallest factory in this study. Regulation, particularly multinational regulation has led to some limited improvements in certain aspects of working practices in the non-EPZ factories. Thus, workers at Trendmaker and Fashionwise do receive the statutory minimum monthly wage and physical working conditions at these factories, including safety measures, are better than findings from previous studies in Bangladesh revealed (Zohir and Paul-Majumder 1996; Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Ward *et al.* 2004; War on Want 2009). However, the situation at Style Star, representative of the smallest factories in the RMG sector, regulation was very different and regulation appeared to have had virtually no impact on day-to-day working practices.

Working conditions at Trendmaker and Fashionwise are considerably better than those at Style Star because their direct dealings with international buyers and pressure to implement their Codes of Conduct at the two larger factories, meaning that they have been able to prove themselves capable of reaching the standards required by MNCs or to at least be working towards these both in terms of product quality and working conditions. Style Star, on the other hand, which is positioned at the lower end of the subcontracting chain, is dependent mainly on large factories for its contracts and cannot benefit from engagement with buyers demanding compliance due to the huge initial investment and running costs required. Evidence also suggests that the benefits MNCs bestow on the Bangladeshi RMG industry do not reach the lower end of the supply chain even though all factories form part of the same system. Style Star's weak bargaining position within the supply chain means it is locked into a vicious circle from which it cannot escape.

Interestingly, the finding of this research that the employment conditions of New Era/EPZ are superior appears to contradict previous studies conducted elsewhere in the world (Elson and Pearson 1981; Lee 1984; Ward and Pyle 1995; Karega 2002; Pyle and

Ward 2003; Wright 2006). These authors have mentioned that the terms and conditions enforced by EPZ authorities are not favourable to factory workers there. It has been claimed, for example, that factory owners in Kenya were allowed to violate labour laws as a result of the fact that the EPZs are protected by government policies favouring foreign investors (IRIN 2004). The report by the Kenyan Human Rights Commission noted that a failure to observe basic human rights, inadequate laws, inefficient government labour officials and weak trade unions. Citing examples of EPZs in Dominican Republic and Mexico, Holdcroft (2003) argued that poor working conditions result from a lack of enforcement of existing laws and legal restrictions on trade unions. The fact that in conjunction with other key factors/ causal mechanisms mentioned above, Labour Instructions Nos. 1 and 2 are strictly enforced by the BEPZA authority has greatly improved working conditions there in comparison with those in non-EPZ case-study factories in Bangladesh.

Ensuring compliance is very important in the RMG industry, both to maintain quality of products as well as meeting the expectations of the competitive export market. Many international buyers now demand compliance with their own codes of conduct before placing import orders for Bangladeshi RMGs (CPD 2003; Haider 2007; Khatun *et al.* 2008). Evidence suggests that buyer pressure has improved working conditions in the case study factories, to certain extent. The management at non-EPZ factories want to impress buyer auditors and believe compliance with regulations will help them to obtain further orders. However, this desire to satisfy buyers leads some to engage in fraudulent practices, such as producing two versions of overtime figures, or coaching staff to answer appropriately when questioned by inspectors. Others appear to continue to contravene regulations regarding child labour or forced labour.

In this respect, the findings of this research support those of Rahman (2011) who concluded that most owners of non-EPZ factories did not follow labour laws and showed little interest in self-regulation. Some even openly admitted that they did not comply. Following buyer Codes of Practice, or rather paying lip service to these, is largely a strategy for maintaining existing contracts and obtaining further orders. Traditional attitudes towards workers' rights still persist and rather than treating their

workers in a fair and humane manner, too many owners remain corrupt and greedy, viewing employees as simply a resource to be exploited.

In many ways, retailers and fashion brands are the most powerful players in the RMG supply chain as they are free to source from wherever they wish. MNCs could use this power to promote better standards by enforcing their ethical policies, as consumers increasingly demand transparency and accountability. However, instead of using this power responsibly, too often most companies chase the best deals across the globe in order to maximise their profits. The findings of this study show that the position of MNCs is self-contradictory and they can be said to exhibit double standards which support the findings of another study conducted by Ruwanpura and Wrigley (2011) on Sri-Lankan apparel manufacturing industry. MNCs insist that owners improve working conditions in their factories, which require a major capital investment to implement (Mondal 2003). However, at the same time they pressurise them to reduce their prices, and improve their quality and productivity levels, threatening to move production to other factories or other countries where they can obtain lower-priced products. They are able to set the terms of trade in what is often dubbed as a 'race to the bottom', driving down prices and lead times, forcing countries to lower their standards in a bid to become more competitive. Current industry practices thus tend to serve to intensify the levels of exploitation at every stage of the production process.

Although MNCs make great play of their commitment to CSR to customers, the unreasonable demands which they make in terms of production targets with increasingly tight deadlines and ever lower prices help, in turn, to drive factory owners to further pressurise their already overburdened workforce. If their ethical policies are to be at all meaningful, MNCs need to address their behaviour and assume responsibility for the impact that this has on working conditions throughout their supply chains.

Chapter Six will provide a comparative analysis of women's experience of work in the case-study factories and explore strategies of resistance and '*organizational misbehaviour*' (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) which female workers employ to protect and advance their personal interests within the factories, in the absence of a meaningful system of collective bargaining.

CHAPTER SIX:

'MISBEHAVIOUR': WOMAN'S RESISTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on women's forms of resistance to the managerial control regimes to which they were subjected in the workplace, comparing, wherever possible, the differences and similarities between EPZ and non-EPZ factories. The chapter begins by exploring different aspects of control regimes in the Bangladeshi RMG sector, focusing on the gendered division of labour, supervisor-worker relations, worker surveillance, and gender and managerial control. Using Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) concept of Organizational *Mis*behaviour and their framework outlining dimensions of misbehaviour previously detailed (section 2.2.3), this chapter then presents a detailed analysis of the various forms of so-called 'misbehaviour', which women engage in to resist the control regimes to which they were subjected.

Therefore, it starts by considering how gendered perceptions of male and female work impact on policies and practices enacted within the workplace. Using the example of absenteeism/sick leave, it explores how managerial control and management practices can combine to produce worker 'misbehaviour'. This is followed by an exploration of Chris Smith's (2010) concept of worker mobility as a response to managerial control. The two final sections of the chapter focus on resistance by solidarity and the use and abuse of sexuality in the workplace. A concluding section highlights contrasts in forms of control and resistance in the EPZ and non-EPZ sectors. This chapter demonstrates that within the capitalist control of labour processes, women in general have some empowerment within the system. However, forms of resistance differ based on the control regimes of the RMG industry.

6.2 Control Regimes
6.2.1 Imposing Control

It will be argued that in all four of the case-study factories the management operate a regime of low trust and high regulation, although this is articulated in slightly different ways within each. Low trust-high regulation managerial regimes are associated with the

policy of direct control (noted earlier) and it was noticeable that 'control' was the most recurrent term used by interviewees when referring to qualities required by supervisors.

Control is very important in the garment manufacturing sector. If someone can control workers then <u>he</u> will easily get promotion as a supervisor. Once a worker becomes a supervisor, <u>he</u> no longer sews. So, we check <u>his</u> ability to control, whether <u>he</u> has the capacity to control other workers and get the work done.

Mr. Hasan, Line chief, Trendmaker

As this comment also illustrates in terms of the use of *he/his*, control is viewed as a male quality. From the workers' perspective, however, Ackroyd and Thompson also observe that managerial efforts to impose regulation "*are always contestable and often contested*" (1999: 89). This section examines how control is exercised by largely male supervisors and the extent to which female worker make attempts to contest or resist this.

6.2.2 Gendered Division of Labour

6.2.2.1 Divide and Rule

Self-organisation, according to Ackroyd and Thompson (1999:54), is "*the tendency of groups to form interests and establish identities and to develop autonomy based on these activities*". Self-organisation aims at the effective protection and extension of sectional interests. The characteristics of much self-organisation can be understood as embedded responses to the technical division of labour. This section examines how self-organisation of managers works to control women in the workplace through gendered segregation. This is a strategy and social practice usually implemented by a dominant group taking the better positions to further their domination (Walby 1990).

Garment production is mainly divided into three main sections, i.e. cutting, sewing and finishing. Previous studies conducted in Bangladesh reported that women workers experience sex segregation, with sewing and finishing largely dominated by women (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Jahan 2012). By contrast, women are very under-represented in the cutting, another important section of the garment industry (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000). In this research within the four case factories, the findings

corroborate the findings of these previous studies regarding gender segregation, where women dominated the sewing and finishing sections. The numbers of female workers were the lowest in the cutting sections in New Era, Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star. In addition, interviewees including managers and female workers in the cases stated that cutting functions are mainly executed by male cutters, who are assisted by a number of male and female helpers.

Within the sewing section of these factories, there was further gender segregation in terms of operating machines, as a non-EPZ factory line manager explained:

> *Men usually work on the Kansai sewing machines, feed off the arm, twin-needle machines, and lock stitch machines, where the wages are higher. You've got to have a lot of stamina to use these sewing machines. Men are used to hard work but women aren't, so if we have enough male workers we don't give that work to women. Only a few women know how to sew on those machines.*
>
> *Mr Hasan, Line Chief, Trendmaker*

It is relevant here to refer to Cockburn's (1983) classic study of the British printing industry which found that male workers argued that women could not become skilled compositors or printers on the grounds that carrying out hot-metal composition demanded physical strength which was an essentially masculine quality. They also claimed that men were 'naturally' suited to working with machinery whilst women were not. In this way, males appropriated the technology, tools, machinery and know-how involved in composing print. In the context of the RMG industry something similar has happened, with men being paid higher rates for operating certain types of machinery.

However, there are a number of contradictions in Mr. Hasan's account regarding why women do not use these machines and these also appear in the comments on the same topic by Tumpa, one of the female operators at Fashionwise, another non-EPZ factory:

> *Fewer women work on those machines. They're difficult and dangerous to operate [...] Women find it difficult to operate them because they're so big. It's hard to sew using a feed-off-the-arm machine; women don't sew on those, even though some women do know how to operate them. Many female workers are not keen on using them because it needs hard work and if they operate them, they get chest pains.*

These comments by Mr. Hasan and Tumpa demonstrate that some women do know how to operate these machines and are able to work them, and *when male workers are not available,* they do operate them. As Cockburn (1991) argues, women move into male-dominated jobs when a demand exists for their labour, but men resist or begin to feel alienated, as though the workplace no longer belongs to them. She further stated that men define women primarily in terms of motherhood, and taking that as evidence that women are not suited for or not interested in certain male-dominated jobs. The differential in pay rates, then, does not appear to be a question of a degree of skill or knowledge but simply of physical force. The only thing that stops women from using them is the design of the technology despite Mr. Hasan's attempt to justify this difference in terms of men being accustomed to hard work unlike women.

A good example of how technological design can influence the gender balance can be found in the case of ironing, which has traditionally been considered to be a man's job within the sector. Female interviewees also viewed other jobs such as cutting, carrying and moving heavy things as men's work since these required physical strength, a quality traditionally associated with males. No females worked in the ironing section within the non-EPZ case factories i.e. Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star, where the old heavy equipment is still used. However in New Era, where the change in technology has led to the introduction of lighter automatic irons, women were employed in the ironing section.

Moreover, in the case study factories, women largely belonged to the production worker category, while staff positions were male dominated higher-grade and better paid, which indicates the existence of vertical occupational segregation (Hakim 1981; 2006), but New Era was the exception. Many more women (50%) hold supervisory and managerial positions in the New Era. Within the seven grades of non-EPZ workers, grades 3 to 7 are dominated by female operators and helpers and majority of the workforce of the garment factory is concentrated in these grades. Grade 1 (pattern master, chief quality controller, chief cutting master, and chief mechanic) and Grade 2 (mechanic, electrician, cutting master) are considered to be managerial posts with subsequently higher wages and women rarely hold these grades in non-EPZ factories. Therefore, managers used this hierarchy to dominate women within the factories, and the differentiation in grades

allowed them to pay women lower wages, whilst men, in turn, were more privileged with regard to their higher status in the workplace.

6.2.2.2 Promotion Practices

Due to the assembly line-oriented production, promotional prospects in the RMG industry are very limited and many garment workers remain in the same job throughout their working life which can prove very demotivating. As mentioned above, females often work at the lowest grade workers as helpers and operators, with a very small percentage acquiring posts as supervisors, line chiefs or production managers. Significant differences were found in terms of promotion prospects between New Era and three non-EPZ factories with the latter not having any guidelines covering promotion. Sometimes they promote workers from helper to operator category based on the quality and speed of their work and behaviour. However, at New Era workers were automatically promoted after two years in a particular grade as the following example illustrates:

Here we get promotion after two years working in a particular grade. I work as a senior operator in this factory; after two years I'll be a highly skilled worker. For example, someone earning $95 would automatically be promoted as a highly skilled worker and their salary will rise to $105.

Shilpi, Senior Operator, New Era

As previously discussed in Chapter Five, the role of supervisor, at least in the non-EPZ factories, is perceived as having its own very strong identity, linked to control, a fact which may contribute to the lack of interest which capable non-EPZ female workers expressed in taking on this role, exemplified by the case of Taslima, a married worker aged 25:

I learnt to use the machines within three months after starting at this factory. When the supervisor and line chief saw that I could operate the machines, they promoted me to operator. But if management offered me promotion from the position of operator to supervisor I wouldn't take it. The Production Manager has already asked me to be a supervisor. One of the most important qualities that supervisors need is to control workers and shout at them using swear words such as 'bitch', 'bastard'. I wouldn't be

able to shout at workers. I don't want to have to take abuse from my senior managers and I don't want to shout at junior workers. I know if I became a supervisor it would increase my pay by tk.10, 000 or 12,000. Everyone needs money but I don't want to get involved in any kind of conflict. Even though I earn less, I'm happy with my job.

Taslima, Operator, Fashionwise

Taslima's opinion echoes that of many other capable female workers. For Walby (1990) this behaviour relates to one of the structures of patriarchy, i.e. male violence and she notes that the fact that women routinely experience male violence such as verbal abuse or sexual assault has consequences for their actions. This kind of patriarchal practice generates fear which restricts women's actions and most women significantly alter their conduct and patterns of movement as a consequence of fear of male violence. Therefore, this research reveals that capable non-EPZ women workers were not willing to take up higher positions, particularly supervisory positions, because the role of supervisor requires controlling workers through verbal abuse and masculinised behaviour.

Another operator thought that there was more job security in her current role:

I don't have any desire to become a supervisor. […] If a supervisor can't make the production target then he might lose his job. The supervisor's job is more difficult than ours.

Rita, Operator, Trendmaker

Only one interviewee expressed a desire to gain promotion to this role but thought despite being well qualified she was unlikely to be considered due to the fact that:

Male workers get priority for supervisor posts because when women get married they leave the factory.

Sadia, QC, Style Star

Terborg (1977) notes stereotyping as an important hindrance to women attempting to reach the managerial levels that maintains the notion that woman should not or cannot be successful in management. It is worth noting that women's participation in supervisory and management positions ranged between three and eight percent at

Trendmaker, Fashionwise and Style Star respectively. In future research, it would be interesting to find out whether female supervisors use the same methods of control on the production line workers as those traditionally employed by males or whether they have succeeded in developing different strategies to maintain production levels.

6.2.2.3 Male-Female Income Gap

The practice of occupational segregation leads to women's work being devalued and lower wages for women. Since wages are attached to jobs, this provides the possibility for paying differential wage rates (Walby 1989). Female interviewees in New Era mentioned that there was no wage differential for males and females within a particular grade, though the jobs which require physical strength, i.e. cutting, moving, loading, and hammering were performed by male workers. Interestingly, among the total female interviewees in the non-EPZ factories, some 70% of them claimed that their employers paid wages according to government-fixed minimum rates and that most female and male workers working in the same category received equal pay. However it is difficult to know whether they are talking here about perceived policy or actual practice. The following quotations from a senior manager at Fashionwise and a female worker at Style Star both suggest that, since wages are determined based on performance and experience, there are no wage differentials between men and women:

We grade workers based on their skill point[34] at the time of recruitment; it doesn't matter whether the worker is a man or a woman. Salary is automatically defined according to their skills. Here women do better than male workers; they're more efficient and their grade point is good. Their wages are performance-related.

Mr Zakir, AGM, HR, Fashionwise

Wages are determined on the basis of practical skills at recruitment. If any worker can produce more per hour for a line chief and supervisor, then her wages are higher. Workers get more salary when they are more skilled or are seniors with longer work experience. There is no discrimination in wages for men and women for the same work. It

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[34] During recruitment, candidates sit a practical test where supervisor uses a stop watch to calculate how many pieces of work an operator can sew in a minute. A wage is fixed for that worker depending on the quantity produced.

depends on work performance rather than gender. When a male worker and I started here, our salary was the same.

Nipa, QC, Style Star

However although this may be the government policy the reality may be somewhat different. For a variety of reasons, some 30% of the total female participants in the non-EPZ factories said that male workers in the same grade received tk. 100-150 more. In some cases this was explained by managers as being due to the perceived skill level required to operate certain types of machinery, although as previously discussed this is not really a question of skill but of physical strength required:

We have some machines such as Kansai, feed-off-the-arm machines; they're heavy and need real force. We mainly recruit male workers for this type of machine. The male operators who operate these get the highest salary on operator grade […] between tk.3861 and tk.4200. We try to fix the salary of those running heavy machines at tk.4200, the top of operator grade. However, if I want I can give them tk. 3900 or tk.4000, but they get the top salary at operator grade. There is a wage differential between those who operate plain machines but it's not that much. On average the difference is between tk.100 and tk.150.

Mr Harun, O-i-C and GM, Trendmaker

Salaries paid in the non-EPZ factories are negotiated individually during recruitment, based on performance and skills. The wage is performance-related with a minimum and maximum range for each grade. This wage policy allows employers to differentiate between the wage levels of workers. The individualisation of the wage structure can be considered as a divide-and-rule strategy chosen by management against possible collective action because it creates an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust amongst worker, saying for example that some women earn more for the same tasks. However, the EPZ factory only had five grades of workers with fixed salaries, leaving no scope for differential treatment in wages.

A female worker at Style Star thought there may be other reasons which might explain the difference between male and female rates of pay:

Supervisors and line chiefs generally fix a rate of tk.100-tk.300 more for male workers in comparison to female workers. They say that men need more money for their daily expenses. I think they give a higher salary to the male workers so that they don't get involved in protests and do what they're told by supervisors or so they'll do jobs for them such as carrying clothes from one floor to another.

Rina, QC, Style Star

There is research evidence to suggest that there is a general assumption amongst male managers that women work only for 'pocket money' for luxuries or to make a secondary income contribution to families where the principal breadwinner is a man (Lim 1997; Elson 2014) or that men need an income to support a family, while women do not (Elson and Pearson 1997). The comments above by Mr. Harun and Rina also bring to mind the statement of Walby (1990) that this patriarchal strategy of segregation does not benefit the institution directly, but it does ensure that individual patriarchs are privileged at the expense of women, and it maintains gender differences. Rina's other point seem to highlight a recurrent theme: that of management's fear of the power of male workers and this is an area which deserves further attention in future research.

To sum up, women's experience was varied in terms of gendered division of labour in the four case-studies. Non-EPZ women were segregated within the sewing and finishing sections in the factories, put them into the lower-paid positions, with limited prospects for promotion to supervisory levels. Instances of wage differentials between men and women were also evident in the non-EPZ factories. On the other hand, EPZ women were not subject to pay differentials and got fixed salaries according to their specified grade due to company policy regarding recruitment and promotion. There was also evidence of women moving into supervision and getting higher salaries.

6.2.3 The Supervisor-Worker Relationship

In order to understand the task of the supervisor it is useful to begin with a brief reminder about the production process in RMG factories. Modern RMG production relies on chain work, with each operator normally responsible for completing one element of the garment, assisted by helpers and then passing this onto the next operator in the chain until the garment is finished. Sewing machines in the production floors are set up one behind another in rows to facilitate this process and every worker is assigned

a fixed production target per hour. This is calculated during recruitment when a supervisor notes how many pieces a worker can sew in a minute and converts this into an hourly rate.

Supervisors oversee the progress of individual helpers and operators whilst quality controllers inspect garments to ensure appropriate standards. A line chief is responsible for the smooth operation of a particular production line, whilst the production manager is responsible for the overall production process in the factory floor. A record is kept of the hourly production of each worker and supervisors check this every hour against the worker's target, notifying any problems to the line chiefs or production manager. Supervisors, line chiefs, and production managers are all accountable to the factory manager and general manager. Interviews with the managers and female workers revealed that very few of these posts were held by women in the case study factories although the percentage was much higher in New Era.

The worker-supervisor relationship was found to be cooperative in New Era where line managers tried to understand worker problems and helped to overcome any work-related problems as Sabiha mentioned:

Supervisors don't swear at us if we make any mistake in work. They're not abusive with us. The supervisor demonstrates how something should be done if we face any problem with making up. If I don't understand something then I ask them how it's done. They make us understand how to do it and what to do if there's a work-related problem.

Sabiha, High Skilled QC, New Era

All of the interviewees in New Era commented that line managers do not use any offensive language. They said that line managers explain if any worker is unable to do her work. If there is production delivery and clothes are still piled up beside a worker, then supervisors allocate another person to help that worker. However, accounts by female operators from two non-EPZ factories give a different insight into the supervisor-worker relationship and suggest this is similar in many factories:

We [operators] *all have hourly targets. I do pocket joints and have a target of 200 pieces an hour. Sometimes targets are just too much. [...] If we can't make our production*

targets or if the clothes start piling up beside any operator, supervisors get angry. We're always stressing about making our hourly target on time otherwise the supervisors start shouting at us. [...] They're really rough and they use offensive language such as 'bitch', 'bastard' and say 'What are we paying you a wage for, if you can't make your targets?'

Moni, Operator, Fashionwise

Life in this industry is very difficult. Supervisors and line chiefs, they all mistreat us if we make any mistakes. A few days ago, three of us were doing the same job. One operator was a slow worker; she wasn't able to make her targets. So the supervisor started shouting at us, using offensive language such as 'bitch', 'bastard', and 'swine'. Most of the supervisors and line chiefs are men and they don't respect us and swear at us. We work here from financial necessity. It's not right that they can say whatever they like.

Taslima, Operator, Fashionwise

This system thus puts pressure on everyone involved in the production process, including supervisors, as one of the operators explains:

Supervisors are always under pressure from senior managers. [...]. If we [helpers and operators] *can't make our hourly target, [...] he'll be under pressure from the line chief, assistant production manager and production manager. If we can't do our work, supervisors have to shout at us. His responsibility is to make us work. If the production target isn't met then the supervisor has to be accountable to the line chief and production manager. [...] They don't want excuses from the supervisor. [...] If a supervisor can't make the production target then he might lose his job. The supervisor's job is more difficult than ours.*

Rita, Operator, Trendmaker

Previous literature on export-oriented RMG manufacturing industry showed managers use different strategies of control and surveillance ranging in their severity in order to ensure production targets are met (Danneker 2002; Smith and Pun 2006; Wright 2006, Siu 2015) and many of these were noted in comments from management and female interviewees in this study. In this context, various studies reported abuse of female workers, both verbal and physical, as a form of control inside the factories (Siddiqi 2003; Alam *et al.* 2008; Jahan 2012).

The General Manager of the Style Star openly talked of verbal abuse and bullying as being justified even though he knew this was legally prohibited. He also admitted that it was only the possibility of worker agitation that deterred him from using physical violence:

If you don't put pressure on some workers they won't work. If we swear at the workers, even bullying (though it is against the law), then they do their work. Before I used to slap both male and female workers but now if we say anything to the men then they set fire to things, demonstrate.

Mr. Asad, GM, Style Star

Generally the non-EPZ managers were fairly open about their brutal treatment of workers. They argued that if they are not put under pressure then targets would not be met during regular working hours and would need to done in overtime at double the hourly rate, although other comments suggest that factories find ways of avoiding this (see below). A Trendmaker line manager claimed that when production targets are not met, supervisors or line chiefs themselves face similar pressure from senior management which travels down the value chain.

In this research, interviewees from non-EPZ factories confirmed that verbal abuse was still commonly used in the workplace by supervisors and line chiefs (almost exclusively men) for not fulfilling production target or for producing sub-standard work due to inattentiveness. Female workers talked of having been harangued and humiliated by supervisors and line chiefs, using expletives and demeaning remarks, sometimes of an obscene and sexually suggestive nature if they thought production targets would not be fulfilled on time. Female interviewees stated that other common punishments included being made to stand whilst working on the production line or having to stand outside the PM or GM's office, which meant that fellow workers knew they were being punished. This was seen as humiliating, as Afroja, an operator at Fashionwise explains:

Suppose my target is 100 pieces per hour and I've only done 80 in the first hour and 90 in the next so I couldn't fulfil my target, then the supervisor will tell me to stand up because I wasn't able to make my target [...] They keep us standing for 10-15 minutes. I had some problems when I first started. My assigned task was to match numbers. One

day I made a mistake and numbers got mismatched. When the Chief Quality Controller discovered my error, he warned me: 'I don't want to see you make this mistake again'. Whilst I was working I made the same mistake, so he took me to his office and kept me standing outside for a while for this mistake. I was very ashamed and thought that I wouldn't continue this job.

Female interviewees particularly disliked facing this type of verbal abuse, and humiliation by supervisors and thought that rebuking is not the best solution to increase the rate of production. Rather it hampers production as they feel very depressed when supervisors are abusive with them. Some stated that they did not feel like working during that time or lose their temper and actually work less. It is interesting that this form of mistreatment was something that forced female workers to take organised protest action at one of the non-EPZ factories:

Once we demonstrated against the supervisor and the line chiefs for mistreating us. We all said 'We won't work if they say disrespectful things about our mothers or swear at us.' Then the General Manager said: 'If any line chief, Production Manager or supervisor is abusive, they'll be fired'. It doesn't happen as much now; it was really bad before.

Nipa, QC, Style Star

Nipa's narrative illustrates that though cultural concepts of male domination are reproduced in the factories through daily practices and verbal abuses, they have not gone unchallenged. Women use their agency and do resist as part of their daily efforts to improve their working conditions. The majority of interviewees in all non-EPZ factories (90%) reported that this kind of abuse had greatly reduced in the last two or three years because if workers lodge complaints to HR or senior managers, actions are taken. This challenge the findings of Jahan's study (2012) conducted in Bangladeshi RMG industry where she found that management never took action against this type of harassment.

By way of comparison, female interviewees from New Era reported that they were not subjected to any verbal abuse from supervisors or line chief as the factory forbade line management from shouting at workers on the production floor. If there were problems

with any aspect of their work performance, then workers had to be informed of this in writing. A New Era manager explained:

This is a worker-focused organisation. Workers can complain to HR if they are ever mistreated by managers. If this happens, the manager is immediately sacked.

<div align="right">

Mr Farhad, Assistant Manager (Quality), New Era

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New Era appears to be the only factory that is fully compliant with the Code of Conduct relating to treatment of employees and employee communication because of enforcement of regulation by BEPZA or possibly increasing awareness of managers.

6.2.4 Other Forms of Regulation, other Forms of Resistance

Although the threat of control by verbal abuse has been reduced in non-EPZ case studies, there are other ways of imposing control on workers, even in the EPZ factories:

Sometimes I feel very hungry but I'm not allowed to eat on the factory floor. I don't have any freedom; there isn't any daylight, no fresh air to breathe. We enter the factory at 7.30 am and it's like a prison; we come out at 6.30pm. When I used to work in Bangla factories (non-EPZ factories), *I could go out for a walk at lunch time, but here we can't. As soon as we enter the factory that means we've got to work whether we like it or not.*

<div align="right">

Akhi, Helper, New Era

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The EPZ factory is situated 30 minutes on foot from women's houses and the lunch break lasts one hour. Thus if they wanted to go home for lunch it would take them more than an hour to get back to the factory. This may be the reason why management do not allow them to go home because they are strict with regard to time management.

Taking breaks (with the exception of lunch hour) proved to be another area subject to different types of control from supervisors. This was a topic which concerned non-EPZ interviewees:

If I talk to a fellow worker, then the supervisor or line in-charge gets angry and starts shouting, and even if someone takes a toilet break and takes a while to return,

supervisors get angry. Sometimes they send another female worker to warn her to return to work.

<div align="right">*Rina, QC, Style Star*</div>

At their most basic, breaks from work serve for performing bodily necessities such as eating, drinking or toilet breaks or for taking much-needed rest after physical exertion. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 65) also point out that breaks offer diversion from "*long periods of extremely tedious work*", a form of recreation to help "*kill the beast of monotony*" (Roy, 1958 cited in Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999: 65). Managers view break-taking of any kind as a form of worker misbehaviour which interferes with production and must be controlled:

[Male workers] *want cigarette breaks and tea breaks, and they spend their time chatting which isn't permitted during working hours. Men just don't have the staying power.*

<div align="right">*Mr. Taher, Merchandise Manager, Trendmaker*</div>

Though male and female employees' working lives have been constrained by production targets and various rules and regulations, they have found their own strategies to make work pleasurable by laughing, chatting and having fun with their co-workers in the absence of their line managers which makes them happy for a while illustrating that "*control can never be absolute and […] employees will constantly find ways of evading and subverting managerial organisation and direction of work*" (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999: 47):

Sometimes we have fun, chatting while we work. When supervisors or line chiefs are away from the production line, then we laugh, chat, we feel happy. Generally we don't talk in front of the supervisors because if they see us, they get angry. They say: 'Have you come here to talk?' That's why we don't talk, for fear they'll say something bad to us. However, if production goes down due to chatting then we have to listen to them. Only supervisors are allowed to talk on the floor as they're bosses with all the power.

<div align="right">*Mitu, QC, Style Star*</div>

There were other forms of control being imposed by managers within the factories. Another female worker from a larger non-EPZ factory explained how seriously talking

was viewed by managers and appropriation of identity cards were used by management as a means of sanctioning employees:

If the supervisor or line chief sees anyone talking their worker's card is taken away instantly. If we talk they don't allow us to punch out our card.

Sufia, Folder, Trendmaker

Several female workers commented on the fact that the introduction of ID cards has given managers a further means of controlling them and imposing financial sanctions. These cards are punched in and out to record hours worked. Supervisors or line managers can take a worker's ID card and threaten to punch this out at the end of the normal working day meaning that if any hours are worked after that time no overtime pay is due.

It seems fairly standard practice that, if workers do not make work targets, they must finish these by working extra hours without any wage benefits, as the quote below reflects:

If someone isn't working to capacity, then we know. […] Any worker not concentrating on her work has to finish this by doing it in extra time. […] In that case she has to punch out her card with the other workers who've finished their work but then she's got to finish her work, either by staying on alone or with other workers. She doesn't get any overtime for this work because her card was punched out earlier.

Mr. Hasan, Line chief, Trendmaker

Cards can also be confiscated for various types of employee misbehaviour including unauthorised eating during working hours:

One day I didn't eat breakfast in the morning so I brought my food with me and went to eat it in the canteen. So the supervisor took my card to give it to the Executive Director and they didn't return it. I thought I'd have to leave the job for eating during working hours, even though I was keeping my production target up. Two days later, the production manager returned my card but I had to fill in an application form for it. I was shown as present on both days but wasn't paid any overtime.

Sufia, Folder, Trendmaker

The same worker felt that levels of managerial control was increasing, pointing to the introduction of new forms technological forms of surveillance:

Now they've fitted CCTV cameras. There were no problems before, now they don't want to see anyone eating or talking on the factory floor.

Sufia, Folder, Trendmaker

Levels in the case study factories do not yet appear to have reached the extremes of control and surveillance reported in the Chinese electronic manufacturing industry. The "dormitory labour" thesis states how management of foreign-funded factories in China capture total control over the lives of Chinese migrant workers (Smith 2003; Smith and Pun 2006; Pun and Smith 2007). In order to meet demand in the global production cycle and to squeeze more surplus value from each worker, employers' exercise power not only over employment but also over employees' after-hours activities (Smith and Pun 2006). Due to accommodation linked to employment and ready access to workers' time it helps to extend the working day at management's discretion (Smith 2003). Although workers could leave the point of production and go back to their dormitory, factory managers monitored, controlled and physically entrapped them at all times (Siu 2015). Wright's (2006) study also showed that women's sexual behaviour was monitored by periodic pregnancy tests such as regular medical examinations and check-ups to regulate menstrual cycles. However, it can be argued that female workers in the case factories are extremely aware that they are being watched throughout the day by supervisors, line chiefs, and production managers, thus, these women experience new forms of gender subordination beyond their families.

Only Style Star, the smallest of the factories, still used paper rather than electronic IDs for their workers and did not have any CCTV in operation within the factory, probably due to the cost implications of this. However, all the other factories, both EPZ and non-EPZ, used these control and surveillance technologies. The introduction of both ID cards and CCTV supports Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 94) argument that attempts by management to impose control tend to escalate: *"Once set on the policy of attempting to control work behaviour, management is also set on an inexorable course towards growth in the scale of its activities, as it tries to establish control"*.

To sum up, the supervisor-worker relationship in the New Era was co-operative in nature and there was no evidence of verbal abuse taking place in the factory, whereas non-EPZ supervisors used different types of stricter forms of control to ensure production targets were met, including verbal abuse and humiliation, restricting breaks and talking with fellow workers, confiscating ID cards and imposing financial sanctions, in addition to technological control through the use of CCTV cameras.

6.2.5 Gender and Managerial Control

In the EPZ factory all of the female interviewees said that supervisors, line chiefs and production managers did not treat male and female workers differently. It is interesting to note that the majority of the female workers interviewed in non-EPZ factories (70%) said that they did not think there was any difference in how male and female workers were treated by supervisors, line chiefs, and production managers. Most of these interviewees, like Nipa, thought a good supervisor-worker relationship was the result of individual work performance:

On my floor, all the supervisors, line chiefs, and production managers are men. I get on well with them all and we have a good relationship. The supervisor doesn't say anything to those workers who do their work properly. The way [managers] *behave depends on worker performance. If you don't do your job well, make lots of mistakes, or arrive five or six minutes late every day, then […] they'll shout at you for that. […] If someone doesn't make the hourly production target, whether it's a man or a woman or a senior worker, everyone gets treated the same. I do my work properly, so they treat me well.*

Nipa, QC, Style Star

However, a significant minority of female interviewees in all non-EPZ factories (30%) said that they had noticed supervisors behaving differently towards male and female workers:

[Supervisors] *only put pressure on women; they don't say anything to men. No one is allowed to eat on the factory floor but male workers do […] They don't have the nerve to say anything to male workers. We* [female workers] *told senior managers that we feel*

bad when we're treated differently: we're human beings too! If male workers want leave or a gate pass,[35] they'll get it whereas we won't.

<div align="right">

Salma, Operator, Fashionwise

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Another interviewee made an interesting comment which suggests that this difference in treatment is not simply a question of gender:

Men and women aren't treated alike. I don't like that. They treat women badly in comparison to male workers. If male workers don't make their target, they're not so rude to them. Senior managers have admitted that they behave differently towards male workers because if they say something to them, they'll argue back, or even pick a fight with them. That's why they keep their distance from male workers when reprimanding them. Because women don't say anything, they treat them badly. However, supervisors don't say anything to those women who protest.

<div align="right">

Rehana, Operator, Trendmaker

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Rehana's observation suggests that this issue perhaps relates more to power, rather than gender. Women are less powerful in this situation for three reasons. Firstly, managers need help from male workers to bring bundles of clothes from one cutting section to another and will put up with some misbehaviour in return for this continued assistance which helps keep up production. Secondly, managers themselves fear the genuine threat of physical force posed by certain male workers or their friends outside the work place. Thirdly, as a Style Star manager highlighted, management are also worried by the possibility of organised protests by male workers.

When women feel they are being treated badly they use the only power they can exercise, as a manager observed:

*Women are not always polite and quiet. They become aggressive when supervisors and line chiefs get them to do extra work and give them more production pressure. They argue with supervisors and **simply quit the job.***

<div align="right">

Mr. Mohidul, Manager, New Era

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[35] Workers needing to leave the factory premises early or for a short amount of time during working hours in case of emergency must obtain this from a manager. Factory gate security guards only allow workers to leave the factory if they have been issued with an authorised gate-pass.

Therefore, women are not always passive victims and resist against the ever-increasing regulation when necessary.

6.3 Worker Resistance: The Concept of Organisational 'Misbehaviour'

Using insights from Ackroyd and Thompson (1999:25) this chapter explores aspects of 'misbehaviour' from worker perspectives. During the interviews, line managers and senior managers were asked to talk about the problems they tended to experience when dealing with factory workers, and whether they thought there were any particularly problematic aspects to employing females. They were also asked about methods used to monitor work rates and to ensure productivity targets are met in the factory, both overall and for specific workers. Finally, they were also questioned about factory turnover rates. Female workers were questioned about their experiences of being supervised and also about issues relating to various aspects of leave. Whilst managers were asked about their experience of violence inside the factory and how this had been handled, female workers were asked if they felt secure in the workplace and whether they had faced any form of physical harassment or sexual violence either at work or elsewhere.

It was noticeable that the key areas which emerged from all interviewees comments related to the issue of what Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) refer to as appropriation of time, and included time wasting, absenteeism, and turnover. There was also evidence, though to a lesser extent, of issues relating to appropriation of identity, including the formation of sub-cultures, what Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) refer to as 'sex games' (which here is used to cover the areas of misbehaviour of a sexual nature including use/abuse of sexuality), and the creation of class or group solidarity amongst certain sets of workers.

In order to establish what was viewed as serious offences in the workplace, managers were asked about circumstances which would be likely to lead to a worker being dismissed. Female workers were asked if they knew of anyone who had been sacked and what the reason was for this. It is worth noting that there were very few references made by management and workers to any misbehaviour which included appropriation of product (pilferage/fiddling). Pilferage or theft was a very rare incident in the case-study factories because of the strict rules and regulations applied to these kinds of

misbehaviour, where factory used release or dismissal as a punishment. With regard to the category of appropriation of work, some management interviewees did make reference to serious incidents of destruction, but this was not always an overt reference to their own workforce. Instead, they mentioned about the broader context of protests, such as protests to increase wages and other benefits which had been taking place in the RMG industry. Management interviewees frequently connected this type of unrest to male employees involved in trade unions and politics. Interestingly, the only example of an organised protest in the workplace mentioned by a non-managerial interviewee relates to a demonstration arranged by female employees, complaining about abusive treatment from supervisors, which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

6.3.1 Gendered Perceptions of Worker Misbehaviour

Line managers and senior managers tended to compare and contrast what they saw as being typical behaviour of male and female workers. This management stereotyping of female employees has not been studied previously in the Bangladeshi context in this way. Some of these comments reflected gender specific qualities in the workplace originally noted by Elson and Pearson (1981). Female employees were seen as being well suited to tedious, repetitive and monotonous tasks like those performed in export-led industries and as willing to accept tough work disciplines. Aysha (New Era), the only female manager interviewed, said that women were "*more disciplined than men*", tending to "*concentrate more on their work*" whilst Mr. Taher at Trendmaker made a telling comment about what he thought was the difference between female and male workers in this respect. The former were willing to "*put up with working long hours*" whereas "*Many men can't do a shift lasting from 8am to 7pm. [...]*". He also noted that men "*like to spend their time chatting*" and "*want cigarette breaks and tea breaks*".

Female workers were also viewed as being naturally more docile. According to the Style Star Production Manager, unlike the men who had a tendency to pick fights with each other, women were "*usually quiet, less aggressive*" (Mr. Iqbal). The same manager also saw this docility reflected in the fact that women did not represent any threat in terms of organised protests and were easy to manage because they would "*listen to supervisors and line chiefs*". This sentiment was echoed by the Assistant General Manager/ Human Resources at Fashionwise: "*If supervisors say something [...], they*

listen" (Mr. Zakir). For the Merchandise Manager at Trendmaker the most important thing about the female employees was that they *"never say 'no'"* (Mr. Taher) which may be construed as absolute docility or may mean that they do not want to risk responding negatively to management requests in order to avoid being branded as not being co-operative.

These perceived notions that female workers are cooperative/compliant, and can thus be controlled more easily than their male counterparts, make them attractive to employers as their workforce. The female senior officer of HR in the EPZ factory praised the female employees because they *"put their work first and [...] take their job seriously"*. However, she also made an important point in highlighting the possible link between the financial vulnerability of female employees and their good behaviour which suggests that this is a survival strategy:

> *Of course, there are other reasons for* [the way they behave]: *they need the money; they just can't afford to lose their jobs.*
>
> *Aysha, Senior Officer, HR, New Era*

Other perceived qualities of female workers such as a sense of responsibility, sustained work effort and concentration are essential for efficient production performance in the assembly line oriented manufacturing of the RMG industry. As far as managers were concerned, the benefits arising from these qualities fully compensated for what they perceived as the negative characteristics of female employees. According to Mr. Farhad, New Era manager, women were *"naturally more emotional",* prone to *"argue with each other"* and overly talkative on the factory floor. It was noted earlier that from the management perspective, all unnecessary talk on the factory floor was classed as 'time wasting' behaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). Other 'time wasting' behaviours noted here by managers include taking cigarette or tea breaks, perceived as being a male employee trait.

Two issues raised by the managers regarding differences between male/female employees in work ethic seemed contradictory. The first of these relates to managerial understanding of 'hard work'. According to Mr. Zakir (Fashionwise), the female employees *"work hard"* whilst Aysha, the New Era officer, described them as *"more*

hard-working than men". However, when asked about any problematic issues involved with employing women, Mr. Hasan of Style Star commented: "*You've got to have a lot of stamina to use these sewing machines. Men are used to hard work but women aren't"*. It seems clear that there are two different meanings being given to the same concept here. For Mr. Zakir and Aysha, this seems to be a general description of the degree to which the women work whereas for Mr. Hasan, this is linked solely to physical strength (*stamina*) and the ability to cope with certain types of large sewing machines: the Kansai sewing machines, feed-off-the-arm, twin-needle machines, and lock stitch machines. This perceived difference has important implications in terms of wage differences between female and male operators (as seen above). The next section explores another of the other points made by management interviewees, which seems contradictory: Mr. Zakir (Fashionwise) praised female employees for the fact that they "*only leave their machines if they're really ill*" whilst Mr. Harun (Trendmaker) specifically commented that female workers "*have more health problems than the men [...] take more unauthorised leave"*.

6.3.2 Creating a Culture of Absenteeism

Ackroyd and Thompson (1999:75) argue that management themselves play a key role in producing employee misbehaviour since they have "*the power and discretion to define behaviours as acceptable or unacceptable and to devise categories and procedures for their identification*". One good example of this in the context of the case-study factories can be found in how managers deal with female employees who fall ill, effectively reclassifying sickness as absenteeism for their own purposes. Absenteeism is defined by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 76) as "*unexcused and habitual absence from work*".

At New Era, female interviewees stated that they are given paid sick leave facilities whenever this is required.[36] Moreover, the situation regarding employee illness was relatively straightforward at the EPZ factory:

We haven't had any reports of serious sickness here. There might be some cases of high temperatures or colds. Workers take a half-day's leave when they're feeling ill. We have

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[36] As clarified in Appendix VI employees are entitled to 14 days' sick leave with paid wages according to Labour Law (2006) and BEPZA Instructions No. 1 (1989).

a medical centre inside the factory. If a doctor prescribes leave for a worker, she takes this according to the doctor's advice. Workers who have been taken ill can rest there and free medication is also provided.

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Mr. Alam, Officer, HR and Compliance, New Era

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Although the interviewee specified a half-day's leave, subsequent comments make it clear that the actual rest or leave permitted depends on the seriousness of the health-related problem. Interviews with female workers in two of the non-EPZ factories revealed that even if a worker feels ill and requests leave, or a one-hour gate pass to allow her to go home and rest, this is not usually granted, sometimes with potentially serious consequences for the women's health:

Some workers suddenly collapse at their machine while they're working. It mainly happens due to headaches, feeling faint or excessive heat. If someone collapses, she's taken to the factory medical centre straightaway.[37] Then they authorise leave for her. However, if I request leave because I'm feeling ill, they won't authorise it. Even if we're running a temperature, or are in pain they won't allow leave. They provide Napa [a type of pain-killer] *and say: "Go back to work on your machine". If a worker is running a really high temperature then she might be allowed to take a break.*

<div align="right">

Muslima, Operator, Trendmaker

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A General Manager at the same factory confirmed that workers took unauthorised leave instead of sick leave and indirectly expressed some suspicions about whether female workers claiming to be suffering from certain symptoms were, in fact, ill:

Female workers have more health problems than the men. Consequently, they take more unauthorised leave and lie in order to get rid of work. They give many explanations for that including they're in pain, have got stomach ache, and feeling faint.

<div align="right">

Mr. Harun, GM, Production, Compliance and HR, Trendmaker

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In this context, Mr. Harun suspects female workers might pretend by saying that they feel ill in order to get leave as this cannot be checked properly. As mentioned in the

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[37] Only Style Star does not have a medical centre. Any worker who feels ill there is taken to the nearby BGMEA medical centre or sent home to rest.

previous chapter, the same manager at Trendmaker admitted preventing female workers who told him they felt ill from going to see the company doctor to avoid them being granted sick leave. Instead, he himself made a 'diagnosis' of the seriousness of the worker's condition.

Similarly, at Fashionwise, if workers who get ill are not given authorised leave, they are then forced to go absent without leave from work:

So far, I haven't been given any authorised leave for illness. If I feel sick I go absent without leave because they don't authorise leave for a temperature, coughs or colds. I was running a temperature and was absent for four days. I went to the factory and asked the line chief for leave. He replied: 'What did you come to the office for, if you're sick?'

<div align="right">

Tumpa, Operator, Fashionwise

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Although this creates problems for management when there is shipment pressure and lack of replacement staff, it is evident from the narrative of Taslima that line managers indirectly produce this form of absenteeism:

I had an ulcer a few months ago. I was absent without leave for eight days from the factory because they wouldn't allow me authorised leave. I saw a non-factory doctor who did an endoscopy and told me to take 10 days' rest. If any worker is absent for 10 days she loses her job, so I thought that if I was off for another 10 days that would happen to me. When I showed my prescription to the factory doctor, she allowed me five days' leave. After that I returned to work but two days later, I fell ill again. I asked the doctor for another five days' leave but she refused. Then I had to take the decision not to work because I thought: 'Life is more important than work'. I was off for 21 days in total. When I went back to get my salary, the manager allowed me to take 14 days as leave and I restarted work.

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Taslima, Operator, Fashionwise

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In this case, Taslima was permitted 14 days leave, her legal allowance, but for the other seven days leave money was deducted from her monthly salary.

Managers at non-EPZ factories do this because if workers are given authorised leave this would legally need to be classed as paid sick leave, whereas if workers themselves

decide to take unauthorised absence it is in managerial interests since they can avoid paying sick leave benefits to those workers and that helps to make some money. In addition, as in the example mentioned, supervisors are also suspicious about whether employees are really ill. Subsequent informal discussions with workers gave the impression that they do not want to be absent, because even one day's absence costs them their bonus for attendance and production for an entire month, representing a substantial amount of money to them. They only tend to take absence either when they are seriously ill or have family problems which force them to go back to their village. These examples support Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999: 76) claim that "*absenteeism is [...] actively produced by a particular sort of regime of control*".

No hard statistical evidence on absenteeism/sick leave by gender (controlled for occupation) was available for this study. In this research, the incidence of health problems was mentioned less frequently in the New Era interviewees. However, interviews with managers and female workers in the non-EPZ factories revealed that high temperatures and colds, headache, eye problems, diarrhoea, dysentery, stomach ache, and jaundice are the common health problems female workers faced in the factories. Workers over 40 who have been working for long time in the factory mentioned health problems, including fatigue, pain and leg pain, eye problems, and repetitive strain injuries. In addition to doing long shifts at work, women's domestic responsibilities are responsible for these health problems they experience at the workplace. As Chapter Seven will show due to the patriarchal structure of domestic labour, non-EPZ female factory workers had no free time on working days, just a few hours' sleep time at night, therefore sickness, tiredness/fatigue which women experience at the workplace is a reflection of the dual burden.

6.3.3 Going with the Flow: Turnover/mobility

In Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) model, from the managerial point of view, turnover is seen as the most serious type of misbehaviour since this withdrawal of labour by workers can be seen as an appropriation of time in terms of the training effort and resources which have gone into making the worker into an asset. As authors like Cappelli (1995), Bearnot (2013) argued, employers are often unresponsive to career development of employees and make less investment in training and upgrading skills

because of the fear that such investment will be lost through redundancy or exit from their firm. Moreover, "*a constant flow of different individuals through a labour process creates problems when individual differences have material effect on productivity or profitability of the employer*" (Smith 2010: 271). However, as Smith (2010) notes, this flow or labour power mobility is becoming an established feature of contemporary working practices. The General Manager, Mr. Asad at Style Star commented on this shift which he has perceived within the industry:

> *Some owners exploit workers. That's a fact. On the other hand, more recently workers have started to make owners suffer. [...] Now we've got lots of garment factories and we're in need of female operators. So if we say something to a worker such as "Why's production down?", then she'll instantly reply: "You can terminate my contract, if you want". There's a huge demand for workers due to the establishment of many garment factories. If* [workers] *leave this factory they'll get a job in another factory. That's why they have the courage to speak like this.*

It is worth exploring this point in more detail here. At first glance, the RMG manufacturing industry in Bangladesh seems to be a classic example of a system in which considerable power resides with the employers in the sites of production. Factory owners want to keep their costs down, improve profit margins and produce a quality product and are willing to impose exploitative and illegal working practices on their workers, some of which have been detailed previously, to achieve those ends. Factory owners require female employees who will learn fast and produce with maximum efficiency, as and when needed. The female workforce is short of income and other life options, needs unskilled work, and is ready and willing to do what is required of them. As Smith puts it, at its worst this type of labour regime "*uses up young bodies, returning broken or damaged ones to society, [...] replenishing stock of labour power with new reserves from the countryside*" (2010: 279). [38]

The findings of this study suggest that increasing numbers of female RMG workers are beginning to realise that they do have some power to negotiate within this system,

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[38] However, in this form, it does also bring to mind the 'disposable' nature of the female workforce in Mexican *maquiladoras* and hi-tech production lines in China and elsewhere (Wright 2006, Smith and Pun 2006).

limited though it may be, and that they can use this to improve their working conditions and income. Ironically, these workers have found that key to unlocking this power is mobility, since for those who are willing and able to move up the factory chain, from the non-EPZ to the EPZ sector; the rewards can be comparatively high.

It became clear from the study that women do choose to move between factories. Of the 12 participants from New Era, four had moved to this EPZ factory from non-EPZ factories. Some other interviewees from the non-EPZ factories said they planned to try and find jobs in an EPZ factory. However, there is less movement from non-EPZ to EPZ factories for three key reasons. Firstly, the latter are considerably fewer in number, with just eight EPZs in Bangladesh as a whole, employing approximately 282,392 of the country's four million RMG workers, with only 98 manufacturing industries within the Dhaka EPZ (EPB 2014). Location is also another important factor, with non-EPZ factories being scattered all over the city and more conveniently placed for some women. Finally, the educational level required is important, as noted earlier, since non-EPZ jobs need little or no education whereas EPZ companies require at least Junior Secondary level education. Thus, most non-EPZ female workers aim to move to another non-EPZ factory which has better conditions than the one in which they currently work.

The findings of this current study suggest that for female interviewees, inter-factory mobility may now be viewed an as integral aspect of not only earning more money but also seeking improved working conditions. Two senior managers (Mr. Harun, GM of Trendmaker, and Mr. Zakir, AGM of Fashionwise) identified a number of factors affecting turnover, including abusive behaviour of managers, factories failing to provide facilities such as transportation, free canteen and snacks, lack of incentives for production, performance, good attendance, etc. Mr. Zakir explained the type of poor management which would cause workers to switch between factories:

Poor management means the factory does not pay salaries on time, management delays paying salary which is due for two-three months, it keeps back overtime salary due for several months, and line managers treat their workers badly.

Mr. Zakir, AGM, HR, Fashionwise

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Of the total participants in this study, some 62.5% had moved factory since starting in the industry: 27.5 % had changed factory twice, 27.5% three times, 5% four times and 2.5% five times. Workers tend to move before they have completed one year of service, particularly after they have gained some sewing skills in a factory. Interviews with managers revealed variations in the turnover rate amongst the factories: workers stayed at Trendmaker for three to five years, at Fashionwise for one to three years whilst most lasted for only six to twelve months at Style Star, much to the annoyance of their Production Manager:

> *I think there should be a system that means workers have to stay for a certain period of time in a factory. If there was a proper system that meant no workers would be recruited unless a release order from their previous factory had been seen, then workers would not move about so much. The workers who leave the factory don't even inform the factory management before leaving.*

> *Mr. Iqbal, PM, Style Star*

It is worth noting here, China's almost all foreign-funded factories' adopt a policy that is to retain workers' first month's salary as a "recruitment deposit", a widespread illegal practice considered essential for avoiding high turnover rate and constraining workers' mobility power (Siu 2015: 58; Pun and Smith 2007). Given this study's findings about the lack of facilities at Style Star, its multiple breaches of regulations and its poor management practices, the factory's failure to retain staff was not surprising. Nor was it surprising that female interviewees at New Era thought it was one of the best of the EPZ factories. Of the 12 participants interviewed there, eight had started there as helpers and were still working there at least eight years on, with no plans to move elsewhere. The other four had previously moved between factories but said they were now settled at New Era until they returned to their villages. Shamoli, who was employed as a helper at New Era, is a good example of female worker mobility:

> *This is my third job. Before that, I worked in two Bangla [non-EPZ] factories. I left both because their wages were lower. I used to take home tk. 3000 as my monthly salary in the first factory. I worked there for just seven months. Then I went to a second factory where they offered me tk. 4500 a month. But they didn't pay my overtime in full. If I don't get money for my hard work then why should I stay there? Moreover, there was no respect*

for anyone. They'd swear at you if you made any mistakes. When I needed to take leave [to solve a family problem] *it wasn't allowed. […] They told me: "Go! We don't need you for this job". So I decided I couldn't continue with this kind of work and after three months at the second factory I tried to find a job in an EPZ factory. This factory is a hundred times better than the previous ones. Now I get about tk. 7000 including overtime, transport and food allowance. I leave for home at 6.30pm but in the Bangla factories I used to work till 9.00pm and sometimes even midnight […] I didn't like going home so late at night. I used to worry about something happening to me in the street.*

Shamoli, Helper, New Era

By changing factories, Shamoli managed to more than double her wages by moving from the non-EPZ to the EPZ sector. Although workers who stay at the same factory can increase their basic salary as a result of yearly increments or promotion, this change is more modest in comparison to moving to another factory. Senior workers who had been working for over four years in the same factory mentioned that their wages had not increased much in comparison with the rates offered to newly appointed operators. The payment system only allows for salary negotiation at the appointment stage. Shamoli's story also highlights the fact that managerial behaviour was also a key factor in her decision to move.

It is interesting to consider this situation of inter-factory mobility in the light of Chris Smith's observations about Labour Power Mobility. As Smith (2010) has argued, as a result of the shifts in orientations to the market, certain sectors are increasingly interested in worker attitudes rather than technical skills because the latter can be taught. Whilst the employers in the RMG sector still make distinctions on the basis of specific technical skills, which are reflected in pay differentials, it can perhaps be argued that, employers are effectively recruiting on the basis of attitudes or qualities, what Smith (2010:282) refers to as 'potential' since many of the female workers that come into this industry in Bangladesh initially do not have technical skills or practical experience, which is explained below.

Only the EPZ factory, New Era, provided a specifically designed three months training programme for newly promoted operators:

Obviously, there are some new recruits who do not have any practical experience of factory work. After recruiting workers, we train them. Suppose we've recruited 10 or 15 people, we provide three months training to them. We have a training manual which covers theoretical and practical issues of making a particular item, i.e. shirts, pants, caps. After theoretical discussion of a particular production process, they gain practical experience of it. When training in all processes is completed, we transfer them to the production line.

Mr. Farhad, QC Assistant Manager, New Era

Interviews with line managers and female workers at the non-EPZ factories revealed that workers there learn to operate the sewing machine without any formal training. Women with no experience of sewing machines start as helpers, the lowest category of workers, assisting operators by cutting threads, matching numbers on cloth pieces to be joined, and unpicking garments needing alteration. If they want to upgrade their skills, they teach themselves to sew by watching the operators and practising on co-workers' machines in their absence. All the participants in this research had learnt sewing in the same way as Husneara explained:

I didn't have any sewing-related skills before joining garment manufacturing. I learnt some skills after starting at the factory. Many operators help you to learn sewing. One of my relatives worked here as operator and she helped me to learn. I didn't get any sewing-related training from this factory. If an operator takes a toilet break, then her helper sits at her machine and practises on a piece of cloth. That's how a helper learns to sew and becomes an operator.

Husneara, Operator, Trendmaker

A manager confirmed that female workers continue to upgrade their skills:

Firstly, she [the operator] *learns simple processes and then improves by teaching herself the key processes using a particular machine or different types of machines.*

Mr. Zakir, AGM, HR, Fashionwise

According to one of the few female supervisors, acquiring new skills is dependent on the worker's own attitude and those with the right personal qualities make progress:

Skills depend on the individual's motivation. Some workers can make up a full shirt or pair of trousers. They've taught themselves the different processes by sewing. However some workers don't want to learn new things, they specialise in a particular process, and they want to work on that process alone. Most workers wouldn't be able to do anything else if they left the garment industry because they only work on one or two processes throughout their time as a machinist. They don't know how to do cutting, for example, but if they learnt how to do sewing <u>and</u> cutting, then they could do something for themselves.

Kulsum, Supervisor, Style Star

These quotes effectively illustrate the importance of employee attitude in this context: readiness to cooperate, willingness to learn, desire for self-improvement, motivation, determination to succeed. It also suggests that the women are fully aware that "*Skill provides workers with power in the labour process*" (Smith 2010: 287).

I've been working here as a helper for eighteen months. I've learnt how to do a range of processes such as shirt-making, button-holing, and hemming. I don't know when the supervisor will promote me to operator but now, if I go to another factory, they'll appoint me as an operator. My co-workers also told me to try for a job as an operator in another factory. I'll wait another three months and if I'm not promoted to operator then I'll leave this factory. Now I get tk. 6,000 salary per month including overtime, but if I got a job as an operator in another factory, I'd get around tk. 7,500 or 8,000 as my monthly salary.

Nasima, Helper, Trendmaker

These examples illustrate another important point made by Smith (2010: 282):

*The employee presents him or herself at work as potential. It is up to the employer, through a production or labour process, to extract the labour or capacity from the worker. Obviously this process requires consent or agreement as the worker will not willingly submit to high utilisation of work effort **without due regard and due respect***" (my emphases).

6.3.4 Resistance by Solidarity

As noted earlier, unions are not permitted in the EPZ factories but interviews with EPZ workers suggested that in general they rarely felt the need to get involved in any kind of

organised protest, as they are relatively happy with their working conditions in the factory. If any individual worker has a problem with their supervisor regarding their work performance or if a worker has any collective grievances regarding pay or conditions they usually inform their WWA representative, as this association is active in EPZ factories. An elected WWA representative is available in every section and has responsibility for dealing with worker problems by entering into discussions on issues with the management. Workers mentioned a range of issues that had been raised, most of them involving requests for increases in rates of pay or various bonus payments (i.e. snack money, food allowance, attendance bonus, production bonus). Problems relating to worker-supervisor relations are also dealt with as one of the female quality controller, named Sabiha from the EPZ factory explained:

> *No supervisor is allowed to insult or use offensive language with any worker. If we inform our WWA representative they talk with management immediately. Then that supervisor would have to explain to HR why he misbehaved towards that worker, though in our factory no-one bullies workers. Management take action about anyone found guilty whether he is a worker or a manager.*

Organised worker protest in the EPZ factory is rare but some workers recalled one protest organised by the women:

> *Here protesting means we stop work. We don't destroy any factory property. […] Three years ago we protested about two issues: a wage rise and […] management failing to hold elections for the WWA. The rule is that elections should be held every three years. […]. We went to the factory but didn't work for three days. We didn't do any harm to the factory. […] When the working day ended at 4.30pm we just left the factory. We told them: "Meet our demands and we'll work". They held elections one month later. They increased our production bonus from tk.250 to tk.500 and out attendance bonus from tk.500 to tk. 600.*
>
> *Farzana, Highly Skilled Operator, New Era*

It is interesting to compare Farzana's account of one protest in three years by New Era workers with Naznin's experience at the smallest of the non-EPZ factories where participatory committees played no obvious role:

I've been working here for a year and there's never been a single month when workers received their salary without holding some protest. […] What they do is that sewing section workers stop working after lunch for two hours, and then all the workers start making a noise. Then management says that they'll pay [the salary due] *the next day.*

Naznin, QC, Style Star

At Style Star, worker protest appears to be almost an accepted form of triggering payment which is due. In both cases, the organised protests took a non-violent form of what Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) would refer to as effort bargaining or soldiering, but achieved the desired result.

It is noticeable in Farzana's account that she stresses twice that the workers' protest did not involve any damage to the factory as sometimes protests of this kind do turn violent, reaching the extreme of Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) dimensions of misbehaviour in which workers engage in destructiveness and sabotage. The Bangladeshi Press often carries accounts of protests by RMG workers in non-EPZ factories which include full-scale demonstrations, road blockades, and clashes with factory security personnel, throwing brick-chips at the factory and even cases of managers being beaten up. The next section explores use and abuse of sexuality in the workplace.

6.3.5 Misbehaviour and Sexuality in the Workplace

According to Hearn and Parkin (1987:14 cited in Ackroyd and Thompson 1999:121) "*We know that the workplace is a site of romance and sexual contact, if only because of the oft-quoted surveys showing that this is where most affairs start and that it is where a sizeable minority of people meet their partners.*" The case factories in our study prove to be no exception and it was noticeable in the demographic information provided by female workers that a significant percentage (69%) of them had met their husband at work.

There is no doubt that the workplace can be a site of use and abuse of sexuality and that "*harassment constitutes a serious potential work hazard for women*" (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999: 125). Previous studies conducted on export-oriented employment worldwide uncovered serious incidents of sexual intimidation and coercion in the

factories (Karega 2002; Siddiqi 2003; Truskinovsky *et al.* 2013). None of the 40 female interviewees in this study reported having themselves been the victim of any form of physical violence in the workplace and they were reluctant to disclose any information regarding personal experiences of sexual harassment.

Cultural factors are arguably one of the major factors in why many women feel ashamed to discuss such matters candidly. From an early age, females in Bangladeshi society are socialised into "village discourses of sexuality" in which cautionary tales and standards of behaviour are particularly rigid for women. Besides the non-negotiable requirement for chastity and fidelity, women are not expected to talk about sex. It is seen as unacceptable for them to desire sexual pleasure, make sexual overtures or refuse conjugal demands (Nguyen *et al.* 2011: 1198). Menon (cited in Lyimo 2010: 21) contends that due to this repressed attitude towards sex, women "are led to believe that if they speak about it [sexual harassment] they will become the victim and will be victimised further", meaning that such issues are not aired in the public domain.

Therefore, women in general seemed to be reluctant to discuss the issue of sexual harassment openly and shied away from providing specific examples despite mentioning to the fact that such harassment was commonplace within the garment factories all over the world. However two of the managers admitted that they were aware of cases in which male managers had abused their position of authority with female workers. In the first example, this was described as being a hypothetical situation, in terms of what typically might happen in such circumstances:

Some of the problems don't get reported officially by female workers but sometimes I find out about them confidentially from other workers. A supervisor might develop a crush on a female worker, and try to date her or want to spend time with her on the weekly day off. If she says no, then he might start making life difficult for her in the workplace. For example, if she turns down the supervisor's offer and she's skilled at working on a particular machine, he might allocate her to another machine where she isn't comfortable. He tries to give her difficult work. If she requests leave, the supervisor doesn't approve it. Very few incidents of this kind happen. Not all supervisors are like this.

Mr. Zakir, AGM, HR, Fashionwise

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In the second example, the manager had direct experience of a case and claimed to have taken direct action against the offender:

If sexual harassment happens outside the workplace, it's not our problem […] but if this problem occurs outside, it does impact on the work inside the factory. […] If the situation gets worse and someone informs me then I take instant action on that case even if it's a high-ranking officer. I dismissed a Production Manager for groping female workers. When he was asked to explain his behaviour in writing, he replied: 'I touch them like a father or elder brother would, in order to teach them.' But female workers claimed that he did it intentionally and touched parts of the body which had nothing to do with making them understand anything. First of all, I gave [him] *a warning; then when I saw that he hadn't mended his ways, I dismissed him from the factory.*

Mr. Harun, O-i-C, Production, Trendmaker

These quotations suggest that in a socially conservative society like Bangladesh, some males abuse their position of authority in the factories, subjecting female workers to harassment if they refuse to go on dates or to become involved sexually. This contrasts the findings from the literature review with those of Salzinger's (2000) Mexican studies where supervisorial sexual attention was one of the elements that management used as a mechanism to ensure control of labour and of production itself.

In this study, it is interesting that whilst female interviewees were not forthcoming about incidents of misconduct by male managers, some of them admitted to being aware of "*bad women*" who used their sexuality to obtain benefits from supervisors, line chiefs or production managers such as granting of leave and gate passes whenever they required, increased pay increments, easier work with less pressure, not facing verbal abuse, and even sometimes having their work distributed to other workers so that they could relax.

One female worker talked at length about the positive and negative aspects of this use of sexuality by both male managers and female workers, suggesting that this was quite a common aspect of factory life. Her main concern, however, was not related to the morality of those involved but simply to the fact this disrupted the nature of an

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employment relationship which she felt should be based on "*payment and performance, wages and work effort*" (Smith 2010: 282):

> *Here in garment manufacturing a third of the women get involved with the supervisors. This type of relationship has both a good and a bad side. During their weekly day off these female workers spend time with the supervisors and line chiefs, going out to the cinema; some even have physical relationships with them. If these workers make mistakes, the managers don't tell them off; they explain their mistakes to them. If an unmarried worker is good looking, the line chiefs and supervisors treat them well. They're checking them out. Not all supervisors or line chiefs do this; about 10% are this type. I don't like it. This is a place of work. We work hard, and in return we get money. This sort of thing shouldn't happen in the workplace. Everyone should be treated the same in the workplace.*

Taslima, Operator, Fashionwise

The use of female sexuality in the workplace can be viewed as a kind of coping strategy by some women. Taslima's testimony is reminiscent of Salzinger's (2000) observations that in her Mexican study some women appeared to welcome being treated as sexual objects because it gave them a form of personal power, which ultimately enabled them to promote their own self-interest in the workplace. Previously, Salzinger (1997) had noted that young women enjoy the experience of being desirable, using this power[39] as a means of attempting to evade the most egregious aspects of managerial control.

In this study, interviewees mentioned cases of married women who introduce themselves as unmarried to male colleagues as they think this will increase their demand and status. This behaviour in a culture that is particularly repressive of female sexuality explains the public perception of garment workers as 'loose women' and the unwelcome attention they receive from men on the streets (Kabeer 2000), topics which will be analysed in detail in Chapter Seven.

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[39] Salzinger (1997) cited an example of how a female factory employee, one of the 'young and pretty ones', was able to use the personal power this gave her. Arriving later on her first day at work, she convinced the manager to intercede for her and was allowed to work after all.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter used Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999:88) typology of different control regimes and their framework of misbehaviour (1999:25) to explore how women use forms of misbehaviour to resist oppressive managerial control regimes. It should be noted that this study differs from Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) in a number of important ways. Firstly, this research was conducted in a different context (developing country (Bangladesh) vs. European), and used different scales of analysis (EPZ and non-EPZ vs. a more general approach operating at organisational level). Secondly, this study examined women's agency looking in more detail at gender whereas Ackroyd and Thompson's approach (1999) was more generally focused on misbehaviour by both male and female employees. Thirdly, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) talked about different control regimes, such as direct control, responsible autonomy, irresponsible autonomy, and controlled autonomy. However, this study looked at only one control regime which is direct control because women at this level in the Bangladeshi context, particularly in the RMG sector, only experience direct control. Employers in the RMG sector do not offer responsible autonomy or any of the other control regimes mentioned by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999).

With respect to the direct control regime, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) suggested that the only response by employees subjected to this regime is recalcitrance or militancy. This analysis adds a new perspective on their model showing that the degree of direct control varies within the Bangladeshi RMG industry and the forms of women's resistance vary according to the different (direct) control regimes. Although direct control was exercised in all case-study factories it was exercised differently (see Table 6.1). With regard to differences between the EPZ and non-EPZ factories, the control regime in New Era was more co-operative in nature. Supervision did not rely on the traditional aggressive forms of supervision involving bullying and shouting, and working conditions were less abusive. In contrast, in the non-EPZ factories, stricter forms of control were still in evidence.

TABLE 6.1: TYPES OF CONTROL REGIMES AND WOMEN'S AGENCY IN THE RMG INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

TYPES OF CONTROL REGIME		TYPES OF AGENCY
EPZ	Co-operative control regimes	Resistance by collective organisation such as WWA (Organised form: Collective, Formalised)
Non-EPZ	Stricter forms of control regimes	<u>Low-level reactions:</u> talking, laughing, gossiping to make work humane, taking unauthorised leave/ absence from work and use of female sexuality <u>Active-level reactions:</u> instant reactions, threatening supervisors, organised protest, work stoppages, and quitting job (turnover). (Organised form: Individual, collective, Informal)

Evidence suggests that different forms of control regime have given rise to different types of female agency in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. In the co-operative control regime (EPZ), women's resistance mainly took a collective form. EPZ workers generally did not get involved in any kind of organisational misbehaviour as they were comparatively happy with their working conditions in the factory. If any conflict arises between workers and supervisors such as arguments regarding work, or requests for an increase in bonuses or wages, they usually informed their WWA representative. Therefore, the EPZ women utilised their work effort bargaining through collective organisation to improve their working conditions inside the factory (Smith 2006).

On the other hand, in stricter forms of control regimes (non-EPZ factories), women were more likely to react against employer efforts at control, either individually or collectively. Women's reactions were both low-level and active-level in the absence of any evident function of participatory committees (PC). Low-level reactions involved talking and chatting to each other, laughing, and having fun with co-workers to make work more bearable, or taking unauthorised leave/being absent from work. Use of female sexuality can also be considered as a low-level female reaction to promote one's self-interests within the workplace. Active-level reactions involved reacting instantly and threatening supervisors or getting involving in organised protests, such as stopping work, and quitting their job (turnover). This refusal to accept working conditions in

which they fail to receive due reward and due respect is creating some positive though limited outcomes. For example, forms of supervisor abuse are now much less widely reported in non-EPZ case-studies.

This analysis of control regimes and worker resistance in both the EPZ and non-EPZ sector has highlighted worker agency. Overall, it can be argued that there is a positive story as results suggest that within the capitalist control of the labour process, women can achieve some sort of empowerment within the system. They use their time in one factory to develop skills and if they are treated badly, they use the transferable skills they gained within the labour market (mobility power) which is an external expression of their labour power. Additionally, they misbehave within the workplace as an internal expression of this power (Smith 2006). Currently the labour market in Bangladesh is sufficiently buoyant to allow women to leave one job and try to find a better one elsewhere once they have acquired these skills. Women are thus able to develop and utilise what Smith (2010:285) calls their Labour Market Power/Mobility Power, forcing "*adaptations and compromises, not through being organised into trade unions, but disorganised through huge amounts of quitting*". This means women are able to threaten to leave one employer for a job in with a better factory, looking for improved working conditions, as they go with the flow…

It would be interesting to compare this study's findings on women's agency with research by Carswell and Neve (2013) conducted in the Tiruppur RMG industry located in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu which suggested that men have the agency in being able to move between factories whereas women's agency is structured by gender norms and responsibilities. Women's opportunities, especially those for the unmarried female migrant RMG workers and long-distance migrants, are structured by a set of gendered norms that constrain their spatial mobility within the town and the industry. Women need to maintain cultural norms of respectability; therefore, they are not able to move freely between factories, lacking the flexibility and freedom to pick those factories that offer the best terms and conditions. Therefore, in that context gender norms and responsibilities restrict women's agency but not men's. However, this research suggests that women in the Bangladeshi RMG industry have more agency. It should be noted that at this particular point of time in the developmental phase of the

Bangladeshi economy women RMG workers have this sort of agency but if factories are built in other parts of the world offering even cheaper production to MNCs compared to that in Bangladeshi RMG factories, then this agency or mobility power might not last.

In addition, different forms of control regimes can be linked to the level of (public) patriarchy women experience in the workplace. Evidence suggests that the extent of public patriarchy is different in terms of different control regimes of the labour process. If we examine women's position within the EPZ and non-EPZ workplace using Walby's (1990) model of patriarchy and six patriarchal structures, it is clear that public patriarchy exists particularly in the non-EPZ factories reflected in the patriarchal relations in paid work, male violence, and sexuality. For example, non-EPZ women are segregated by sex within helper and operator job categories in the factories and excluded from the more highly paid forms of work such as supervisory and higher level skilled jobs. Therefore they are getting lower wages than their male counterparts due to their job designation, although sewing is a skilled task (Collins 2002; Mills 2003). Instances of gendered wage differentials within same category are also evident to some extent in the non-EPZ factories. In some cases this is due to the perceived skill level required to operate certain types of machinery, although this actually related to the physical strength required.

They also experience significant amounts of verbal abuses in the workplace and this behaviour from men has restrictive effects upon the actions of most women, resulting in their unwillingness to take up supervisory positions within the factories. Due to gender segregation, where male managers (almost exclusively men) supervise women, sexualised language is often employed in order to discipline and intimidate workers. The structure of the state is also important in this context since the wage inequality which exists between male and female workers in the non-EPZ factories or the abuse women experience are directly shaped by the state. State agencies, in particular, DL and CIFE plays an important role in its inability/unwillingness to employ large number of labour inspectors to enforce legislation in the non-EPZ factories, thereby strengthening forms of public patriarchy in the workplace.

However, as seen above, women are not passive victims of oppressive structures. Women's struggle has led to changes in degree of public patriarchy include aspects of

gender relations such as reduction in the wages gap between men and women and the reduction of verbal abuse at non-EPZ factories. Evidences show some 70% of the female interviewees from the non-EPZ factories claimed that most female and male workers working in the same category received equal pay since wages were determined on performance and experience. Moreover, female workers took organised protest action at the non-EPZ factories and their actions had led to a significant reduction in abuse there.

On the other hand, there is less evidence of public patriarchy in the EPZ factory. The fact that EPZ culture is less masculine at supervisory level seems to enable more progression for women there with 50% of women there in supervisory and managerial positions. Also, there is no wage differential between men and women with similar qualifications since company policy regarding recruitment and promotion meant that EPZ women received fixed salaries according to their specified grade. Verbal abuse is not used and managers do not use any offensive language. However, public patriarchy has not entirely disappeared from the EPZ since women are still restricted from certain jobs which require physical strength, such as cutting, moving, loading, and hammering. In particular, stricter forms of regulation by BEPZA along with other key causal mechanisms (such as favourable factory location, Korean partnership, better position within the supply chain, long-term mutual relationship with multinationals as well as higher levels of education) have influenced the position of EPZ women within the workplace and the forms of patriarchy they experienced in public spheres.

Chapter Seven will provide an analysis of women's lives within the household and the broader society and explore the forms of patriarchy they experience in those spheres.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
WOMEN'S LIVES OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Six showed that women from EPZ and non-EPZ factories exert different types of power in relation to the forms of supervision and managerial control regimes to which they are subjected within their workplace. Chapter Seven will examine what happens when women are empowered in the economic sphere and whether that transfers over into the domestic sphere in terms of changes in patriarchal relations. The chapter begins by examining the concept of the double burden. It then focuses on women as contributors to family income and the impact this has on their control over their income and expenditure within the household. The following section considers the role which women play in household decision making and whether factory work has led to changes in their attitudes and lifestyles, and later explores how women manage potential tensions between factory and family life. It demonstrates that experience of paid work can offer female RMG workers a degree of empowerment within home and society, but the level of this varies for women. Female interviewees were grouped into three different categories based on their responses regarding household support, financial autonomy, and decision making powers. The "Traditional" group consisted of both married (13 out of the total 23 married women) and single (four out of the total 12 single women). Some ten of the remaining married women were categorised as "Progressive" whilst the "Independent" category comprised 13 women in total (eight single and five who were widowed, separated or divorced).

7.2 Female RMG Factory Workers and the Double Burden

In the male-dominated patriarchal society of Bangladesh, men and women have traditionally been restricted to their own spheres of activity (Cain *et al.* 1979). Women were confined within the private sphere to perform all the reproductive tasks at household level, while men participated in the productive activities outside the home (Cain *et al.* 1979; Souplet-Wilson 2014). As increasing numbers of women work in export factories due to financial necessity, the task of earning money has been added to their domestic responsibilities, forcing them to work a "double shift" (Pearson 2004;

Hossain 2012: 57), combining paid productive work with unpaid reproductive housework.

7.2.1 All Work and no Play?

Patriarchal ideology plays a powerful role in relegating Bangladeshi women to the disadvantaged and subordinated position within the family due to the gendered division of labour. Men's economic contribution and socialization justify their dominance over women in the household without contributing to reproductive activities, while as a result of the association of femininity with the role of caring, females are not considered to be real workers in the workplace dominated by men. Therefore, even if they work full-time, women still bear responsibility for childcare and domestic chores (Goetz 1999). With few exceptions, female interviewees, regardless of marital status, confirmed they were responsible for all housework including food shopping, cooking, and cleaning. Most women spoke of fitting up to three hours of housework around their factory work, typically following daily routines similar to the one outlined by Sapna:

> *I need to get up early in the morning, either 5.00 or 6.00 am. I sleep only four or five hours a night. I shower, cook rice, and start out for the office before 8.00 am. I work on the machine till 1.00 pm; then, have a one hour lunch break. I come home for lunch and return to the factory and work till 9.00 or 11.00 pm. Sometimes our factory closes at 7.00 or 8.00 pm when there's less overtime, but there's no guarantee [it] will close on time every day. If [it] closes at 8.00 pm, I buy vegetables and other necessities on the way home. I rush home because if I arrive late, the oven won't be free. If the factory closes at 8.00 pm, I don't have any problems; I can finish all my household chores and go to bed by 11.00 pm. But if we leave the factory at 10.00 pm, then we get to sleep at 1.00 am after finishing the household work. On weekdays there is no rest.*

> *Sapna, Operator, (21, Married), Trendmaker*

Although EPZ factory workers usually start work at a similar time (7.30 am), they know that their working day ends at 6.30 pm, and that unlike non-EPZ workers they will not be expected to stay until 10.00 pm for late-night working:

> *After returning from the factory I wash my face, and have 10-15 minutes rest and then I start the other part of my daily routine. I can finish cooking by 8.00 or 8.30 pm.*

After dinner I chat for a while with the other women who live in this house and then I go to bed at 10.00 or 10.30pm. […]

Lovely, Operator, (22, Married with children), New Era

Sapna's account shows that the nature of the double burden is exacerbated by inadequate facilities. This study found that most female workers share rented accommodation with other RMG workers, with anything from four to ten or more families living communally in a corrugated tin house.[40] Each family has a separate room and landlords are supposed to provide access to electricity, running water or tube-wells, a bathroom/toilet and kitchen. However, occupants usually share bathroom/toilet facilities and cooking facilities in the form of gas burners or traditional clay ovens (*tandoor*) which creates problems:

Gas supply is really problematic at the moment. In the daytime there's no gas supply, it comes back on in the evening. […] When the gas comes on I cook and go to sleep around 10.00 or 10.30 pm. There are only two ovens and five families live here. Everyone returns from shift at almost the same time. We need to queue for the oven.

Lovely, Operator, (22, Married with children), New Era

Practical problems of this kind added frustrating complications to already difficult lives, meaning that working women, particularly those in non-EPZ factories, allowed less time for themselves, sleeping only four or five hours in order to complete housework. This in turn impacted on their health, as seen in Chapter Six female workers had more health problems at the workplace and take more unauthorised leave. Paul-Majumder and Begum (2000) noted that in order to combine domestic chores with long shifts at work, female factory workers slept less and had less leisure time. This study suggests that, 15 years later, this situation has changed little for most of the female interviewees. This contrasts findings of Siu (2015), basing on workers' letters and ethnographic research in Shenzhen, Siu notes that today's Chinese migrant factory workers have considerably more leisure time compared to the workers of the early 1990s. After their daily shift

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[40] Only six of the 40 interviewees rented a room (see 7.3.1 for further information on this new form of accommodation). In the last decade, Dhaka's population has almost doubled from 5.3 to 9.3 million, placing massive pressure on housing and infrastructure and, in the process, creating a thriving street food industry which caters for those who have neither time nor space to make their own food (Khairuzzaman *et al.* 2014).

work they spend their leisure time on the internet at least three hours playing games with co-workers and chatting with family, friends, and relatives using information technology.

In this research, analysis suggested that the only exception to this rule were unmarried women who had migrated to Dhaka with their parents. Four of the 12 single women noted they did not usually do housework as their mothers took responsibility for this.

I don't need to do any housework. My mother used to work as a domestic assistant because I wasn't able to keep the family, but now I'm working at the factory, [she's] left that work. After returning from the factory, I get very tired. I eat dinner which my mother's already prepared for me; I pray, and then sleep. I get up at 7.00-ish, get ready, have lunch and go to the factory. At weekends I rest all day.

Tumpa, Operator, (19, Unmarried), Fashionwise

Whilst it is tempting to view this as a case of inter-generational female solidarity in Tumpa's case, this arrangement also has an economic basis. She has assumed the responsibility as family breadwinner because she can make more money from factory work than her mother would have done as a domestic assistant. These interviewees reported helping their mothers with housework on their day off.

During the working week, few women enjoy leisure time and although they may manage up to five hours' rest on their weekly day off, they still had major household chores to complete including hand-washing the family's clothes:

On weekdays I don't get any rest except for sleeping at night. But at the weekend sometimes I get up late, 9.00 or 10.00-ish. I wash the clothes, cook until 1.00 or 2.00pm. Then I have lunch and afterwards I'm free. I can rest for four or five hours. I take a nap in the afternoon if I want or go to the park with my family. Then I need to cook at night for the next day.

Nipa, QC, (17, Married), Style Star

Interviewees typically spent between 12 and 18 hours doing housework during the working week, in addition to four or five hour's housework on their weekly day off.

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Since these women lived in shared accommodation, they spent time together on Friday afternoons, or visited relatives living nearby.

With regard to the double burden, most interviewees were responsible for housework in addition to their factory work, the only exception being single women still living at home with parents who only helped out on their days off.

7.2.2 Household Support

Female interviewees were asked if they received help from husbands or other household members with housework to find out more about their attitudes towards gender roles in the domestic sphere.

7.2.2.1 "Traditional" women

Four single women living with parents helped out with housework but they were categorised as belonging to this group because they supported traditional gender roles, believing that women should perform reproductive tasks within the household, even if they were doing factory work. Some thirteen married women said that they rarely received support from their husbands with household tasks. However, despite being full-time workers, most of these "Traditional" married women, some with children, some without, were adamant that housework and childcare was their responsibility as women. The comments by Sadia and Nahar are typical of the responses which this question elicited from "traditional" women:

My husband doesn't do anything. What would he do? There's not that much housework. Why would he do housework? That's my work. I don't allow my husband to do any housework. Sometimes he helps by bringing water from the well or buying groceries from the shop. I'd never let him cook.

Sadia, QC, (23, Married), Style Star

Cooking and cleaning tasks are my responsibility. If men do these tasks, they wouldn't be able to do it like a woman. They'd mess everything up. I don't want my husband cooking or cleaning the house. I don't think men should do housework.

Nahar, Operator, (30, Married with children), Fashionwise

These responses reveal that for the "Traditional" women there is a clear dividing line between male and female roles within the domestic sphere (*my tasks/my responsibility*), although Sadia allowed her husband to contribute by performing activities which take place outside the home. Shopping is still considered 'men's work' in rural Bangladesh. Rao (2012) argued that in Bangladesh traditional patriarchal values imply a particular separation of tasks, casting females primarily as 'housewives' and males as 'workers'. In this study, it was found that "Traditional" married women tend to perform all the household activities themselves and offered various explanations for non-involvement by males. Like Sadia, some excused husbands on the grounds that *"There's not that much housework"*. Others voiced the opinion, like Nahar, that men were incompetent: *"They wouldn't be able to do it like a woman. They'd mess everything up"*. Ironically, these comments mirror the type of statements made by some of the male managers about female employees' inability to perform certain functions in the workplace (see Chapter Six).

Bhopal (1997:106) notes that this division of gender roles is so deeply engrained in South Asian tradition that it is considered 'natural' behaviour, meaning that women accept the traditional roles assigned to them without question and internalise the long-established division of labour within the household. This differentiation of the genders into masculine and feminine subjects is considered to be due to socialisation primarily during childhood, when boys and girls learn the appropriate behaviour for their sex and are prepared for their adult roles in the sexual division of labour (Parsons and Bales 1956; Comer 1974; Sharpe 1976). This gender role rigidity, accompanied by male self-exclusion from participation in the household economy, leaves women forcing themselves to fulfil what they perceive as their duty, even in the most demanding situations, as the following example illustrates:

> *I feel it's very difficult to do my housework as I have a small baby. My husband doesn't help me with this. In the morning I have to cook rice and prepare food for my baby. I have to make breakfast, feed the baby, and get lunch ready for my husband because he eats at home. But he wouldn't even fetch water to drink. I buy the groceries, cook, wash up, I do everything. I have everything ready for him. I take my baby with me to the factory* [and] *keep him in the childcare centre.*

> *Farjana, Operator, (30, Married with children), New Era*

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Kabeer and Mahmud (2004b) state that factory work, particularly in export garment manufacturing where overtime is common, makes it difficult for women to combine wage earning with caring for their children. Pahl's (1984) work suggests that in households where there are young children women are more likely to have to do even more domestic labour than those without. Farjana's comments graphically illustrate this situation, but she is relatively lucky as she does at least have childcare facilities at the factory where she works. Unlike the previous interviewees, Farjana would welcome her husband's help with housework, but he has effectively excluded himself from participating in domestic duties, conforming to the expected patriarchal norms that segregate gender roles (Bhopal 1997). Kabeer (2014) argues that resistance on the part of husbands to undertake housework is partly due to the fact they are aiming to uphold the patriarchal order and maintain traditional gender roles since if they share in domestic work and women take up breadwinning roles, this new division of labour poses a challenge to heterosexual masculine identity.

7.2.2.2 "Progressive" Women

Although nearly half of the married respondents expressed conservative attitudes regarding gender roles and relations in the domestic sphere, reflecting a traditional ideology, there was evidence of some more liberal viewpoints. The "Progressive" women interviewed for this study reported that their husbands played a significant role in performing certain household duties:

> *If I return home at 8.00 pm from the factory, I can finish the cooking by 9.30pm. When I return at 10.00 pm, my husband cooks the rice if he gets back earlier than me. My husband helps with household chores, for example, while I'm cooking in the morning, he makes the bed, sweeps the floor, and helps me bring the plates and glasses from our room; sometimes he chops the vegetables for me.*
>
> *Afroja, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise*

> *I tell my husband to come home earlier after office hours so we can use the oven and give him something to cook* [there]. *My husband helps with housework. He chops*

vegetables in our room, while I'm cooking in the kitchen. He helps a lot with household chores.

Lucky, Operator, (21, Married with children), New Era

When the factory closes at 7.00 pm, I cook when I get in. When the factory closes at 10.00 pm my husband cooks. He rings to ask me when the office closes. If it's 10.00 pm then he does everything. He helps a lot with the household chores. He buys daily groceries such as food and vegetables. I don't need to go shopping. I don't like [it].

Mitu, QC, (30, Married with children), Style Star

These comments suggest that "Progressive" women were challenging traditional roles in a context where domestic labour is regarded as a female activity. Unlike the comments of the "Traditional" married interviewees, these responses suggest that there are significant signs of change in both male and female attitudes towards household chores with husbands participating in various tasks within the domestic sphere. This is extremely significant as the social norms of Bangladeshi women's identity, typically linked solely to domestic work and the bearing and rearing of children, is challenged by some husbands performing household activities.

Perhaps the most striking of these responses is Lucky's comment that she tells her husband to come home earlier, which implies confidence in her negotiating position with him. Possibly links can be made here between these women's workplace experiences making them feel confident enough to resist verbal abuse from line managers on the factory floor (see Chapter Six). This confidence transfers into the domestic sphere, giving "Progressive" married women the power to speak for themselves and re-negotiate gender roles and relations, as the following narrative illustrates:

I'm a factory worker. My husband's a street vendor, selling vegetables. I make the biggest contribution to our living costs. He has some loans in the village as we had a grocery shop there and wants to go back because his earnings are very low here. He's suggested returning several times to start a new life there. But I don't want to. I'd like to work a few more years in the factory and save some money. The situation has changed

now. I can speak for myself. Before I used to depend on him for everything and never disagree.

Mitu, QC, (30, Married with two children), Style Star

Mitu's account suggests that her income as chief breadwinner has improved her position within the family and her husband was one of the men who participated in household chores, playing a major role in childcare:

I work in the factory from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm or later. My husband works in the afternoon. I have two children: an 11-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son. My husband takes care of him while I'm away. My daughter is at school. When she returns home, he feeds them both as he stays at home. When he goes out to work, he takes our son with him. He helps me a lot in the home.

This study did find examples, then, in which employment appears to have brought significant changes in the household of progressive women regarding traditional gender roles, with husbands participating in housework and childcare due to their wives' work commitments. These "Progressive" women are able to transform their gender roles as they can think beyond traditional cultural norms.

Cook and Fathalla (1996) argue that exposure to education enables women to re-think traditional cultural values and modify their individual attitudes. Sultana (2010b) highlights the important role that education plays in reducing discrimination against women and making men's and women's roles more equal within the household, finding that women with higher levels of education are more liberal and tend to espouse non-traditional ideologies compared to illiterate or less educated women. Data in this study revealed that the "Progressive" women who enjoyed a more egalitarian relationship with their husbands had spent longer in education (having completed either secondary or higher secondary level of schooling). It may also be significant that these "Progressive" women were earning more money than their partners[41], suggesting that material power may also play a role in a woman's ability to re-negotiate domestic

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[41] Interestingly, the husbands of these RMG workers who also worked in the RMG sector earned less (tk.5, 000-6,000) than their wives (tk.7,000 or 8,000), because the latter were more experienced or skilled. Moreover, husbands engaged in casual work also brought home lower earnings than their wives because RMG employment provided regular income.

gender relations and can improve woman's bargaining position within family. Afroja's account provides a similar kind of insight:

There are many unmarried men working in this factory. They've told me if they get married they'll marry a village girl, but not a garment worker. When I asked them why, they replied: 'If I marry a garment worker, she won't listen to me. I won't have any value to her. When a woman earns, she feels that she doesn't have to depend on her husband for a living. So she'll answer back if she doesn't like what I say. She may leave me because she's able to lead her life without me.'

Afroja, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise

The above extract illustrates that men perceive that a woman earning a regular income would weaken their power within the home because it gives her independence without needing men's economic support. Regular income gives women the agency to exercise their own judgement.

7.2.2.3 "Independent" Women

In this study, the "Independent" women living alone in Dhaka had to carry out domestic chores, like their "Traditional" married counterparts because there were no family members living with them to help them out with their housework. New living arrangements did not liberate these "Independent" women from housework but meant they had relatively less pressure on themselves within the household as they had more control over their money and greater freedom of movement (discussed below).

To sum up, in terms of getting support on domestic labour differences were observed amongst female interviewees that were based on marital status. The "Independent" women in this study (13 of the total of 40 interviewees comprising eight single, five deserted, separated and widowed women) had to perform all domestic chores in the absence of any supporting household members living with them but they had control over their lives. Earning an income and independent living in the city increases women's sense of self-sufficiency, which in turn allows them to exercise a greater control over their own lives.

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For "Traditional" women (13 married and 4 unmarried women from a total of 40 interviewees) employment in the RMG industry has not impacted on their gender roles, as it simply meant a double burden with working married women receiving no support within the household from husbands. Since "Traditional" women adhered to traditional cultural beliefs, this restricts the reallocation of household tasks within the family. Even though these women carry an often physically punishing double workload burden, these interviewees stated that for various reasons they would not consider allowing their husbands to carry out housework. "Traditional" women may suppress their "economic selves" to restore "traditional order" at home, in which case empowerment in the private realm continues to be suppressed by cultural value systems. In Walby's terms (1990), "Traditional" women experience extreme forms of private patriarchy inside the household.

On the other hand, "Progressive" women (10 out of total 40 female interviewees comprising 10 married women) spoke of their experiences of moving towards sharing domestic labour tasks with husbands and as a result a change is beginning to take place. "Progressive" women had begun to challenge traditional attitudes concerning gender roles, possibly because their higher level of education and higher earnings than their partners gave them the confidence to confront cultural norms and social values and re-negotiate their positions with regard to household tasks. Thus, it can be argued that for "Independent" and "Progressive" women the state of gender relations is changing to an extent as a result of paid employment, whereas "Traditional" women's entry into the workplace has not brought about any change in the private form of patriarchy.

7.3 Changing Patterns in Household Income and Expenditure

In order to assess the impact of women's work on the economic position of the household, interviewees were asked about issues relating to household living conditions and expenditure. They were asked to comment on any changes which had taken place in the method of allocating household income and expenditure since they had taken up their jobs. In addition to assessing the level of the financial contribution made by the interviewees to their household, this section also explores the extent to which the women considered themselves to be financially autonomous (see 7.3.3).

7.3.1 Wage and Women's Livelihood

According to Kibria (2001), the Bangladeshi RMG sector has mobilised various economic groups of women from poor urban households. Similarly, the findings of this research suggest that most of the interviewees (35 of the 40 participants) are from low-economic status families. Because the majority of the household heads had fairly low monthly earnings (tk. 4,000-8,000), thereby, daughters or wives were obliged to work in the RMG sector to help support the family financially.

Once they started working in the RMG factory, all the interviewees started to contribute a substantial amount to household income but the financial situation of these women proved to be quite varied. EPZ workers, such as Lucky, felt reasonably confident about their situation because they reported higher earnings than their non-EPZ counterparts. Some 23 of the 40 female interviewees had another income earner in the family or a husband working either in the RMG sector or in another services sector, which made a significant difference to their family income levels:

> *My salary is tk.8886 […] about tk.12,000 or 13,000 including overtime. My husband's salary is about tk.8000 or 9,000. He works as an operator in another RMG factory. Our salary fluctuates depending on overtime; if we do more overtime then it increases. With our joint income we can manage family expenses but it would be very difficult managing on one income. I pay the rent (tk. 3,000 including electricity, water, and gas bill). I send money to my mother who looks after my son. I'm happy with what I get as my salary. I can raise my family with our income.*

> *Lucky, Operator, (21, Married), New Era*

As Lucky notes, one salary would not be enough to get by on but with both, they can more than cover all their basic expenses. On the other hand, for women who were the sole breadwinners in their household (17 of 40 interviewees), the situation was very difficult:

> *I don't have any other income source. I feel good when I get my salary: tk. 7,000 or 8,000 including overtime. But by the middle of the month I feel I've already spent a lot of money: how will I get by for the rest of the month? In Dhaka, tk. 7,000 can't possibly support three people. My rent is tk. 2,600 and the rest goes on food. We eat just enough*

to live on. I buy rice for the whole month, pay the electricity bill, and my daughter's tuition fees. That comes to tk. 3,000. I buy only 250gm fish which costs tk. 30. Every day I spend tk. 50 on groceries. What can you get for that amount of money?

Muslima, Operator, (43, Deserted), Trendmaker

My total salary is tk. 7,000. It's difficult to survive on this. I live within my means. I keep thinking that I've got to survive on this salary the whole month. If I wanted I could spend tk.500 in just one day, but what would I do for the rest of the month? I need to keep a close watch on my money. If I got tk.9,000 as my salary, that would be good for me.

Shirin, Operator, (18, Unmarried), Fashionwise

The accounts of Muslima and Shirin reflect many of the female interviewees, who found it difficult to manage as sole wage earner for their household. This group included women who had been widowed, deserted, or separated and all the single women. In Bangladeshi society, the male head of the household would normally be required to provide for female relatives. However, in these cases, their fathers or husbands were either unable (too old/infirm/deceased) to provide maintenance, or unwilling, having remarried and established a new family. Also, the high cost of living in Dhaka City meant that two incomes were often needed simply to cover family expenditure.

An online report by Tasin published in the *Daily Star* (2013) stated that a minimum wage for RMG workers had been introduced in November 2010,[42] while food prices had risen three times during that period, meaning that a worker needed tk. 3,854 to keep pace with these increases. Based on the data, a sole wage earner on tk. 8,000 a month, who was keeping a family, would need to spend half that sum on food.

Accommodation was another necessary expense which worried interviewees. It emerged from interviews that many RMG workers now rent small rooms with or without attached kitchen and toilet. These make a very high profit margin per square foot for landlords in comparison to the income they can receive renting out houses in

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[42] Another minimum wage was implemented for RMG workers in December 2013. However, data for this study was collected during May-September 2013, prior to implementation of the new minimum wage for 2013.

middle-class and lower middle-class areas. One of the interviewees expressed her concern about the rising cost of accommodation.

Our salary increases by tk. 300 a year, but our rent increases by tk. 500. I'm paying tk. 2,650 rent for this room. The landlord increases it every year; some years even twice, saying that prices for gas, electricity and water have gone up. I've been living here for four years. The rent was originally tk. 1,000; it's gone up to tk. 2,650 within four years. We don't gain anything if our salary increases.

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Moni, Operator, (22, Married), Trendmaker

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As there is no regulation regarding rent increases in Bangladesh, landlords aim to make as much profit as possible. The rent for a room in a corrugated tin shed was tk. 2,300-3,500 per month, depending on size and structure; rent for a room in a building was slightly higher, at tk. 4,000-5,000. Some of the interviewees, particularly Style Star workers, mentioned that if anyone gets behind with rent which can happen due to the irregularity of overtime payments (see Chapter Five), landlords are often abusive and women living without support from husbands are particularly vulnerable.

Most of the women's wages were used to provide basic household necessities such as food, accommodation, clothing, and medicine. When they received their monthly wages, they paid rent, put money aside for food and other expenditure, and sent remittances to support family in their village. Most interviewees thought that wage levels were not adequate to cover the cost of living. Nonetheless, most of the female interviewees believed that working had changed their lives for the better in comparison to their previous existence in the village. In general, they were able to cover their own expenses and support at least one adult or two children with their earnings:

Life in the village was very difficult for us. My husband used to work as a hawker; I was a housewife. I like working in the RMG factory as I'm earning money. I receive my wages within seven working days of each month. My job means I can contribute to family expenses. We're in a better position now. If I want to buy something I can buy it. There's also been a change in our diet. Before I used to eat less meat and fish but now I can eat better. I eat meat once a week and fish every day. I'm also saving money for my daughter's education.

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Shabana, Operator, (24, Married with children), Fashionwise

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Most women said they could now afford to eat meat or fish at least four times a week; some interviewees said every day. They also reported that they had purchased the essentials: a bed, cooking utensils, storage racks, and a table, and some mentioned owning mobile phones. Women in double income families not only purchased goods for themselves but also for their village homes including furniture and electrical goods. This improvement in diet and personal purchasing power appeared to be a direct outcome of the women's income.

7.3.2 Women's Savings

The information in the two following sections is based on women's responses to questions regarding their savings and remittances. The majority of female workers had some disposable income which they could spend or save as they wished, after paying for food and other household expenses. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the differentials in wages, EPZ workers had managed to save more than their non-EPZ counterparts. Some interviewees had deposit protection service (DPS) accounts in Dhaka in which they placed tk.500-3,000 per month. Some young, unmarried workers saved their money in cooperatives in their village. Most women reported sending remittances to their families in the rural areas, either to pay for daily household necessities or to fund childcare and education. In addition, workers also saved money to repay earlier loans, renovate houses in the village, meet marriage expenses for family members or themselves, or pay towards sending family members abroad. Lovely described how she allocated her income:

I spend money to my family, I pay the rent. I can save tk. 2,000 or 4,000 a month. I keep the money in a bank account. I'd saved tk. 150,000 but I gave it to my mother to build two rooms in the village. She's built a house in the village. The outer walls are made of bricks with a tin roof. Previously, I bought a plot of land for the house with my money.

Lovely, Operator, (22, Married with children), New Era

Like Lovely, half of the women reported that they had bought small plots of land in their village, to build a house on. The rest had either bought animals or jewellery as an investment. These purchases were seen as a form of insurance against uncertainties such as sickness, loss of job, or death of the male family breadwinner, or as savings towards

dowry. Whatever the amount, these savings allow women to develop a sense of control over their lives, as detailed in section 7.3.3, helping to cushion them from the effects of potentially difficult events.

To sum up, although wages in the RMG industry are low, they are still higher than the money offered in other locally available jobs and women's participation in factory work leads to improved income for the whole household. Female factory workers were able to support themselves as well as meet the basic needs of either one adult or two children. Their wages were able to provide three meals a day, to purchase clothing/household utensils, to pay for children's education and for medical treatment. Also, most interviewees had some savings. While most of these women workers belonged to poor households, being employed and able to have savings did offer the possibility of empowerment to the women.

7.3.3 Control over Income and Expenditure

Another measure of female empowerment is a woman's ability to dispose of her own earnings as she wishes and to manage the household expenditure, so interviewees were asked about their control over their wages and expenditure.

7.3.3.1 "Independent" Women with Financial Autonomy

The "Independent" women comprising single and divorced, widowed and separated women in this study had financial autonomy. In the traditional Bangladeshi family system, unmarried women are under the authority of fathers, brothers, and other male kin who control all aspects of their lives, including finance (Kibria 1995). In this study, the 12 unmarried female participants, eight of whom were living unaccompanied by family members, had more control over their income. However, most still remitted a portion of their wages to their families in the villages:

I spend money as I wish, budgeting for what I want. If I do extra overtime then I get tk. 9,000 as a monthly wage. I pay rent of tk. 3,000; I have one DPS in which I deposit tk. 2,000 every month. I remit tk.1,000 to 3,000 to my mother and younger brother who still live in the village.

Rita, Operator, (22, Unmarried), Trendmaker

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I'm not accountable to anyone in terms of spending my earnings. I remit about tk.4000 to my family. I keep my wages and spend them on myself. However, I can't spend whatever I want. I spend my money very carefully. I pay my rent which is tk.2, 300 and food costs about tk. 2,000. I'm not able to save money as I have to remit a large amount of money to my mother.

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Shirin, Operator, (18, Unmarried), Fashionwise

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Like Rita and Shirin, most unmarried interviewees unaccompanied by family members in the city had control over their wages and spent their wages as they wished as they were the only breadwinner for the family. They either had no male relative in the household in authority over them or the male head of the household was too old to keep track of their money. Therefore, they retained full control of their earnings. Fernandez-Kelly (1990) argues that the patriarchal family system is based on the social and economic protection of women by men, so the inability of male kin to adequately provide for the needs of all family members may shift the dynamics of power within the household. Earning an income from RMG work and being able to control that money has provided these women with power which is indeed a shift from traditional cultural patterns in Bangladesh.

These unmarried women remitted a large proportion of their wages to their families, amounting to a third or more of their earnings, either on monthly basis or every two/three months. This tendency to remit wages resembles the behaviour of working daughters in many different societies (Chant and McIlwaine 1995; Hancock and Edirisinghe 2012). Remitting their wages to families could be seen as a choice, indicating their freedom to use this money as they wish.

This study's findings on this issue contradict those of Kibria (1995), which indicated that young unmarried female workers did not remit any of their wages to family members. She argued that conditions of poverty had challenged the set of expectations traditionally guiding relations between young women and their kin, to the extent that the traditional family system had little meaning for them. The young single factory workers interviewed in this study provided financial support to their parents or siblings in the form of remittance from their earnings, indicating a strong sense of responsibility. However, interviewees also made it clear that they only envisaged spending four or five

years in RMG factories in Dhaka, and that their long term aim was to return to their village. Thus, by sending remittances to display an enduring sense of responsibility for their families, they maintained strong links there.

Also, the five women in this study had been married but when interviewed were widowed or separated or divorced and in the absence of any male head of the household had full control over their own wages (see Table 7.1). These women saw factory employment as a means of survival and typically they used their wages for household expenditure and children's education. Aleya's comments make it clear that her main rationale for working was as a means of survival:

> *I'm widowed, so who'll look after me if I don't work? That's why I've started at a garment factory. My son is eight years old. My salary is tk. 5,100, with overtime up to tk. 9,000. The more overtime I do, the higher my wage; otherwise I have a fixed salary of tk. 5,100. I need tk. 2,500 for the rent; I need to pay for food. Everything is expensive. I need to send money to my parents-in-law because my son stays with them. The money is very valuable to me. I spend it as I see fit. Due to this job, I'm earning money and surviving.*

> *Aleya, Operator, (26, Widowed), Trendmaker*

7.3.3.2 "Traditional" Women with No Financial Autonomy

The group of "Traditional" women comprised both married and unmarried women had no financial autonomy (see Table 7.1). In this study, four of the 12 unmarried female RMG workers were living with family members and, like Munni, they usually reported having no control over their monthly wages, handing these over to the head of the household and not retaining any for their own needs:

> *I give my wages to my mother as soon as I get them. From my earnings she pays the rent, utility bills, and buys the shopping. My father can't work because he's too old and my mother doesn't work either. I feel very bad that I'm earning money but I can't spend money on what I want to buy. I'm unable to spend money on my own needs as we're poor.*

> *Munni, Operator, (23, Unmarried), Trendmaker*

Munni does not question the cultural expectation that her salary will be used to pay household expenses. Although she feels upset that despite being the breadwinner, she has no say in how her earnings are spent, she realises that due to the family's financial situation, choosing to spend money on herself is simply not viewed as an option.

Of the total number of twenty-three married women interviewed in this study, some 13 had no control over their earnings (see Table 7.1), handing over their wages to their husbands, with the male head of household having total responsibility for financial arrangements, as these responses attest:

When I get my wages I give them to my husband. Then he gives me money for daily expenses. I ask him if I want to buy a dress, shampoo or hair oil. My husband hasn't got any extra expenses. He spends for our family.

Husneara, Operator, (42, Married with children), Trendmaker

After getting my monthly salary, I give my salary to my husband. I give it to him willingly. If I wish to buy anything then my husband buys it for me. I could keep my money but I don't want to make my husband unhappy.

Salma, Operator, (20, Married), Fashionwise

TABLE 7.1: WOMEN'S CONTROL OVER WAGES AND EXPENDITURES

CONTROL OVER INCOME AND EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY		MARITAL STATUS	TOTAL[*]
"Traditional" women with no financial autonomy	17	Single living with parents	4
		Married women	13
"Progressive" women with partial financial autonomy	10	Married women	10
"Independent" women with financial autonomy	13	Single living alone	8
		Widowed/Separated/ Deserted	5
		TOTAL=	40

(*Total number of women interviewed: **12** single living alone or with parents and **28** Married/Widowed/Separated/Deserted)

"Traditional" women, like Husneara and Salma, receive or would ask their husbands for a small part of their earnings for daily expenses or specific purchases. At most, these women manage a small amount of their income to ensure daily maintenance of the family. In Bangladeshi society, women expect economic success and financial provision from husbands, while men expect their wives to perform familial and mothering roles in return (Rao, 2012). The socialisation process teaches women and men the concept of the male breadwinner, who will take overall responsibility for meeting all the household's material needs. As a result, Husneara, Salma, and many other "Traditional" interviewees thought it entirely natural to dutifully turn over their income to their husbands, believing, moreover, that keeping their earnings for themselves would offend their husbands in front of other family members. This is hardly surprising in a context like Bangladesh, where the traditional family system is "*centred on the deference and dependence of women on men*" (Kibria 1995: 295). Their willingness to surrender their wages to their husbands may be explained by the compliance of women with the traditional patriarchal family system in Bangladesh in which the woman views her husband "*as the benevolent dictator, whose authority over financial matters is justified by the fact that he acts in ways that protected the interests of all household members*" (Kibria 1995: 297). Therefore, "Traditional" women submit to this domestic form of patriarchy by surrendering their wages to their husbands, in turn perpetuating men's position as head of the family.

7.3.3.3 "Progressive" Women with Partial Financial Autonomy

This group of "Progressive" women had seventy percent or more wage control over their own daily expenditure and kept their own wages with their husband's knowledge. They made decisions about how to spend their pay and challenged the traditional notion of patriarchy:

I'm able to spend money on my son's education. My salary is about tk. 11,500. As I'm earning money, I can spend it if I want. I feel this is right. When my son wants money I can give him some. Sometimes he wants new clothes from me. I can give them to him as I

don't need to explain to anyone why I need to buy something. As both my husband and myself are working, we use one salary for food, rent, and other expenditure whilst the other goes into the bank.

Asha, Operator, (20, Married with children), New Era

My salary is tk. 7,000 including overtime. When I get my salary sometimes I just tell my husband that I've got it but I keep the wages myself. I spend them on family expenses when we need something. My husband never asks for my money. However, it's his responsibility to look after me. He knows that I am saving money in a DPS account.

Naznin, QC, (22, Married), Style Star

Like Naznin and Asha, the "Progressive" women indicated that they spent money themselves when required. Their wages formed a significant part of the family budget but they also had at least one family member employed in the RMG sector or in a low-level managerial job. They considered themselves good wives and mothers and those with children considered they were working to give them a better life and education. For these women, employment was aimed totally towards the betterment of their households in the form of paying for a son's education or saving money for future family expenses.

In addition, interviews revealed some significant changes in attitudes of "Progressive" women because their role as earners has allowed them to challenge the traditional dynamics of gender relations and to refuse to relinquish control over their wages to men:

I feel very fortunate and self-confident because I have my own income. I've set up a DPS account for my elder son to cover his future educational expenses. I deposit tk. 500 each month. Before I didn't understand that I needed to save money; what I'd saved I gave to my husband and relatives. I didn't think of myself, but I now understand that I need to save for myself. If I don't have money, then I don't have any power. I don't have any value to anyone.

Farzana, Operator, (30, Married with children), New Era

I'm happy as I have my own income and I earn wages every month. I feel independent. I'm happy to contribute to our household expenses. I also try to save some money from

my earnings. If I'm short of money at the end of the month then I can use the money I set aside. I don't have to ask my husband for money.

Taslima, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise

Women's financial autonomy is reflected in the above comments since these "Progressive" women prefer to keep their own wages for their own purchases. These women keep their own money in case of future uncertainties, aware that it gives them power, value, and a better bargaining position. Also, their experiences within the public sphere and continuous interaction with other people due to factory work has given them confidence and adds extra weight to the suggestion made above suggesting the knock-on effect of this confidence on their relationship with husband. These "Progressive" women are taking a bold step in empowering themselves, going against the cultural expectation requiring subordination to their husbands.

To summarise, the degree of financial autonomy which female interviewees exercised varied considerably. The "Traditional" female interviewees did not retain control over their income, instead surrendering it to the male head of the household, and their acceptance of this male financial authority was a reflection of patriarchal cultural tradition. It could be argued that patriarchal control is maintained through the appropriation of women's labour (Walby 1990), since "Traditional" female interviewees surrendered their wages either to husbands or parents who controlled their money. In patriarchal societies it is believed that women are transferred to their husbands' families through marriage, and their wages are considered to be men's property, meaning that women usually spend their income or part of it on their in-laws but not their parental families (Chowdhury 2009); thus, women's labour is appropriated by their husbands. It is not surprising that for "Traditional" female interviewees entry into waged work had not significantly increased their power within the family, because they still conformed to patriarchal family relations.

However, the "Independent" women, who were single, divorced, widowed and separated RMG workers, had full financial autonomy. The inability of their families to provide for them economically was the main reason for their substantial control over income. There was also evidence of significant changes taking place in the attitudes of "Progressive" married women with regard to controlling money. They preferred to

retain their own income instead of handing over wages to their husbands, thus rejecting the traditional dynamics of power relations between men and women in Bangladeshi society.

7.4 Decision Making and Changes in Attitudes and Lifestyles

It is generally hypothesised that women's participation in economic activities leads to an improved role in decision making within the household (Unni and Bali 2002). In this study, interviewees were asked to reflect on whether they had noticed any changes regarding household decision making or in their attitudes and lifestyle since starting work in the factory. This section argues that many of the women's decision-making powers have increased since becoming employed but this varied in relation to types of power and marital status. However, all the women thought employment had brought about changes in their attitudes and lifestyles, making them more confident and brave.

7.4.1 Role in Decision Making

The "Independent women" said they were solely responsible for household decision making reflecting the fact that they lived independently in the city:

When I didn't work, I used to listen to what my parents said. But my life has changed. I take my own decisions. Before, my parents bought clothes for me. I never went to market to buy vegetables, fish or meat. Now I do all these things because I live here alone. When I get wages, sometimes I buy clothes for my mother and brother. When I go to visit her I give her tk. 200 or 500, whatever I can. Besides this, I remit tk. 2,000 to her every two or three months. Before taking decisions about family matters my mother asks me for my opinion first; if I tell her not to do something, then she listens to me.

Nasima, Helper, (21, Unmarried), Trendmaker

When Nasima lived with her parents, decisions affecting her life were taken by her father, which is very common in the patriarchal family system in Bangladesh. When he died she started working to support herself and her family. Her status as breadwinner has increased her confidence and decision-making power; she now advises family members as well. She is able to spend money as she pleases and enjoys contributing to

household expenses. Like many working women, Nasima's role as breadwinner has made her important to family members and her decisions are valued.

A convincing argument can be made in such cases that this rise in self-confidence in "Independent" women was linked with wage earning and that their status has increased within the family because they contribute to household finances. This change in status is reflected in the fact that senior family members now ask for their views when previously they would have been overlooked. This marks a significant improvement for them in terms of their status within the family, which in turn improves their bargaining power.

The most striking result in this study was that most of the women categorised as "Traditional" and "Progressive" women also made joint decisions within the household. The only exception was four unmarried "Traditional" women still living with their parents who reported that their parents took household decisions. Although "Traditional" women surrendered wages to their husbands, they were asked for their opinions regarding household expenses. All the "Progressive" women said they took household decisions jointly with their husbands, as the accounts by Sajani and Naznin show:

We decide jointly how to use the money. […] Factory work has taught me how to tackle any problem or situation within the household. So, now if my husband tells me not to go somewhere, I can convince him to let me go.

Sajani, Operator, (28, Married with children), New Era

Of course, there have been changes in terms of decision making. Now I'm working, I don't need to ask my husband for money. I'm not dependent on him for money. We take decisions on household expenses after discussing together.

Naznin, QC, (22, Married), Style Star

These "Progressive" interviewees reported that their decision making power had increased due to their paid work, with household decisions being taken jointly. Interviews reveal that most "Progressive" women experienced an increasing sense of power due to the fact their earnings have given them financial independence from

family members or husbands. Contributing to family subsistence gave all the "Traditional" and "Progressive" women a voice in household decision making, to a greater or lesser extent. Sajani's comment about persuading her husband to change his mind when necessary may suggest that the experience women gain in negotiating contracts and wages at the initial stages of their factory employment (see Chapter Six) has helped them to develop more general skills that can be applied in their marital relationships.

The basic premise of resource theory is that the marital partner with the greater resources has more negotiating power within the relationship. Therefore, when the wife's labour is important to family welfare, husbands are more dependent on her contribution of valued resources, meaning women have more influence over household decisions (Malhotra and Mather 1997). In this study, "Traditional" and "Progressive" women revealed they made everyday household decisions, such as those relating to basic outgoings (e.g. utilities, rent), purchasing food and clothing, and children's education, whilst one-off decisions involving costly expenditure, such as marriage alliances and property purchases, were still decided by men.

In the absence of any male head of household, the "Independent" women (single, separated or widowed) were responsible for decision making. Although "Progressive" and "Traditional" women still took decisions in consultation with their husbands, they seemed more confident about expressing their views in these negotiations. It is clear that, irrespective of their marital status, wage-earning women had gained a degree of decision making power, to a greater or lesser extent. In addition, the urban environment also appears to have had a considerable influence on their attitudes and lifestyles as explored in the following section.

7.4.2 Changes in Attitudes and Lifestyles

Although "Traditional" women in this study frequently bear the double burden of productive and reproductive activities and do not control their wages, almost all interviewees spoke about changes in their attitudes and lifestyle, with all of them noting that they were more confident in their interactions with others after moving to the city. The vast majority of these women (37 of the 40 interviewees) had migrated from rural

areas of Bangladesh (see Table 4.5) and confessed that initially they had experienced difficulties adjusting to city life:

When I first arrived, I felt shy talking to other people, really ill at ease. I used to think "If I speak, what will others think about me?" After three months of working, I've adjusted to this place. Now I mix with lots of people as we work in the same factory. I can find my own way around and travel back to the village alone. My friends in the village wouldn't be able to travel independently like me.

Lovely, Operator, (22, Married with children), New Era

This work has increased my confidence. My co-workers say that I was very naive when I joined here. I was very shy about talking to anyone. I didn't have the courage to talk to my supervisor, or production manager. Now I can talk to anyone, even higher level officers, thanks to this job. I think that I'm smarter, cleverer than before. It's true that when people enter garment factories, their attitudes and lifestyle change.

Afroja, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise

I'm surrounded by different types of people from different areas of the country. They speak in different ways. Before, I was always at home; I never mixed with many other people. Life in the RMG factory is totally different. Village and city life are totally different. Someone might appear clever in the village but when he comes to the city, he's like an idiot. I never used to talk like I do now. The city environment's changed me. I watch how other female workers behave and I try to keep myself clean and tidy when I didn't bother before.

Momtaz, Helper, (30, Widowed), Style Star

Like Lovely, Afroja, and Momtaz, almost all the women reported overcoming their initial fears as one of the major changes they had experienced since starting work. Of the 40 participants in this study, 15 had moved to the city alone at a very young age, initially struggling to adjust to the unfamiliar setting. Previously they had been confined to the family home in the village, and had had very limited interaction beyond that with family members, meaning that that were afraid to talk to other people in a new place. Interaction with fellow factory workers helped them build their confidence and cope with a new setting. These women reported that when they first started work, they would

continuously observe the behaviour of others in the factory: how other women dressed and how they interacted with each other and with men. This constant observation of co-workers' behaviour and lifestyles, as well as involvement with aspects of city life, helped them adapt to the urban lifestyle. The factories have thus become a learning ground for independent female identity, as these women need negotiation skills and assertiveness to survive on the factory floor, learning to talk to both men and women with confidence. The factory functions as an enabling space, strengthening forms of resistance both at work and in the world outside. Women's experience of RMG work is impacting on the social dynamics of Bangladeshi society on various levels, as seen in the shift in women's changing position within household.

Another aspect of change in women's lives was independent travel to the city and freedom of movement once there, showing their resistance to gender-ascribed roles of household confinement. Village women would not usually travel to distant places unaccompanied by family members, so independent travel is an important change for these women indicating a shift from private to public forms of patriarchy. This greater independence formed part of their lifestyle in the city. Married women who migrate usually continue to live in a familial environment with their husbands whilst some unmarried workers still live with their parents. However, as noted previously, most single women either live alone in a rented room or with other female workers without any male guardian and they enjoy much greater autonomy in the city:

> *At the weekend no-one can stop me from going out in the afternoon, to the park, or sometimes watching movies with friends, [...] so we have a lot of freedom. I can go anywhere I want. None of my family in the village will know. [...] However, if anyone sees me talking to a man in the park or outside the house, then he'll tell another factory worker that he saw me sitting with a man in the park or carrying on with someone. Even though he doesn't know if the man I'm sitting with is my brother, or a relative.*

> *Rita, Operator, (22, Unmarried), Trendmaker*

Female workers, in particular unmarried women living without parents, enjoy a degree of independence but are still very conscious about maintaining their reputation, often imposing self-regulation (see section 7.5). When they go shopping or to work, they travel with other women and remain at home during the evening on their free days. The

married women also mentioned that they enjoy freedom of movement but usually inform their husband about their plans:

I don't go anywhere or do anything without my husband's knowledge. If I ask, he doesn't stop me.

Husneara, Operator, (42, Married with children), Trendmaker

While Husneara gives the impression of submitting to her husband's decisions, there appears to be a tacit recognition within her marriage that her necessary role as breadwinner had won her greater freedom potentially and that in reality there is little that her husband can do to restrict her freedom.

In addition, interviewees revealed that the way they dress has changed. They wear gold- or silver-plated jewellery which is available in Dhaka at a very cheap price and, they have adopted *salwar-kameez*[43] which is associated with being modern and fashionable, whereas their rural counterparts would usually wear saris (the preferred garment for adult or married women).[44] Munni's comments regarding this increased interest in fashion are typical of interviewees' opinions:

I like to buy <u>salwar-kameez</u> if I go to the market. Most of the garment factory women love clothes. What we wear at home we can't use in the factory. After two or three months of wearing a dress, it starts to fade. On January 1st our factory are arranging a picnic and we need to get dressed up for that. Our salary is too low; after covering family expenditure I can't buy clothes.

Munni, Operator, (23, Unmarried), Trendmaker

Like Munni, these women want to adopt urban dress which is considered to be modern and smart. This participation by women in new patterns of consumption linked to globally oriented standards of modernity has been described as 'new autonomy' (Mills 2003: 50) and it increases women's self-esteem, as they are become increasingly self-

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[43] *Salwar-kameez* is traditional dress from northwest India, consisting of loose-fitting pants and a long tunic, widely worn in Bangladesh since the 1960s (Amin *et al.* 1998). On average women buy four or five *salwar-kameez* per year.

[44] *Salwar-kameez* is preferred for work, being more practical in the factory setting and less hazardous in terms of Health and Safety concerns about the possibility of loose fabric becoming entangled in machinery.

reliant and, in turn, it allows them to experience exercising a greater control over their own lives.

Additionally, there is evidence that working has not only changed their attitude towards the importance of education but also helped to change the discriminatory attitudes fostered by patriarchal norms in favour of sons. In the following extracts it is noticeable that education for both boys *and* girls is mentioned:

I don't want my children to work in the garment factory like me. I took this work for the sake of my children's future. I want them to be educated, unlike me. My father was poor and couldn't afford to educate me. My elder son is studying in class IX and daughter in class III. I'm working hard so they are well educated. My dream is that they'll get a good job. Without education, who'll give them a good job?

Nahar, Operator, (30, Married with children), Fashionwise

I've been working in the factory since 2007. Sometimes I think I'll leave and return to education. Without education, it's not possible to marry an educated person. I stopped studying after class X because of a financial crisis in my family. A university graduate won't marry me. […] But I can't leave this job because of my family's economic situation. If I return to studying, it will be very expensive. Who will cover the cost of school fees and tuition fees for my brothers and sister? I'll be happy if they can continue their education. One day they'll say: "Our sister sacrificed her life for our education".

Akhi, Helper, (20, Unmarried), New Era

These accounts illustrate that although these women missed out on education themselves, they understand the value which it has and seek better opportunities for their own children or younger siblings. Many interviewees voiced regrets about not being educated enough to get better job opportunities. Any job in the formal sector in Bangladesh requires at least a higher secondary education certificate and preferably a degree. Managerial positions in the RMG factories require a school leavers' or higher secondary certificate. As most women in the non-EPZ factories were unable to achieve these qualifications, for various reasons, they were effectively prevented from taking up managerial positions or entering the upper ranks in their factories (see Chapter Six).

Having encountered these constraints, they are now much more aware of the importance of education and many cited this as the reason for spending money on their children's education or saving for their future, emphasising that they saw factory work as not only about changing their own lives but enabling them to transform the lives of others. Factory work has increased women's agency and made them revaluate the worth of their daughters, meaning that the traditional gender discrimination in favour of sons being educated is declining. Their own experience of factory work showed women that adult daughters, either married or single, can contribute financially to the family.

To summarise, women's participation in paid employment has brought changes in attitudes and lifestyle. Amin *et al.* (1998) argue that the technological nature of this work and their ability to operate sophisticated machines are an important part of their self-image, as is improved higher quality of life they enjoy as a result of migration to the city for paid employment. Evidence from this study suggests that many aspects of women's lives have improved in comparison to those of their rural counterparts, with increased freedom of movement and self-confidence, autonomy and a growing awareness of the importance of education as an agent of change can be seen as indicators of their empowerment. This change seems to result in part from their financial status within the household but is also related to the skills which they have acquired as part of the job itself.

Despite these positive outcomes, some other aspects of factory work have affected women negatively, given that in Bangladesh there is still considerable social stigma attached to women working in the RMG industry. The next section examines popular perceptions of factory workers and how women respond to these negative reactions.

7.5 Women's Double Identity

According to Rao (2012), the Bangladeshi notion of femininity has traditionally emphasised domesticity, meaning that women's work outside the home can be construed as a threat to male honour, causing loss of status for a household. This also results in female RMG factory workers being perceived negatively. Women in this study spoke about managing the tensions between two different identities (workplace

and household self). This section examines how the women cope with these contradictions.

7.5.1 Negative Perceptions of Female RMG Factory Workers

Female interviewees revealed various reasons why RMG factory women might be perceived negatively by villagers. In Bangladeshi tradition, a family's honour is tied to its ability to protect the chastity of its women and young unmarried women whose activities are not subject to familial supervision are automatically viewed as sexually suspect and considered to be a threat to family honour (Kibria 1995; Jordal *et al.* 2013). It is popularly believed that without this supervision in the city, there is a chance they will lose their virginity and hence damage their prospects of making a good marriage, fears reflected in Sajani's account:

> *Before, the villagers used to think women coming to work in the garment factory were immoral, especially single girls. Married women aren't a problem because they're living with their husbands in the city. But a single girl, living independently in the city, any man could enter her room, or if she mixes freely with men she might become involved in illegal sexual relations. If that happens that's the end for her. Many single women told me they have problems finding husbands.*

> *Sajani, Operator, (28, Married with children), New Era*

Sajani and most of the married women in this study claimed that they hold conservative attitudes regarding sexuality to safeguard their reputation. As in many other conservative societies, premarital sex is not socially acceptable in Bangladesh and the sanctions against women for this remain strong (Amin *et al.* 1998). Women living independently are assumed to be at risk of engaging in this activity and even the mere suspicion of improper behaviour leads to them being labelled as immoral. Similarly, in the Sri Lankan context, Hewamanne (2011) noted that unmarried women living unchaperoned found their sexuality subject to familial and societal concern.

Women's interaction with men in the workplace is also viewed as problematic in a society which still practises gender segregation. Since women at work are subject to the authority of men who are not in any family relation to them, which enables people to

think that women are in "dirty jobs", and this reverberates into attitudes in the private and social realm, as Jahanara highlights:

Now I'm married I feel that my in-laws don't think I'm a good woman because I work in the garment factory. Villagers don't think garment factory women are any good, either, because they think that when the lights go off at night in the factory men make advances to women.

Jahanara, Operator, (25, Married), Trendmaker

The maintenance of the tradition of *purdah,* a social practice of female seclusion can be viewed as controlling the 'threat' of sexuality by minimising interactions between the sexes (Amin *et al.* 1998). The nature of factory work, which requires frequent interaction with the opposite sex, makes it impossible to enforce gender segregation, leading to women being viewed as vulnerable to the possibility of corruption. The necessity of working overtime or long shifts means that women, particularly those in the non-EPZ sector, sometimes needed to work at night and would not return home until late, a practice that is partly responsible for shaping the negative images of female factory workers in popular opinion, leading to them being branded as 'bad girls' (Jahan (2012). However, where *purdah* has served to isolate women and limit their activities to the private sphere, women's daily contact with men at the factory floor have contributed to a renegotiation over this social practice, causing a shift from private to public sphere since women are creating new identities in the urban space of new interaction.

Another negative perception relates to fears about women being 'corrupted' by urban behaviour, leading them to argue with their elders in the village household, particularly males. Traditionally, in the patriarchal family system, it is believed that men should be the decision makers whilst women should submissively accept orders (Sultana 2010b). In this construction of gender, women are voiceless and their personal opinions are ignored by male family members. Thus, when women openly voice their disagreement this is viewed negatively:

My relatives, especially my uncle, don't like garment factory work. When I return to the village he says "garment factory women are bad". If I argue with anyone he says "You've turned into a bad girl after joining the garment factory". In our village, even a

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pauper wouldn't allow his daughter to work in a garment factory but since my father is unemployed, my auntie brought me here.

<div align="right">*Akhi, Helper, (20, Unmarried), New Era*</div>

Akhi's account illustrates that despite facing criticism from a male figure of authority, she has the self-confidence to ignore this. Moreover, her financial independence and role as family breadwinner increases her bargaining power, enabling her to express her own views on issues. Despite patriarchal dominance at work, this account suggests that women's participation in economic activities can reduce private patriarchy.

Another negative impression is linked to the fact that RMG factory work is seen as demeaning work, only carried out by those in the lower classes:

When I told my sister-in-law that I wanted to work in the garment factory she told me to leave her house. So I went to live with my auntie. Our village neighbours see us as lower-class people. One family was considering me for marriage; but neighbours told them not to as I was a garment factory worker. That's why I'm still unmarried, because many people think that we factory women have sex with men. Once I went to the market during Eid wearing make-up. A trader insulted me while I was haggling for some cloth, telling me I was a garment factory worker behaving like a landlord. He said: "Go away! I'm not selling this to a garment factory girl".

<div align="right">*Munni, Operator, (21, Unmarried), Trendmaker*</div>

Munni's description shows how several different negative perceptions become interrelated in the popular imagination: the job itself is seen as demeaning which corrupts the women who do it and their presence then threatens to taint others. Munni's sister-in-law banned her from the house. Villagers consider her as beneath them. Suspicions about her chastity have damaged her marriage prospects.

Locke and Hoang (2014) argue that in the Vietnamese context, too, factory work can jeopardise women's marriage prospects in their rural homes. Exposure to urban lifestyles brings them new aspirations concerning love, marriage and sexual relationships whilst these women simultaneously find themselves under immense pressure to maintain the moral integrity critical to their future marriage prospects in

their rural home village. Whilst urban migration allows male villagers to demonstrate their modernity, urbanity and bread-winning potential, for young women risk exposure to the modern values of sexualised femininity and the moral turpitude of the city jeopardise their 'virtue'. Urban ways of speaking, dressing, and behaving are viewed as threatening in their rural village. Munni's adoption of urban customs (wearing make-up) exposes her to public insults whilst the term 'garment factory girl' is used as a term of abuse.

Interestingly, some interviewees blamed these negative perceptions on the few 'immoral' women who were willing to be corrupted for the sake of material possessions. They claimed that 'immoral' women could be recognised by their way of laughing and joking with men, dressing in expensive clothes, wearing certain types of make-up, and transgressing social norms of femininity and sexual respectability (for example, they lacked qualities such as fear, shyness, naivety, docility, helplessness, and chastity). On the basis of their public behaviour and appearance, these 'immoral' women were suspected by their fellow workers of involvement in illicit relationships with men. Farjana's opinion was representative of this censorious attitude towards fellow workers:

> *Many women's lifestyles are not good. They go to bad places, mixing with men. Some even get involved in prostitution because they want to lead a life of luxury. They earn tk. 8,000, but buy shoes worth tk. 2,000: how do they buy such expensive stuff? That's why people suspect they've become involved in prostitution. It is an insult to call someone "a garment factory woman".*
>
> *Farjana, Operator, (30, Married with children), New Era*

One of the managers at Trendmaker, Mr. Harun (O-i-C, Production), also expressed his concerns about this issue:

> *Recently many female garment workers have also been working as sex workers. We [managers] spot immediately if any woman is involved in this. They are frequently irregular or absent from their work on Friday. Here [Trendmaker] Thursday is the day off, so if they're involved in sex-work on Thursday evening, they don't come into work on Friday. Usually, this results in unwanted pregnancies and back-street abortions. We*

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can't stop them behaving like this outside work, but it creates a negative impression in society.

In sexually conservative societies like Bangladesh, prostitution remains the most socially stigmatised of occupations, despite campaigns by women's organisations, including those of sex workers, to promote their rights and recognition (Kabeer 2004). For Farjana and many of her fellow workers, even mixing with men was enough for a woman to be labelled as morally suspect and they resented the idea that this was also a slur on their own reputation. In other countries, this stigmatisation of female workers is worse, for example, in Sri-Lanka the EPZs have been labelled 'whore zones' in popular national discourse (Attanapola 2003; Hewamanne 2003).

Other interviewees thought these problems were caused by the vulnerability of young uneducated rural women migrating to the city, where they became easy prey for males who were calculatingly exploitative or simply undependable:

Unmarried women don't know much because they're uneducated; they don't understand what's right, and […] without knowing anything about [a man], they get involved in a relationship and get married without telling their parents. They don't know whether he's married or has children in the village. There've been many cases of women finding out after getting married that the man already has a wife and children back in the village. Other men don't have a wife or children but they're unreliable; they get a woman pregnant and then leave. If women were educated then they'd know what's right or wrong. Educated women can avoid getting involved in this kind of mishap.

Sapna, Operator, (21, Married), Trendmaker

As Gaetano (2008:629) notes, in the Chinese context, young rural women who migrate to large cities for factory work occupy a liminal position in space and time that is conditioned by a particularly gendered form of mobility and relationship to place. As migrants, they live away from their homes but are not fully incorporated into urban society, and expect to eventually return. As unmarried women, they occupy a unique position between childhood and adulthood which creates vulnerability, meaning that men can easily take sexual advantage of them. Single women in the city lack the social ties or knowledge about a man's family which would be prerequisites for marriage in

the village setting (Schuler *et al.* 2006 cited in Rao 2012). Consequently, their chances of being deceived or abandoned were seen as being much higher, with 'husbands' simply leaving to find better opportunities elsewhere.

Despite vulnerability linked to factory work, Sapna's account also highlights the fact that entry into RMG sector has altered their views with regard to marriage and enabled them to choose whom to marry, which is extremely significant as this has not been an option traditionally given to them, since their parents decided for them.

7.5.2 Reactions to Negative Attitudes towards Female RMG Factory Workers

Most women expressed their concerns about negative perceptions of female factory workers and they worried that people would doubt their sexual morals if they knew they worked in a garment factory. Therefore, most hid their profession from their in-laws to maintain their reputation due to the social stigma associated with this work:

> *Sometimes I wonder what I'd do if one of my in-laws were to call here, find my house and see my room locked? Then how could I come home from work? How would I make them understand where I was? This worries me a lot. They don't like garment factory work because their economic situation is good.*
>
> *Afroja, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise*

Like Afroja, many of the married women were worried about their situation becoming public knowledge and hid their working status from their in-laws. All the interviewees without exception reported that negative views were held about women's participation in RMG work, especially by villagers. Some even mentioned that they themselves had previously shared those negative preconceptions due to stories they had heard about garment workers but their ideas changed after starting work and realising factory women work hard to earn an honest income:

> *My in-laws don't know I work in a garment factory. If they find out they'll think I've become a bad woman. Many villagers believe that female garment workers are immoral. In my father-in-law's neighbourhood people don't like garment factory workers. But if they came here, they'd see how safe it is. I used to think garment factories were very bad places but now I understand after working here. At the factory we're under constant*

surveillance by the supervisor or manager. No woman can chat with a male worker for long unsupervised. Bosses here are very strict about that.

Mitu, QC, (30, Married with children), Style Star

In order to counter any criticism levelled at the factories as a place which provides the opportunity for illicit sexual activity, they portray the workplace as a protected environment where workers are carefully monitored. Other women avoid identifying themselves as RMG workers, knowing how they are likely to be perceived, and have learnt to ignore criticism due to economic necessity:

I won't introduce myself as a garment factory worker in the village. People criticise this job, and think garment factory women are bad. But working in the factory, I know we're not doing anything wrong. We're working hard to earn money. People outside don't know what happens inside the factory. However, if they say we're immoral I keep quiet because they don't give me money to eat or buy clothes. I'm widowed; if I don't work, who'll look after me? I have to work to feed myself and my son. […] They might belong to rich families or have better economic conditions; they don't need to do this job but I don't have any alternative.

Aleya, Operator, (26, Widowed), Trendmaker

They don't think garment factories are good places. Many of them say: "You work in a garment factory: no-one will marry you". I don't talk to those people when I go back to the village. My mother also told me that people talk like this or say bad things about garment factory women. I told her: "Will those people ever bring you food?"

Sabiha, QC, (26, Unmarried), New Era

The above accounts illustrate how sexual dominance at work affects perceptions in the private sphere - RMG work is a signifier of sexual exploitation that affected these women deeply. Therefore, most women maintained a good reputation through hiding their work identity in front of their in-laws and villagers. It is worth mentioning here that in Sri Lankan EPZs, too, Attanapola (2004) found that factory girls strategically maintain a 'good girl' role when returning to the village. Since Westernized behaviour, clothing and lifestyles are not regarded as acceptable there, returnees deliberately dress

down and try not to use city-style slang to prove that they have not been changed by their urban sojourn.

However, a small number of women in this study reported that they do identify themselves as RMG factory workers, even though they are aware of how they may be perceived. Factory work has strengthened their resolve and they are brave enough to face any negative attitudes they may encounter, seeing what they do as an honest means of earning the money they and their families need to survive:

> *I tell people I'm a garment factory worker. Everybody in the village knows where I work. I earn money and my family survives because of this job. So I don't have any problem saying I'm a garment factory worker. That's what I am. I don't care whether my relatives like it or not.*
>
> *Akhi, Helper, (20, Unmarried), New Era*

> *I don't feel uncomfortable saying I'm a garment factory worker. I work and pay my way. I'm not making a living by stealing. I don't care if people say we're bad. I work for money, I get money, that's fine by me. Some think female garment workers are immoral. I don't care because we're all different. There are good and bad people everywhere. We can't change people's perceptions about the garment factory unless they come here to work and see what happens.*
>
> *Shabana, Operator, (24, Married with children), Fashionwise*

These women are not overly concerned about social acceptance, focusing only on survival. RMG factory work has helped them and their dependents escape dire poverty and they are proud of this and their other achievements: their experience of the modern urban lifestyle, their acquisition of new knowledge from short courses on health safety and awareness, their ability to form friendships with fellow workers from elsewhere in Bangladesh and their freedom of movement, a new experience for rural women.

Bangladeshi women have been working in the RMG sector since the early 1980s and there is some limited evidence that popular attitudes towards female RMG factory workers, including those held by villagers, are beginning to change a little, as the following example indicates:

Ten years ago, people didn't like garment factory jobs. Then, there were few garment factories. Villagers didn't like female garment workers. I don't know what they thought about male garment workers. They didn't want to send their daughters to the garment factories. However, everyone in my village knows me well. I've been taking care of my parents by working in a RMG factory for 10 years. When I go home, my uncle, aunt and neighbours praise me. The elders pat my head and say: "You're a very good girl, being a daughter; you've taken responsibility for your parents which is what your brother should do". When they talk like this, I feel very good.

Afroja, Operator, (25, Married), Fashionwise

In Afroja's case, the villagers accept her profession due to the particular circumstances involved. Since the male who should have assumed this task (her brother) has failed to fulfil his responsibility, the moral imperative of supporting aged parents outweighs any concerns about the suitability of her chosen profession. Moreover, she is already a married woman and so, presumably, in the villagers' eyes, subject to her husband's authority and less vulnerable than a single independent woman.

It appears, then, that employment in the RMG industry is popularly perceived as constituting a threat to prevailing socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh, particularly by those living in rural communities. The fact that factory work allows women to interact with men on the factory floor, that factory workers live independently, unaccompanied by family members and that women have acquired bargaining power within the household are all factors which have caused female RMG workers to be popularly perceived as bad, in the sense of immoral, corrupted or insubordinate. It can be argued that RMG factory work has disempowered women in the sense that they are marginalised within society and feel ashamed to mention their profession, particularly when looking for a potential husband or in their village community. However, there is also evidence that some women are proud of what they do, as it has ensured their own and their family's survival, a positive shift in attitudes.

7.6 Conclusion

In line with Walby (1990), this thesis argues that all six patriarchal structures: the household, labour market, state, sexuality, violence, and culture exist in patriarchal relations in Bangladeshi society. For RMG women, evidence suggests that the structures of patriarchy, i.e. paid work (gendered division of labour, and pay differentials for male and female workers), male violence (use of verbal abuse), and sexuality (use of sexualised language) existed in patriarchal relations within the workplace (see Chapter Six, pp. 202-203). The household is an important structure for these women since it is the place where women's labour (in particular, Traditional group of women's labour) is appropriated by their husbands. The household is also related to culture as another structure of patriarchy, which includes the different norms and values of expected behaviour for Bangladeshi women and affects whether women will participate in paid employment or limit their activities within the private sphere of the home. The state also plays a role in shaping patriarchal relations both at the household and the workplace. As seen in Chapter Five, state's inability/unwillingness to enforce legislation or the ways in which domestic violence is policed (noted in Chapter Three) is a way in which the state is engaged in patriarchal relations.

In addition, RMG women experience private as well as public forms of patriarchy and these two forms of patriarchy often coexist along a spectrum. Results of this research suggest that different types of Bangladeshi RMG factory women, categorised here as "traditional, "progressive" and "independent", experience different forms of patriarchy and that some specific aspects of private patriarchy have undergone change. "Independent" women are more subject to public patriarchy, "Traditional" women to the private form, whilst "Progressive" women appear to be moving from private towards public.

"Traditional" women's experience is located within the private form of patriarchy in which the household constitutes an important site of oppression, with a patriarch controlling women individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home (Walby 1990). This operates through the distribution of domestic labour, organisation of domestic finance and household decision making. "Traditional" women (who had no

educational qualifications or only primary level) performed most household chores and had no control over finance. Men benefit from the domestic labour of "Traditional" women, and their refusal to participate and resistance to change is a demonstration of their power over women. The socialisation process has prepared "Traditional" women for their adult roles in the sexual division of labour, meaning they surrender their wages to the male head of household, whether their husband or father.

This suggests conformity to traditional social values within the household and a lack of willingness to challenge traditional patriarchal norms, in which the male role as family breadwinner is recognised as an essential aspect of masculinity and linked to male authority within the Bangladeshi family (Kabeer 1991; Rao 2012). These findings appear to imply that private patriarchy or the fundamental characteristics of patriarchal rule persist within the households of this "Traditional" group of female RMG factory workers.

As noted earlier, the household is also related to culture as another structure of patriarchy since it there that women learn the norms of culturally acceptable behaviour and are taught to be homemakers, who rear children and manage household chores for men's advantage. Despite their entry into RMG factory work, "Traditional" women still view themselves primarily as 'homemakers' and their husbands as 'breadwinners' (Bhopal 1997) and continue to conform to cultural norms at home and experience private patriarchy. Although "Traditional" married women surrendered wages to their husbands, they played a limited role in household decision making. Their financial contribution to household expenses gave them value within the family and in return their opinion was sought on issues relating to household expenses.

On the other hand, those women categorised as "Independent" experienced the public form of patriarchy. The household is no longer the main site of their oppression, but still exists as a patriarchal structure. Although "Independent" women living unaccompanied by family members in the city still performed domestic labour, they exercised control over domestic finance and household decision making. These interviewees were single, widowed or separated and had often been forced unwillingly into their role as breadwinner due to adverse personal circumstances, but managed to survive both within and outside the traditional male-dominated household and society.

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In addition, the "Progressive" group of women were also experiencing significant changes in terms of gender relations within household, as a result of their move from private to public patriarchy. Some couples challenged tradition with the husband's involvement in household activities marking a re-shaping of the traditional gender roles within the domestic sphere. These women were also unwilling to submit to male authority by simply handing over their hard-earned cash. They chose instead to retain their wages for themselves, enabling them to enjoy a degree of economic independence and a say over how this portion of their income was to be spent.

This change may be linked to the fact that these women had a higher standard of education (secondary level or above) and increased material power which influenced their ability and willingness to negotiate with their husbands regarding reproductive responsibilities and financial control, which in turn increased their capacity to make life choices. For both "Independent" and "Progressive" Bangladeshi RMG factory women the scope of private patriarchy is diminishing to a significant extent as a result of their paid employment.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the context of the present study, women's position in the Bangladeshi household differs somewhat to that hypothesised by Walby, given that patriarchy manifests itself differently there. Walby (1990) argued that during the twentieth century changes occurred to the form which patriarchy takes in most Western societies, with a shift from private to public patriarchy. She noted that women now experience less oppression in the household due to their increasing access to paid employment and that individual personal control of wives by husbands has decreased significantly since women can effectively end this form of oppression by means of divorce or separation; but in Walby's opinion, this oppression has shifted to the workplace where women are instead subordinated in other ways. In other words, "*women are no longer restricted to the domestic hearth, but have the whole society in which to roam and be exploited*" (p. 201).

Similarly, evidence from this study suggests that almost all women in this study have experienced a shift from private towards public forms of patriarchy. While *purdah* has served to keep women financially dependent on men throughout their lives in the

domestic sphere, their role as a wage earner has reduced their dependence upon their husbands or fathers, a challenge to men's breadwinning abilities. Again, where seclusion or confinement of women within household is a norm in patriarchal family system, women's increased freedom of movement and autonomy in the urban space is another example of the transition from private to public forms of patriarchy. Women highlighted the fact that this new-found independence, coupled with their social interaction with a broad range of co-workers in the factory or beyond, had contributed to the development of self-confidence and a greater degree of awareness regarding their life decisions. Therefore, choices about whom to marry which is an institution of private patriarchy have been reshaped within the economic and social domain. Entry into RMG sector has altered their views with regard to marriage and enabled them to choose whom to marry. There is also evidence that daughters are now able to take care of their parents in their old age, meaning that working has helped to change the discriminatory attitudes fostered by patriarchal norms in favour of sons. These evidences also indicate that women's participation in paid employment has empowered them beyond the workplace.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
WOMEN LIVING WITH CAPITALISM AND PATRIARCHY IN THE GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN

how does this poem end?

do the daughters' daughters quilt?

Lucille Clifton, *quilting* (1991: 3)[45]

8.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this research was to explore the experiences of female workers in the readymade garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh, analysing how a range of factors, including government regulation, the power of MNCs, and cultural norms and values, can impact positively or negatively on employment practices and the lives of these women both on the factory floor and beyond. Using the layered ontology of critical realism and a research design based on multiple case-studies, three levels of women's experiences of work were examined. This analysis not only focused on their direct experiences of labour as RMG factory workers, but also explored how this experience of work has impacted on women's lives at household level and also at the broader societal level. Multiple theoretical concepts, such as the global value chain, theory of labour process and patriarchy, were used to help understand the complex interconnections across these different levels of women's experiences of work, and also to compare and contrast the nature of these experiences in the EPZ and non-EPZ case-study factories. Empirically, it compared the levels of enforcement of regulatory frameworks (governmental and corporate) on specific employment practices in the RMG sector. It also examined the labour process regimes and the types of patriarchal control affecting women's experience of work at both EPZ and non-EPZ factories, in the home and beyond.

On a more personal level, as a Bangladeshi woman, this thesis has fulfilled my need to learn more about an industry in which millions of my fellow countrywomen work, and one in which many hundreds of them have died or suffered injuries in the process of

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[45] An extract from *quilting* by the African-American poet Lucille Clifton is cited in Maura C. Flannary's article, 'Quilting: A feminist Metaphor for Scientific Inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7 (5) 2001, 628-645, 628.

making a living. They form one of the key links in a complex chain of production and consumption which stretches all the way from 17-year-old Nipa sewing seams in the sweltering heat of the Style Star factory floor, to the air-conditioned outlet of a well-known high-street retailer where another teenager buys a T-shirt in the latest style and colour; it will be worn three times and then discarded for the next must-have fashion item. I wanted to explore the extent to which these RMG workers might be considered literally as "fashion victims" or whether, far from being totally "stitched up" by the combined forces of the patriarchal system and the global political economy, they subtly succeeded in unravelling some of the threads that bound them by performing small acts of resistance.

This chapter presents the key arguments based on the empirical findings from this study. The first of these is that paid work can offer female RMG workers a degree of emancipation on their lives, but that this degree of empowerment varies for these women. Secondly, this thesis argues that position within the global value chain and labour process regimes shapes not only women's experiences of work but also the degree of patriarchal control exercised in the workplace and workers' response to this. This has important consequences for women's agency and their ability to transform both their working lives and their everyday existence. Thirdly, this thesis has also demonstrated that female RMG workers have power and can affect varying degrees of change both at the workplace and within their own households, by using their agency.

This chapter begins by highlighting gaps in the literature regarding women's work in developing countries and outlining this study's methodological contribution to work in the field. It then focuses on the contributions that this research makes to our understandings of the complex inter-relationships between labour process regimes, the global value chain and patriarchy, and how these shape women's experience at different levels. The penultimate section also draws links between the experiences of Bangladeshi women and those of female workers in other developing countries and makes links with the theoretical approaches used in this thesis. It then presents the concluding remarks.

8.2 Methodological Contribution

Although researchers have conducted comparative studies focusing on female experiences of EPZ vs. non-EPZ factory employment in various national and business sector settings (Chant and McIlwaine 1995; Fussell 2000; Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Karega 2002; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b; Blin 2006; Glick and Roubaud 2006) these have not looked at industries holistically. This has resulted in a lack of in-depth understanding of workers' experiences within a single industry, where company size, position in the global value chain, contracting relationship, organisational structure and many other factors may all have significant impact. Previous research also failed to consider how factors and mechanisms such as regulatory frameworks, corporate power, and patriarchal norms and values combine to shape women's experiences of work within the RMG industry. Therefore, this study attempted to fill these gaps, exploring how such factors and mechanisms combine to condition women's experiences of work in the Bangladeshi RMG industry.

In addition, most earlier studies based in developing countries focused solely on the workplace (Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Absar 2001; Zaman 2001; Ward *et al.* 2004; Kabeer and Mahmud 2004a, 2004b; Wright 2006; Hancock 2006; Glick and Roubaud 2006). Some other studies also exist which looked at the impact of working in this sector on women's position within the home but less in number (Kibria 1995; Kabeer 1997; Unni and Bali 2002; Souplet-Wilson 2014; Ansell *et al.* 2015). Therefore, this study has attempted to make the connections between women's work and home lives and examined whether their experiences of paid labour can impact on their lives beyond the confines of the factory floor.

The sample of factories for the case study was selected on the basis of location (EPZ vs. non-EPZ), size, status (subcontractor or not), and regulatory context (Ministry of Labour and Employment vs. BEPZA), thus yielding ample opportunities for comparison of working practices and women's experiences. Interviewing male managers and female workers at different points in their life trajectories (single, married, married with children, widowed, separated or divorced) provided access to a diversity of viewpoints regarding women's work. In patriarchal societies, women are frequently exploited, dominated and oppressed by men through patriarchal relations (Chowdhury 2009;

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Souplet-Wilson 2014), so including male managers provided a more nuanced understanding about their perceptions and attitudes towards female workers in the context of the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The horizontal and vertical selection of factories (EPZ and non-EPZ and varied sizes within the subcontracting chain) helped explore the position of firms within the value chain and their relation with MNCs, which in turn influence factory working conditions positively or negatively as well as shaping the diverse experiences of women at the workplace, home and beyond.

8.3 Women and Paid Employment: Empowerment vs. Exploitation

Empirical data gathered from this study was intended to contribute to the ongoing debate in feminist and sociology literature regarding whether women are empowered or exploited by paid employment (Elson and Pearson 1981; Wolf 1990b; Tiano 1994; Ward and Pyle 1995; Lim 1997; Beek 2001; Ahmed 2004; Meyer 2006; Hancock and Edirisinghe 2012). This research suggests that paid employment generally has a significant positive impact on RMG women's lives in Bangladesh but that this degree of empowerment varies. Factors such as educational level and marital status appear to play an important emancipatory role, enabling some women to enjoy a greater degree of empowerment in terms of gender relations and financial autonomy in the domestic sphere. These issues are discussed below.

8.3.1 Emancipation of Women

RMG work is a positive measure towards women's empowerment. All the female interviewees said they lead a better life than the one they had in their village, earning money and supporting the basic needs of their families by sending remittances. Factory work has given them economic security and a form of independence, reflecting Kabeer and Mahmud's (2004b) findings that women's earnings present a radical challenge to the myth of the male breadwinner model of the family in Bangladesh. It can help to develop not only their professional skills, but also their feelings of self-esteem. Working allows them independent movement within the city, enhancing their levels of confidence whilst interaction with others in new social settings also gives them an increased awareness of options in their personal lives, particularly a growing awareness of the importance of their children's education, regardless of their sex. It has also

enhanced some women's abilities to utilise their agency to negotiate with men either in relation to their role as factory worker or as contributor to family welfare in the domestic sphere. These instances can be seen as indicators of women's empowerment which is related to being employed in the RMG factory and the skills which they have acquired as part of the job itself.

As noted earlier, education appears to be an important determinant for women's better position in the workplace and at home. This study found that "Progressive" women who have completed secondary schooling or beyond (mainly but not exclusively EPZ workers) reported increased levels of empowerment within the domestic sphere reflected in changing attitudes towards gender roles and financial autonomy. The fact that these women tend to be better educated suggests that increased awareness of their life decisions plays an important role in reducing the socio-cultural influence which creates inequalities against women (Sultana 2010b) and allows them to negotiate their positions with more power and agency.

Women's level of education also affects their access to employment, with better qualified women benefitting from the higher wages and more favourable working practices of the EPZ factory, which in turn impacts on the conditions they experience in their domestic lives. For example, having a higher level of education enabled women to secure a job in the New Era factory, therefore, receiving higher wages compared to their non-EPZ counterparts. Consequently, EPZ women were generally better off, with more purchasing power. Better education therefore leads to a better place in the labour market, which to some extent leads to a better quality of life for EPZ women. On the other hand, for "Traditional" women with low levels of schooling (primary or junior secondary level) working in a non-EPZ factory, the experience of employment did not offer the same possibilities for personal empowerment.

Marital status also appears to play an important emancipatory role and perhaps the most dramatic change enacted by factory work is to be seen in the lives of the most vulnerable women (single, widowed, separated and deserted) who have been categorised as" Independent" women in this study. In Bangladeshi society, the male head of the household would normally be required to provide for female relatives but these women had been forced unwillingly into their position as breadwinner. In the

absence of any male support they have escaped the traditional patriarchal family structures of Bangladeshi society, achieving a previously impossible degree of independence.

However, this degree of empowerment varies for married women in this study. Paid work appears to have only a limited effect on "Traditional" married women's position within the household since these interviewees confirmed that they continue to be subject to an intense form of private patriarchy inside the household. They carry the double burden of domestic tasks and waged work whilst the income they generate is controlled by husbands. For "Progressive" women, factory employment has practical consequences at the household level, for example, reflected in their ability and willingness to negotiate with their husband regarding housework and financial matters and these women appear to be moving from private towards public forms of patriarchy.

This thesis also argues that the public and the private forms are the domains that interact or relate to each other. For example, evidences show that women's domestic work made women subject to various kinds of health problems at the workplace. On the other side, the sickness/fatigue which women experienced at the workplace is a reflection of the dual burden, suggesting that patriarchy at home is spilling back into the workplace. Also, evidences suggest that where marriage brought respectability in the private sphere, patriarchy at work was a sexual thing, either based in women's vulnerability or women's perceived lasciviousness. Marriage brings respectability at home since they are subject to their husband's authority, while singleness brings vulnerability at work since single women in the city lack social ties; supposedly, men can more easily take sexual advantage of them. Or patriarchy at work is based in women's perceived lasciviousness. As seen in Chapter Six, some married women hid their marital status in order to increase their demand and status and this behaviour explains the public perception of garment workers as 'loose women'. Women are in 'dirty jobs' because workplaces are dominated by men not contained by kin relations, and this reverberates into attitudes in the private realm. Women were stigmatised for their autonomy and mobility in society, and thus perceptions of public patriarchy transformed relations in the private life. For that reason, most women in this study hid their working status from

villagers and parents in law. These examples illustrate how domestic patriarchy affected relative experiences of public patriarchy and vice versa.

A number of other factors may influence the degree to which this experience of work has a positive or negative effect on individual women. The next section discusses how a firm's position in the global value chain, the labour process regime in operation and the level of patriarchal control exerted both within the workplace and beyond influence women's lives.

8.3.2 Factory Position within the Global Value Chain and Women's Experiences

This thesis has argued that two factors (position within the global value chain and labour process regime) shape not only women's experiences of work but also the degree of patriarchal control in the workplace which has important consequences for female agency and women's ability to transform both their working lives and the conditions of their everyday existence. Case-study data shows that EPZ employment practices are superior to those found in the three non-EPZ factories. Key causal mechanisms such as zone location, regulatory environment, ownership characteristics, size, position in the global value chain, contracting relationship with MNCs, educational level of the workforce and type of product being manufactured all have positive impact on labour conditions at New Era. In particular, being a large factory within EPZ and its partnership with a Korean company give it enhanced bargaining power and better product prices meant New Era is better positioned within the supply chain. Long term relationship with buyers also enable New Era to have a more consistent flow of orders from buyers they deal with, which in turn, allow New Era to save transaction costs and spend more on employee welfare. Moreover, strict enforcement of regulatory frameworks (BEPZA and MNCs) impact positively on working conditions and employment practices, findings which appear to contradict earlier studies conducted elsewhere in the world (Elson and Pearson 1981; Lee 1984; Zaman 2001; Karega 2002; Holdcroft 2003). Previously, these researchers argued that government policies favouring MNCs, inadequate legislation, inefficient government labour officials, and restricted trade union involvement in EPZs created unfavourable terms and conditions for workers working in those special zones.

This research shows that female EPZ workers in Bangladesh not only receive higher wages than their non-EPZ counterparts but also enjoy many other work-related benefits, supporting the findings of some earlier studies conducted in Bangladesh (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004b) and Honduras which note that EPZ employment represents a significant step-up in pay for women (Beek 2001). Unlike Kabeer and Mahmud's (2004a; 2004b) workplace-focused research which failed to consider the broader impact of paid work on Bangladeshi women's lives in terms of gender roles, household responsibilities and financial autonomy, this research stressed the importance of making these connections. As this research has discovered, a factory's position in the supply chain can impact significantly not only on the working practices they encounter on the factory floor but also on the quality of the life they experience outside the workplace. New Era's favourable position in the supply chain facilitated fairer working practices, which also impacted on the private lives of EPZ women, to some extent. Thus, shorter working hours, meant EPZ women were better able to manage household chores and rest after factory work whereas erratic working hours and night shifts frequently experienced by the non-EPZ women made it more difficult to manage the double burden and gain any respite from their demanding daily routine. Also, higher earnings mean EPZ female workers were relatively better off in terms of their economic situation which helped to moderate the effects of private patriarchy.

Findings also demonstrate that EPZ women are subjected to a lower degree of public patriarchy since fairer workplace practices mean there is limited scope for wage differentials between men and women with similar qualifications and the supervisory regime is non-aggressive. At New Era, some 50% of the well-paid supervisory and managerial positions were held by women, challenging the gender stereotyping that has impeded women's horizontal and vertical mobility within the workplace (Ward and Pyle 1995; Chant and McIlwaine 1995; Kothari 1996; Paul-Majumder and Begum 2000; Wright 2006; Blin 2006). Possible links can be made here between the labour process regime and patriarchal relations in the EPZ workplace, since the lower the degree of oppression in the labour process regime, the lower the degree of patriarchal oppression and better position in the global value chain decreases levels of worker oppression. New Era's partnership with the Korean firm gave it better bargaining power with MNCs because it was better able to manage deadlines by importing fabrics and

raw materials from the Korean firm, meaning shorter working hours for their workers. On the other hand, non-EPZ factories were delayed by waiting for raw material from input sourcing countries and keeping to strict deadlines to avoid MNC penalties for late delivery meant that non-EPZ women were overburdened by long working hours and safety standards were often ignored.

Employment terms and conditions in the non-EPZ factories vary but all are inferior to those at New Era. Largely as a result of lack of enforcement of government regulation, non-EPZ management tend to ignore legislation and abuse their power. In the two larger non-EPZ factories, Trendmaker and Fashionwise, women only enjoy some of the benefits to which they are legally entitled (see Chapter Five). Both these factories are fairly well-positioned within the supply chain because they deal directly with international buyers and can afford modern machinery to turn out quality products. They have been able to develop their relationship with MNCs by proving themselves capable of reaching the required standards in terms of product quality and working conditions, which in turn, has led to a degree of reliability in orders. A continuous flow of orders from foreign buyers is dependent on compliance with codes of conduct and this pressure has helped ensure a degree of improvement in working conditions and practices in both these non-EPZ factories.

However regulatory frameworks have virtually no impact on the smallest non-EPZ factory, Style Star, which is positioned at the lower end of the supply chain. Depending largely on subcontracted work from bigger Bangladeshi factories and some direct orders from MNCs, it has by far the worst working conditions and practices (see Chapter Five). As previously argued, the degree of oppression in the labour process regime reflects the degree of patriarchal oppression evident in the workplace and in non-EPZ factories stricter control regimes and public patriarchy is evident in oppressive work practices, rigidly gendered division of labour, and pay differentials for male and female workers, regardless of skill level or qualifications (see Chapter Six).

In general, all non-EPZ workers are subject to exploitative and oppressive working practices. Due to gender stereotyping of female workers as quiet, passive, and lacking physical strength by employers women are segregated within the lower-paid, labour-intensive jobs (Cockburn 1983; Ward and Pyle 1995; Chant and McIlwaine 1995; Paul-

Majumder and Begum 2000; Kabeer 2012). Jobs identified as 'women's work' tend to be classified as 'unskilled' or 'semi-skilled', whereas technically similar jobs identified as 'men's work' are generally classified as 'skilled' (Phillips and Taylor 1980). An aggressively masculine culture of supervision in non-EPZ factories based on abuse of workers means that even appropriately skilled women are reluctant to seek promotion to supervisory positions there. Since women are rarely promoted, occupational inertia is reinforced over time and men continue to be perceived as having exclusive rights to positions of authority in non-EPZ factories (Chant and McIlwaine 1995).

In addition, non-EPZ women experience new forms of gender subordination on the factory floor, what Elson and Pearson (1981) termed the 'recomposition of patriarchal control on women'. Results of this study reveal that strict factory rules recompose patriarchal oppression of women inside the non-EPZ factories. Managers use strict forms of control and surveillance inside factories including bullying, shouting, swearing, and use of demeaning language when workers fall behind production targets or produce sub-standard work. Non-EPZ managers are fairly open about their brutal treatment of workers, arguing that without this pressure targets would not be met and the overtime necessary would increase costs. Downward pressure from MNCs to owners/manufacturers to fill large orders within short lead times obliges employers to oppress workers within the workplace (Barrientos and Smith 2007), illustrating how a firm's position within the global value chain and its relations with MNCs can influence levels of worker exploitation. The form of control regime impacts on the experiences of women in the workplace and creates different forms of women's agency within it. The next section discusses the different forms of agency which EPZ and non-EPZ women use in the workplace and beyond to improve their working conditions and everyday existence.

8.3.3 Women's Agency

This research reveals that women are actors who can affect change using their agency. Drawing on Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) work on control regimes and worker 'misbehaviour' for this study not only adds new perspectives to their managerial regime model (see below) but also helps to address the issue of empowerment vs. exploitation which has been much debated in development studies literature (Fernandez-Kelly 1983;

Wolf 1990b; Lim 1997; Beek 2001; Wright 2006; Meyer 2006). None of these studies have utilised Ackroyd and Thompson's models to analyse the implications of paid work. Focusing instead on the implications of paid work for society in general and women's position in particular, they have provided limited insights into women's agency in the workplace and beyond.

This thesis argues that the Bangladeshi RMG industry employs only direct control regime (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) but the degree of this direct control varies across the case-study factories as do forms of women's resistance. In the co-operative control regime (EPZ), women engage in work effort bargaining through collective organisation (Worker Welfare Association) to resolve worker-management conflict or gain extra wage-related benefits. Non-EPZ workers are more likely to react negatively to employer control, either individually or collectively, particularly when facing bad treatment from line managers, contract termination, or delays in overtime payment. Reactions to oppressive managerial control regimes include chatting and laughing with co-workers, taking unauthorised leave and using their labour mobility power and transferable skills to seek better employment elsewhere (see Chapter Six).

Since the continual need to recruit and train new workers lowers productivity, placing management under pressure, this turnover tactic is leading to some improvements in the labour process in the non-EPZ factories (Smith 2006). Also, supervisor abuse is now much less widely reported in non-EPZ factories due to women's organised protests in the workplace. Their expertise and skills in the workplace make them feel confident enough to resist verbal abuse from line managers on the factory floor (see Chapter Six) and this confidence also transfers into the domestic sphere, giving women the power to speak for themselves and, in some instances, to re-negotiate gender roles and relations to a greater or lesser degree (see Chapter Seven).

This thesis shows that capitalism and patriarchy operate in "mutual accommodation" in the workplace but not within the household where they operate in "conflict and tension". As previously noted, more women are becoming confident, negotiating with their husbands, and challenging traditional attitudes concerning gender roles. Unlike "Traditional" women, their "Progressive" counterparts allow their husbands to

contribute to household tasks. This is extremely significant as it challenges the gender norms of femininity and masculinity in Bangladeshi society.

Factory work has given "Progressive" married women the ability to question and change their husband's decisions. This suggests that these women's status as breadwinner increases their confidence and bargaining power within the household (see Chapter Seven). Women's increased self-confidence, bargaining power and controlling power in decision making, in turn enables them to question patriarchal domination within the home.

"Independent" women also utilise their agency in the domestic sphere by voicing their personal opinions regarding family matters. This is, no doubt, linked to the experience women gain in negotiating contracts and wages at the initial stages of their factory employment, which helps them to develop more general skills that can be applied in the home and also in their marital relationships.

The "Independent" and "Progressive" women in this study are also more financially independent which challenges the notion of male breadwinner model and patriarchy in Bangladesh. These "Independent" and "Progressive" women disposed of their income as they wished. Since the patriarchal family system is based on the social and economic protection of women by men, women's ability to earn income and control this has shifted the dynamics of power within the household and traditional cultural patterns in Bangladesh.

Moreover, irrespective of their marital status women have gained economic agency due to their income (female factory workers, in general, were able to support themselves as well as meet the basic needs of their dependents without relying on their fathers or husbands for money) and are now in a position to make more life choices. Continued contribution to household expenses makes them important to family members, which in turn allows them to take household-related or personal decisions. This also marks an important shift in the patriarchal family system since women are no longer voiceless within the family.

Whereas they were previously confined to the home, women have now experienced increased freedom of movement and the cultural constraint of *purdah* is being renegotiated through their mobility. There is also evidence that working women in this study have begun to revaluate the worth of their daughters and investing in their education.

All this evidence indicates that RMG work has enabled women to use their agency to make choices and to challenge the patriarchal norms that men are "breadwinners" and "decision makers", whereas women are "housewives" and "voiceless". This marks a significant improvement for women in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh. There is also hope that due to the involvement of an estimated 3.5 million women in RMG factory work, the significant changes which this study suggested are taking place at private household level will eventually feed through into the broader social sphere, leading women to question and to challenge some of the more entrenched patriarchal attitudes in Bangladeshi society.

8.4 Conclusion

By way of an ending, I return once again to the question posed in the title of this thesis: have the female workers in Bangladesh's RMG industry been stitched up by labour process regimes, by patriarchy or by a combination of both? As this thesis has demonstrated, the answer to this question is far from simple.

Walby (1986; 1990) argued that the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism is often one of tension and conflict, with two systems competing with each other to exploit women. She noted that indeed this is the logical result of the rival interests of the dominant groups of each system in the exploitation of women's labour. This is because the utilisation of women's labour by one system is at the expense of the other; if women are working for capitalists they have less time to work for their husbands. However, this study suggests that capitalism and patriarchy as distinct systems which interact in different ways – sometimes in relative consensus and sometimes in relative conflict. Evidences show that, in relative terms, these two systems may operate in mutural accommodation in the workplace, but in the household, they operate in conflict and tension. At the EPZ factory the control regime is more humane and there is less

evidence of patriarchal oppression (equal pay for equal work, female progression to supervisory level, no verbal abuse) whilst in the non-EPZ case studies the opposite is true (gendered division of labour, and the wage differential for male and female workers, use of verbal abuse). Capitalism benefits from patriarchal relations within the workplace. In their desire to exploit more docile labour, RMG employers use gender segregation, differential treatment in wage rates, particularly in the non-EPZ case studies, which further allow them to maximise profit. This strategy of segregation also benefits men since it does ensure that individual patriarchs are privileged (with men getting better jobs and no longer competing with women) at the expense of women, and it maintains gender differences, which suggests that capitalism and patriarchy have common interests within workplace.

On the other hand, outside the workplace, capitalists and patriarchal interests' conflict since capitalism emancipate women in relation to men, to some extent, which represents a threat to patriarchal (male) dominance over women. Outside the workplace, there is evidence that women's experiences of work can be empowering in various ways. Certainly, many rural women, previously amongst the most oppressed groups in Bangladeshi society, now lead better lives because of paid employment when this improvement is measured in terms such as economic security, ability to contribute to family subsistence and welfare. Employment also appears to have brought significant changes in the household regarding traditional gender roles, financial autonomy, decision making, and mobility which presents a radical challenge to the myth of the male breadwinner model of the family in Bangladesh and the notion of patriarchy. Although wages in the RMG industry are low, they are still higher than the money offered in other locally available jobs and women's participation in factory work leads to improved incomes for the whole household (Bearnot 2013). Therefore, women benefit economically from RMG factory work and owners and MNCs also benefit. The latter gain the substantial share through cheapening women's labour because in a society where male breadwinner bias prevails, women can be paid less on the grounds that they are secondary earners (Elson 2014).

This research also shows that capital, represented here in the form of MNCs not only benefits from patriarchal relations within the workplace, but can reinforce

differentiation among women's lives. As previously noted, employers in non-EPZ factories take advantage of gender stereotyping to relegate women into jobs which are designated as unskilled and lower paid. By lowering labour costs, firms enhance their comparative advantage (Hartmann 1979b; Barrett 1980; Mies 1986; Lim 1997; Souplet-Wilson 2014). Moreover, capitalism can reinforce differentiation among female workers in the RMG industry, since MNCs can have both positive and negative effects on different women's experiences in the workplace, pointing to a relationship which is contradictory and complex in nature. This research found that in the EPZ factory and larger RMG firms MNCs appear to be improving working conditions by putting pressure on suppliers to implement their codes relating to labour standards in a wide range of areas, meaning that female employees in these factories benefit from improved working conditions and therefore in their private lives.

However, MNCs are also instrumental in generating differentiation between working conditions of factories within the supply chain, driving down the working conditions at the lower end where price is the key criterion for buyers rather than ethical standards. Factories such as Style Star are powerless in price negotiations with larger factories which outsource to them to fill orders at low prices in order to maximise their own profits. When work was scarce, this factory at the bottom end of the supply chain was forced to accept whatever it was offered. It emerged from interviews conducted from this research that even when compliance auditors actually reach the lower end of the supply chain, a blind eye is turned by both management and auditors to even the most glaring of regulatory breaches, because it suits both parties. Management at Style Star can avoid expenses on capital investment for compliance issues, such as health and safety whilst MNCs can obtain lower prices for the same orders from this small factory since prices would be higher in the larger factories which are compliant with regulation. Therefore, MNCs can manipulate product prices to increase profits by using small non-compliant factories like Style Star. It can be argued therefore that MNCs have a vested interested in some RMG factories remaining non-compliant which negatively impacts on conditions in the smaller firms within the subcontracting chain which are often disjointed and untraceable in the supply networks.

Hoskins (2014) notes that following the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Dhaka where over a thousand garment workers died and thousands more were injured, the discovery of the labels of Western clothes' manufacturers in the ruins of the building highlighted the extent to which the RMG industry is dependent on long supply chains and the practice of subcontracting. She also noted that this practice enabled some high-street retailers to claim (truthfully or not) that they had no idea that their clothes were being made at a factory in somewhere called Rana Plaza, and that they knew nothing about the state of a poorly constructed building there which they never even knew existed. Thus, as Hale and Wills (2007: 468) note, the workers most in need of regulatory mechanisms such as codes are ironically those least likely to be covered by them as MNCs continuously strive to push up profits and drive down prices in the highly competitive labour market (Dicken 2007; Souplet-Wilson 2014), rather than thinking about the interests of workers caught at the bottom end of the supply chain.

There is some hope that working conditions of the Bangladeshi garment industry seem to be getting better, to certain extent, than those of the earlier time. For years, workplaces lacked minimum safety, and pay remained meager and irregular. However, evidences from this study suggests that this industry has actually undergone some slow, but significant, improvements in working conditions such as in terms of safety standards, improvement in wage rates and supervisory relations (see Chapter Five). As noted earlier, in addition to multinationals pressure to implement their codes, the agency of women is one of the most powerful forces in enabling improved social conditions at work. However, much initiative, such as investment in better compliance, up gradation of production techniques to enhance higher productivity, and strengthening the labour inspectorate, is still needed for RMG factories to move up the value chain.

It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that MNCs do business with Bangladesh because it can produce high quality, low cost garments, but as profit-seeking entities, they may decide to move elsewhere in the world if cheaper suppliers become available, meaning that their positive effects may disappear. Holdcroft (2003) tells the cautionary tale of how MNCs shifted most of their investment from Mexico to China when the $1.20 hourly rate in Tijuana failed to compete with the lower benchmark of 40 cents per hour set for Chinese workers. This reflects the power asymmetries operating between

large MNCs and suppliers, and confirms previous research findings that concluded that MNCs are the primary drivers within the supply chain networks, shaping the lives of millions of women working in the labour-intensive RMG export industry all over the world (Gereffi 1994; Hurley and Miller 2005; Dicken 2007; Barrientos and Smith 2007; Coe *et al.* 2008). However, recently some authors (Anner *et al.* 2013; Appelbaum and Lichtenstein 2014) noted that "the Accord on Building and Fire Safety in Bangladesh" which has been negotiated in the wake of the Rana Plaza collapse, among European brands, retailers, the Bangladesh garment manufacturers association and international union confederations, can not only regulate the power of lead firms, such as MNCs, but is also the most comprehensive effort to date to systematically eradicate sweatshop conditions in any nation's apparel industry.

There is however another question implicitly posed in the title of this thesis: have *all* these female RMG workers been stitched up or have some succeeded in making positive gains from their experiences as labourers? As previous discussions have shown, it can be argued that the experience of work in Bangladesh's RMG factories does have the ability to play an emancipatory role for women, but the degree of empowerment they experience is dependent on their level of education, marital status, the position of the firms within the global value chain, the labour process regime in operation and the degree of patriarchal control exerted at the workplace and beyond. "Traditional" married female factory workers interviewed carry on performing the majority of reproductive tasks in their household, perceiving domestic tasks to be 'women's work', thus shouldering a double burden. However, "Progressive" women are challenging the status quo, sharing some domestic tasks with husbands and refusing to surrender their hard-earned wages without some say in how it is spent. These educated women are taking a bold step in empowering themselves, going against the cultural expectation requiring subordination to their husbands. As sole breadwinners, "Independent" women are leading female-headed households, exercising greater control over their lives and income, and taking decisions which affect not only their own lives but also those of their children.

It is perhaps worth noting finally that whilst female interviewees voiced a full range of positive and negative views about their varied experience of factory work, again and

again I heard women explain that they saw RMG factory work not only as an opportunity to change their own lives but also in terms of its potential to enable them to transform the lives of their children or their younger siblings by paying for them to gain an education. This suggests that the real impact of women's experiences of work examined in this thesis will be visible in future generations of Bangladeshi women, and that in Lucille Clifton's poetic terms *"the daughters' daughters"* will not still be quilting, having acquired the personal resources to resist being stitched up.

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Appendix I: Voluntary Organisations and their Initiatives

International Labour Organisation Labour Standards www.ilo.org	A series of internationally recognised conventions developed by the UN specialised agency ILO that helps advance the creation of decent work and the economic and working conditions that give working people a stake in lasting peace, prosperity and progress.
ISO 14001 www.iso.org	The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) developed this standard which is primarily concerned with environmental management. It can be applied to any organisation in any sector and aims to minimise harmful effects on the environment caused by the organisation's activities and achieve continual improvement of the company's environmental performance.
Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production 12 Principles www.wrapcompliance.org	WRAP is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the certification of lawful, humane and ethical manufacturing throughout the world. The WRAP initiative is mainly applied in the US and Latin American countries.
Business Social Compliance Initiative Code of Conduct www.bsci-intl.org	The BSCI is an initiative of European retail companies initiated by the Brussels based Foreign Trade Association. It aims to improve the social performance in supplier countries through a uniform social standards monitoring solution for retail, industry and importers.
Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code www.ethicaltrade.org	The ETI is an UK based alliance of companies, NGOs and trade union organisations, wishing to promote and improve the working conditions in the supply chain. ETI wants to ensure that the working conditions of workers producing for the UK market meet or exceed ILO standards.
FLA Workplace Code of Conduct www.fairlabor.org	The US based Fair Labour Association, formed in 1999, is a non-profit organisation representing a multi-stakeholder coalition of companies, universities and NGOs who combined their efforts to promote adherence to international labour standards and improve working conditions worldwide.
SA8000 www.sa-intl.org	Social Accountability 8000 is a voluntary standard for workplaces, based on ILO and UN conventions relating to social issues. It was initiated by Social Accountability International (SAI), an international, multi-stakeholder NGO dedicated to improving workplaces and communities by developing and implementing socially responsible standards.

Appendix II: Interview Questions for Female Workers

(Interview Group One)

Structured Questions

Socio-Demographic Profile	
Where do you live?	
Which village area are you from? District?	
What is your current age? (Year)	
Please state your educational Background	Educational Qualification Not literate/ Can sign/ Class I to V(Primary level)/ Class VI to VIII/ SSC/ O level /HSC/A level /Above
Please state your marital status. Did you get married before joining the factory?	Unmarried/Married/Deserted/Separated/ Divorced/Widowed
How many people live in the house?	
How many people depend on the wages?	
Who else is a wage earner in the house and what they do?	Monthly Income:
What are your living arrangements?	Buying a house/renting/group homes/independent living/ supported living with families/ other

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Previous work history

- What was your first job? Please could you tell me about your work history?
- If you did not work, how were you supported?
- Please describe the past/history of life before you started working in the garment industry? (Good and bad sides)

Current job

- What is your current role? Can you please describe what you do in this role?
- How long have you been in your current job? How long have you been in garment production? Were you a trainee or apprentice in this factory? How long for?
- How did you get this job? Who decided you should work here? Why have you chosen to work here?
- What do you like about your job?

- What don't you like about your job?
- Have you ever been promoted here? What was the nature of that promotion? When was this? Why did you get it? What do you think managers look for when promoting workers?
- Do you face any difficulties in your job? What are they?
- Do you know of anyone who has lost their job? Why did they lose it? Is this common? Why do you think this is?

Gendered Division of Labour (occupational segregation) and Skills

- Do you notice any differences between men and women's jobs within the factory? What jobs do men tend to do? What jobs do women tend to do? Why do you think men and women do different jobs?
- Did you have any kind of garment work related skills before entering into the factory? Which types of skills are they? How did you get it?
- Have you gained any skills from garment work? Which kind of skills and how have you achieved? What are the constraints to develop skills?
- Does this factory offer any training to develop skills, if yes please describe in details?

Control and Gender Categories (Issues around sexuality, spatial segregation)

- Who is your manager, male, female? How do they supervise your work?
- What is your relationship like with them? Do you think you are well treated at work?
- Did you notice any different behaviour of supervisors between you and your male colleagues? Can you please say why this happens? How do you feel about it? What is the like attitude of managers towards single female workers, married or married workers with children?
- Do management give any punishment if you come late or make any error in making clothes or fail to meet the production target in the factory? If yes, what type of punishment/ how do they exercise them, etc.? Do you think these are fair?

Working Hours, Over-time

- On average, how many hours per day do you work?
- Do you get a lunch break? Do you get a rest period? How long for?
- Do you work over-time? How often do you do it? Why do you do it? Who decided for working overtime?

- What is the hourly pay rate for overtime? Is it better/worse and regular payments? Does management maintain any register to keep record of overtime? How the over-time wages are calculated?
- Do you work overtime after 10pm at night? Please describe your experience with working overtime? (Good/bad)?

Domestic Dual-burden and leisure

- How do you maintain your household work after having long hours of factory work? On average, how much time (in hours) do you spend on household related task every day? How much do other people spend in the house?
- What are you responsible for at home? Does your husband or any other family members help you with household chores? How much time do you spend on leisure activities on weekends and weekdays at home?
- Do you have any children? Who looks after them while you are at work? Is there any childcare facility within the factories?

Working Conditions, Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- How safe do you feel in the factory? Can you breathe properly? Is it well lit? Do you know of anyone that has had any accidents? What happened?
- What is toilet arrangement in this factory? Is there any restriction to use the toilets? How many times do supervisors allow using the toilets?
- Have you taken any casual leave, annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave? If yes, how many days they were? Were they paid leave or what sort of?
- Did you face any health problems during your work in the factory? What was the nature of health problems?
- How secure do you feel while working in the factory premises? Have you faced any kind of physical harassment, sexual violence inside/outside the factories? If yes, what are the types of violence inside and outside the factories? What did you do after the violence occur?
- How do you travel to and from work? How long does this take? Is it safe?

Wages and Control of Money

- How much are you paid per month after deductions? Please describe if you have had any difficulties with getting paid? When/How/Why?
- Who do you talk to when you have questions about your wages? Do you feel that you have any power to increase your wages? If yes, how?
- Did you notice any wage differences between you and your male colleagues working in the same job category? Why this differential? What do you think about this?

- Do you have any other income sources? If yes, what are they?
- Does wage cover your living cost? If no, why? Does wage bring any change in your living conditions, like accommodation, necessary commodities? Is there any change in terms of food intake?
- What do you use your money for? What do your wages earned in this employment mean to you?
- Has being in work allowed you to spend more personally?
- Do you feel that there is any change i.e. increase in confidence, decision making power since taking up the work?
- Would you say you feel better or worse off than a few years ago? Why? What has changed?

Other

- How are female garment factory workers seen by people? What do you think of how they are seen? What do family members think of you? How do outside people and friends see you as a garment worker?
- How do you identify? As a mother? Daughter? Worker? Other?
- What are your work/career aspirations for the future? Where do you see yourself in five years' time? In ten years' time?
- What do you worry about? What do you feel excited about it/what are you looking forward to?
- Are trade union activities allowed in this factory? Are you a member of a union? If yes, why? If not, why not? What do you think about trade union membership and union activities? (Good /bad; positive views/negative views)
- If unions are allowed, has anyone approached you to join? Are there any female trade union representatives or officers? Have you seen any benefits? Why wouldn't you join?

Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything you would like to ask? You are free to withdraw from the study whenever you like.

Appendix III: Interview Questions for Line managers/ Supervisors

(Interview Group Two)

Structured Questions

Factory Profile	Factory 1/ 2/ 3/ 4
Location of the factory	EPZ/ Non-EPZ
How many total workers are there in your factory? (Staff (all ranks) or workers (as in manual workers?))	
How many female workers are working in this factory?	
How many female workers are in administrative jobs? (Working as supervisors, line managers and higher ranks)	

Socio-Demographic Profile	
Gender	Male/Female
Educational Background	No educational background /Primary level/Class VI to VIII /High school/SSC/O Level College/HSC/A Level /University, Bachelor degree University, Master degree /Other-

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Current Work

- Did you work as a supervisor or manager before working in the garment industry? If yes, where? How long have you been working in this factory?
- What is your current role/position? Please describe your formal roles and responsibilities within this factory.
- What do you like about your job? What don't you like about your job? What is the hardest part?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Recruitment, Promotion and Dismissal

- How are workers recruited for the factory? Could you please give examples of recruitment for a typical male job and for a typical female job?

- Does the factory recruit unmarried/married/men and women, mothers?
- What criteria are used for promoting workers in this factory from one grade to another?
- Have you notice any differences in the turnover rate for male and female workers? Why do think this is the case?
- Which circumstances would be likely to lead to a worker being dismissed? Is it common for workers to get dismissed?

Gendered Division of Labour and Skills

- Do men and women do the same jobs? If not, why are females/males recruited for certain jobs? Are there any different categories of work in this factory, for example skilled and unskilled? Who belong to those categories? Why this distinction?
- Which particular skills do you think female workers have? Which particular skills do you think male workers have? Do they get recognition for their previous skills and how?
- What kind of skills do women gain from working here? Do you provide any form of training to workers? If yes, what sort of training is provided to workers?

Control Strategies

- How do you monitor work in this factory? Have you got any training or any specific procedures you have which make you more efficient in monitoring workers?
- What problems do you usually find dealing with female workers in the factory?
- How do you ensure high rates of productivity? If you have to intervene to increase productivity with particular workers, what do you do?
- How do you handle problematic female workers? What sort of problems are these? What do you do?
- Would you approach a problematic male worker in the same way? What needs to be different?

Over-time Work

- Do female workers work over-time? Is this common? Why do they work over-time? When is it required? If any worker does not want do overtime, what do you do then?
- What is the hourly pay rate for overtime work? How it is recorded, paid and calculated?
- Do female workers work after 10pm at night in the factory? If yes, do you think it is secured for them working late at night?

Working Conditions, Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- Have you had any accidents in this factory during your employment here? What happened? What safety measures are usually taken for workers?
- What are the policies of leave in this factory? How are they given whether with wages or without wages?
- Have you had any health problems while working here? What do you think about health problems of female workers in the factory? Which types?
- Have you found any violence inside the factory? Have any female worker reported any kind of physical harassment, sexual violence inside/outside the factory? If yes, which types of violence inside and outside the factories? How have you handled them?

Wages

- Have you had any difficulties with paying your female workers? When/How/Why?
- Do women and men get equal wages in the similar job category? If not, who get less paid and why?
- Does management provide any increment/ bonuses/ allowances to workers besides monthly wages and overtime wages? What are the like other benefits?
- Did you find any individual female worker to negotiate for her wages? Please describe how it worked/what happened when wages are negotiated?
- Please describe how do other actors (especially government, buyers, competitors, and trade unions) influence the wage setting?
- Do you think the current wages sufficient enough for their labour? Do you think the current wages cover their living cost? What management can do in this regard?
- Do you think wages are fair in the factory? Who controls the wages? Have they gone up recently?

Other

- Why do think female employment in the garment industry is so high?
- Overall, describe your feelings about the positive sides and negative sides of employing females.
- What do you think about trade union membership and union activities? Are trade union activities allowed in this factory? What is your view regarding trade union activities? (positive/negative)

Some general questions to ask relevant supervisors or managers:

1) **Working Hours**

   On average, how many hours a day do workers work?

   On average, how many hours a week do workers work?

   Do female workers get a weekly day off work? On average how many days off work do they have a month?

   How much time are female workers allowed for lunch and rest periods?

2) **Working Conditions, Safety, Wellbeing**

   Are formal appointment letter issued to workers?

   Are identity cards issued to workers?

   Is there any mandatory provision of wearing protective clothes while working in the factory?

   Which facilities do you provide such as drinking water/rest room/lunch room /canteen /washrooms/childcare facility etc. in the factory?

   What are the arrangements regarding toilet breaks for female workers?

   Does this factory have any access to doctor during working hours or provide any first aid facilities?

3) **Wages**

   How does the payment work in your factory? Cash/account/cheque/other

   How often are wages paid?   Monthly/weekly/daily/other

   Which payment system do you operate? Piece rate/time-rate/performance related pay/other

Appendix IV: Interview Questions for Top Management

(Interview Group Three)

Structured Questions

Socio-Demographic Profile	
Gender	Male/Female
Current Job	
What is your current role/position?	
How long have you been working in this factory?	In years:
How long have you worked in garment production?	In years:

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Company Data

- Please describe your role and responsibilities within this factory.

- Please describe the company's goals and mission.

- Can you please tell me which garment inputs/raw materials are produced/ available in Bangladesh?

- Do you need to import raw materials from other countries? From which countries do you generally import raw materials, clothes and other products? Do you face any problems regarding this? What are they? How do you handle them?

- Which products do you manufacture in your factory?

- In which countries/to which multinational retailers do you usually export your products?

- Overall, could you please explain the process of manufacturing in this factory? (from collection of raw materials to exporting of products)

- Could you please explain how subcontracting works in your company?

Dealing, Negotiating Practices with Multinational Buyers

- Which Multinational corporations (MNCs) do you work with? What do you make for them? Are these on-going contracts or contract by contract?

- What are the MNCs codes of conduct for doing business with them?

- How do buyers place orders for their products?

- What happens when contracts are negotiated with MNCs? How much power do you feel you have when negotiating a contract? Can you please give me any examples?

- Is there any agent (either from input supplying countries/buying houses) working for this factory to obtain contracts from MNCs?

- What do you think about the buying practices of MNCs? (Good/Bad)

- Is there any pressure from buyers in completing the orders? Please explain.

- Do you think MNCs have any influence over rates of pay for workers? If yes, how?

- Do MNCs play any role in improving working conditions in their supplier factories? If yes, how?

- Do they send any auditors in this factory? How many times do they audit in a year? How does this process work? Do you welcome this or is it a distraction? Does it help to improve the working conditions of the factory?

Other

- How do government affect your business? Did the legislation raising the minimum wage (30th July 2010) affect your business? How? Do you think this legislation is good or bad?

- Do you think wages for workers in this factory are fair? Why do you think this?

- What do you think about the working conditions of this factory, i.e. well lit, properly ventilated? Do you have proper fire prevention measures? What are they?

- Do trade unions have any influence in your business? How? What do you think of unions?

- Can you please explain how much value is added to a specific product at various stages of manufacturing?

  (For example what is the final price of a product?

  -What is the cost of the clothes? -How much do the workers cost?

  -What is the cost for agents? -What is your annual profit?

  -How much MNCs gain?)

- Could you please explain in general the problems you face doing business in Bangladesh?

- Why do you think female employment in the garment industry is so high?

- What are the positive sides and negative sides of employing females?

Appendix V: Final Template of Codes for RMG women's experiences

Code A: Factory Profile	Code D: Women's experiences at the workplace
A1 Location and size	D1 Control and surveillance
A2 Number of employees	D2 Absenteeism
A3 Gender composition of workers	D3 Turnover
A4 Company's goals and mission	D4 Skills and opportunities
A5 Raw material sourcing country	D5 Occupational segregation
A6 Final destination of products/ MNCs	D6 Resistance
A7 Manufacturing Process	D7 Health issues
A8 Subcontracting working patterns	D8 Verbal abuse
A9 Contract relationship with retailers	D9 Sexual harassment
Code B: Influence of Trade Union, Government regulations, and MNCs	**Code E: Women's experiences of work beyond the workplace**
B1 Role of trade unions	E1 Dual-burden and leisure
B2 Government legislation	E2 Gender relations at the household
B3 MNC's code of conduct	E3 Wage and livelihood
B4 Buying practices with MNCs	E4 Control of money
B5 Price negotiation with MNCs	E5 Role in decision making
B6 MNC's influence on pay and working conditions	E6 Attitudes and life styles
B7 Audit process	E7 Self-esteem, autonomy and confidence
Code C: Employment Practices	E8 Double identity
C1 Appointment	
C2 Working hours	
C3 Leave facilities	
C4 Payment and bonuses	
C5 Safety and Security	
C6 Discharge and dismissal	

Appendix VI: Summary of Current Relevant Regulation/Codes of Practice in Relation to Working Practices in the Bangladeshi RMG Industry

	LABOUR LAW (2006)	BEPZA INSTRUCTIONS NOs. 1 AND 2 (1989)	BUYER CODES OF PRACTICE (NEXT, TESCO & GAP)
Trade Unions and freedom of association	Workers may establish and join a union of their own choice subject to the constitution of the respective trade union to control worker-worker, worker-employer or employer-employer relations. Employers and workmen shall have the right to form a federation of their trade unions and may also affiliate that federation with any international federation or confederation of trade unions (§176).	Trade unions were banned within EPZs by the Government from 1986 to 2004. The EPZ Workers Association and Industrial Relations Act 2004 was promulgated by the Parliament of Bangladesh. This recognises workers' right to form associations, in order to regulate labour relations and settle disputes arising between employers and workers in the EPZs.	Workers are free to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively. The supplier shall adopt an open attitude towards trade unions and their organisational activities. Employers shall not discriminate, threaten, or penalise trade union representatives or interfere with their functions in the workplace. Where law restricts the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, the employer must facilitate, not obstruct, the development of parallel means of free association and collective bargaining.
Appointment and conditions of employment	Issuance of an appointment letter and identity card for workers is compulsory (§5)	Employees shall be issued with an appointment letter, indicating the terms and conditions of service, nature of work, pay and any other relevant matter related to their appointment (para. 5)	Employers shall provide understandable written information regarding employment conditions before workers enter employment as well as providing the particulars of their wages each time they are paid.

Termination and dismissal	In the case of monthly rate workers, 120 days' written notice must be given prior to termination of contract. Moreover, if a permanent worker's contract is terminated he shall be entitled to receive 30 days' wage for every completed year of service in addition to any other benefits. Employers may terminate employment without notice if wages are paid to that worker for the aforesaid notice period (§26). An employer can dismiss any worker without serving any notice or making payment on two grounds, i.e. conviction by a criminal court, or proven misconduct (§23). Misconduct is defined as wilful insubordination, alone or in combination with others, to any lawful or reasonable order; theft, fraud or dishonesty; receiving or giving bribes; habitual absence, without leave, for more than ten days; habitual late attendance; habitual breach of any rule or law applicable to the establishment; fighting, riotous or disorderly behaviour; habitual negligence of work; resorting to illegal strike or instigating others to do so; falsifying or tampering with employer's official documents (§24). Any worker against whom misconduct has been charged or proved may be punished by any of the following: dismissal, removal, demotion to lower grade, withholding promotion/increment for one year (minimum); imposition of fine, temporary suspension without wages, censuring or warning (§23.2).	In the case of termination of the services of a permanent employee, the employer shall provide 120 days' notice. The employee may be paid wages for 120 days in lieu of such notice. Any worker whose employment is terminated shall be paid compensation at the rate of one month's pay for every completed year of service in addition to any other benefits under the terms and conditions of employment (para. 13) Misconduct is defined as per Labour Law (§24) but also specifies causing damage to factory property, smoking on factory premises, holding meetings on factory premises without employer permission, leaving work without permission, sleeping while on duty, improper use or non-use of protective clothing or uniforms while on duty (para. 15) If an employee is found to be inefficient, corrupt or guilty of misconduct, the employer may impose one or more of the following penalties: censure, stoppage of increment or promotion (on grounds of inefficiency, irregular attendance or misbehaviour), reduction in rank, dismissal and recovery from employee's pay in whole or part for any company losses from negligence (para.16). An employee may be discharged due to physical or mental incapacity. Any employee having completed one year of continuous service, shall be paid compensation by the employer at the rate of one month's pay per year of service completed (para.23)	All workers shall enjoy security and stability of employment and regularity of income wherever reasonably practicable. Worker contracts should not be terminated for the sole purpose of avoiding the provision of benefits.

Working hours and overtime	Adult workers may work eight hours per day with two hours of overtime per day maximum. Total working hours for adults of 60 working hours per week and an average of fifty six hours per week in any year shall not be exceeded under any circumstances (§100; §102). Females are not allowed to work between 10pm and 6am without their consent (§109).	Relevant national laws regarding working hours, overtime and night work for females apply.	Normal working hours should not exceed 48 hours per week which must comply with national laws or benchmark industry standards, whichever affords greater protection. Overtime should be voluntary, not exceed 12 hours per week, and employers shall not demand this on a regular basis. Overtime must be compensated at the rate legally prescribed in the country for garment manufacturing.
Days off and paid leave	All factory workers should have one non-working day per week. If an employee is required to work on this day, then another day off must be substituted for this within two months (§103). All employees are entitled to 10 days casual leave per year with full pay, 14 days sick leave with full pay per year, one day's earned leave for every 18 days' work (one year of entitlement), and 11 days of festival leave per calendar year (§115-118).	Workers should get one day off per week and any worker required to work on a Friday or holiday, shall be given a substitute day-off on any other day (para. 9). All workers shall be entitled to 10 days casual leave per year with full wages, 14 days sick leave on half-pay, one day of earned leave for every 22 days work (one year of entitlement), 10 days of paid festival holiday per calendar year (paras 8, 11 & 12).	Employers should provide at least one day off for every seven day period on average. Workers should get paid annual leave and holidays as required by the law or the local industry standard, whichever is greater.

Wages and additional benefits	Minimum rates of pay are followed (set by the Government as notified in the Ministry of Labour and Employment Gazette 2010). Non-EPZ workers have seven grades each with a minimum and maximum range. Payment including overtime wages and other allowances, must be made within seven working days of the expiry of a wage period (§123). Employers must pay workers overtime, which is set at double their usual rate of pay, i.e. basic or other allowances, if any (§108).	The minimum wage rates were set by the BEPZA (§83 of the EPZ Workers Welfare Association and Industrial Relations Act 2010). EPZ have five worker grades each with a fixed rate. Salary must be paid by the seventh day of the following month (para. 36, Instructions 1). Minimum wages should be computed and determined in US dollars and then payment made in taka currency (Instructions no. 2, 1989). In addition to minimum wages, each company should be liable to pay additional benefits such as a two-month festival bonus per year equivalent to two months basic pay, provident fund contribution at applicable rate, a minimum of 10% annual increase over worker's basic wages, payment of production and attendance bonus, existing canteen/food and transport facilities will continue to be provided by the company.	Workers' wages shall always be enough to meet their basic needs and some other discretionary expenditure. Monthly wages and benefits must equal or exceed the minimum wage required by law or industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. Hourly overtime rate must be compliant with national law and be higher than the rates for the regular work shift. Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the expressed permission of the worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded.

Safety and security issues	The following standards must be met at all RMG factories: there should be at least one alternative exit with a stair connecting all the floors of the factory building; no exit can be locked or fastened during working hours; there should be an effective and clearly audible means to warn of fires; there should be an adequate number of fire extinguishers; there should be cleared passages providing access to each escape route; there should be a fire drill at least once a year in each factory where more than fifty workers are employed (§62). Floors, stairs and means of access shall be of sound construction and maintained in a neat and clean manner, and should be wide enough and free from any blockage (§72)	The relevant laws of the country regarding safety and security shall apply.	Employers must provide a safe and hygienic working environment, and continue to work towards preventing accidents and injuries to health by minimising hazards, which is reasonably practicable. Employers shall arrange regular and record health and safety training, and such training shall be repeated for new workers. The company shall assign a senior management representative to observe the code for health and safety issues.
Welfare issues	Factories employing over fifty workers shall have suitable rest facilities including areas to have food (lunch room) (§93). Separate latrines and urinals for male and female workers, a well-equipped first aid box for every 150 labourers, and washing facilities will be provided (§59, 89 & 91). A children's room to be provided for every 40 female workers having children under 6 years (§94)	In every company there shall be a suitable rest room where employees can take rest or can eat their meals brought by them (para.32). The employer should provide a reasonable number of toilets, washing facilities, and first aid boxes equipped with necessary things.	Workers shall have access to clean toilets facilities, to potable water, and sanitary facilities for food storage. There should be at least one well-stocked first aid box on every factory floor and specific staff trained in basic first aid.

| Worker's Association /participatory committee | There is a provision to form compulsory participation committees in every establishment where 50 or more permanent workers are engaged. The committee shall be formed in combination of both the same number of workers and employers (§205).

-the participation committee shall meet at least once in every two months to discuss and exchange views and recommend measures for the performance of the functions (§ 206). | -From November 2006 workers were permitted to form "trade unions" in the name of Workers' Associations at any factory where more than 50% of the workforce agreed to do so.

-The representatives of the workers' association shall be elected by fellow workers. | |

(Adapted from SEBA Limited 2007; BEPZA Instruction I & II (1989); Bangladesh Ministry of Labour and Employment gazette 2010; HUQ 2009; ETI Base Code; Codes of Practice: Next, Tesco, GAP)

Appendix VII: Summary of Primark Code of conduct, ETI Base Code, and ILO Conventions and Recommendations

PRIMARK CODE OF CONDUCT (https://www.primark.com/en/our-ethics/workplace-rights/code-of-conduct)	ETI BASE CODE (http://www.ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code)	ILO CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (http://www.ilo.org)
1. EMPLOYMENT IS FREELY CHOSEN	**1. Employment is freely chosen**	**C29,** **R35,** **C105**
1.1 There is no forced, bonded or involuntary prison labour.	1.1 There is no forced, bonded or involuntary prison labour.	
1.2 Workers are not required to lodge "deposits" or their identity papers with their employer and are free to leave their employer after reasonable notice.	1.2 Workers are not required to lodge "deposits" or their identity papers with their employer and are free to leave their employer after reasonable notice.	
2. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ARE RESPECTED	**2. Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected**	**C87,** **C98,** **C135,** **R143,** **C154**
2.1 Workers, without distinction, have the right to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively.	2.1 Workers, without distinction, have the right to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively.	
2.2 The employer adopts an open attitude towards the activities of trade unions and their organisational activities.	2.2 The employer adopts an open attitude towards the activities of trade unions and their organisational activities.	
2.3 Workers representatives are not discriminated	2.3 Workers representatives are not discriminated	

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against and have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace.	against and have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace.	
2.4 Where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is restricted under law, the employer facilitates, and does not hinder, the development of parallel means for independent and free association and bargaining.	2.4 Where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is restricted under law, the employer facilitates, and does not hinder, the development of parallel means for independent and free association and bargaining.	
3. WORKING CONDITIONS ARE SAFE AND HYGIENIC	**3. Working conditions are safe and hygienic**	
3.1 A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Adequate steps shall be taken to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, by minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.	3.1 A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Adequate steps shall be taken to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, by minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.	**C155, R164, C184**
3.2 Workers shall receive regular and recorded health and safety training, and such training shall be repeated for new or reassigned workers.	3.2 Workers shall receive regular and recorded health and safety training, and such training shall be repeated for new or reassigned workers.	
3.3 Access to clean toilet facilities and to potable water, and, if appropriate, sanitary facilities for food storage shall be provided.	3.3 Access to clean toilet facilities and to potable water, and, if appropriate, sanitary facilities for food storage shall be provided.	
3.4 Accommodation, where provided, shall be clean,	3.4 Accommodation, where provided, shall be clean,	

safe, and meet the basic needs of the workers.	safe, and meet the basic needs of the workers.	
3.5 The company observing the code shall assign responsibility for health and safety to a senior management representative.	3.5 The company observing the code shall assign responsibility for health and safety to a senior management representative.	
4. ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS		
4.1 Primark wishes to share its commitment to the environment with suppliers whose practices conform to applicable environmental standards.		
5. CHILD LABOUR SHALL NOT BE USED	**4. Child labour shall not be used**	
5.1 There shall be no recruitment of child labour.	4.1 There shall be no new recruitment of child labour.	
5.2 Companies shall develop or participate in and contribute to policies and programmes which provide for the transition of any child found to be performing child labour to enable her or him to attend and remain in quality education until no longer a child; "child" and "child labour" being defined in the appendices.	4.2 Companies shall develop or participate in and contribute to policies and programmes which provide for the transition of any child found to be performing child labour to enable her or him to attend and remain in quality education until no longer a child; "child" and "child labour" being defined in the appendices.	**C138, R146, C182, R190**
5.3 Children and young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or in hazardous conditions.	4.3 Children and young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or in hazardous conditions.	
5.4 These policies and procedures shall conform to the provisions of the relevant ILO standards.	4.4 These policies and procedures shall conform to the provisions of the relevant ILO standards.	
6. LIVING WAGES ARE PAID	**5. Living wages are paid**	**C131, C95**
6.1 Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week meet, at a minimum, national legal standards or	5.1 Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week meet, at a minimum, national legal standards or	

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industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. In any event wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.	industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. In any event wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.	
6.2 All workers shall be provided with written and understandable information about their employment conditions in respect to wages before they enter employment and about the particulars of their wages for the pay period concerned each time that they are paid.	5.2 All workers shall be provided with written and understandable Information about their employment conditions in respect to wages before they enter employment and about the particulars of their wages for the pay period concerned each time that they are paid.	
6.3 Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the expressed permission of the worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded.	5.3 Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the expressed permission of the worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded.	
7. WORKING HOURS ARE NOT EXCESSIVE	**6. Working hours are not excessive[1]**	
7.1 Working hours comply with national laws, and benchmark industry standards, whichever affords the greater protection.	6.1 Working hours must comply with national laws, *collective agreements, and the provisions of 6.2 to 6.6 below,* whichever affords the greater protection for workers. *Sub-clauses 6.2 to 6.6 are based on international labour standards.*	**C1, C30, C106, C14**
7.2 Workers shall not be required to work in excess of 48 hours per week and shall be provided with at least one day off for every 7 days period on average.	6.2 Working hours, excluding overtime, shall be defined by contract, and shall not exceed 48 hours per week.[2]	
7.3 Overtime must be on a voluntary basis, shall not	6.3 All overtime shall be voluntary. *Overtime shall be*	

exceed 12 hours a week, shall not be demanded on a regular basis and shall always be compensated at a premium rate.	*used responsibly, taking into account all the following: the extent, frequency and hours worked by individual workers and the workforce as a whole. It shall not be used to replace regular employment.* Overtime shall always be compensated at a premium rate, *which is recommended to be not less than 125% of the regular rate of pay.*	
	6.4 The total hours worked in any 7 day period shall not exceed 60 hours, except where covered by clause 6.5 below.	
	6.5 Working hours may exceed 60 hours in any 7 day period only in exceptional circumstances where all of the following are met: • this is allowed by national law; • this is allowed by a collective agreement freely negotiated with a workers' organisation representing a significant portion of the workforce; • appropriate safeguards are taken to protect the workers' health and safety; and • the employer can demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply such as unexpected production peaks, accidents or emergencies.	
	6.6 Workers shall be provided with at least one day off in every 7 day period or, where allowed by	

	national law, 2 days off in every 14 day period.	
8. NO DISCRIMINATION IS PRACTISED	**7. No discrimination is practised**	**C100, C111, R111**
8.1 There is no discrimination in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, union membership or political affiliation.	7.1 There is no discrimination in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, union membership or political affiliation.	
9. REGULAR EMPLOYMENT IS PROVIDED	**8. Regular employment is provided**	**C95, C158, C175, C177, C181**
9.1 To every extent possible work performed must be on the basis of recognised employment relationship established through national law and practice.	8.1 To every extent possible work performed must be on the basis of recognised employment relationship established through national law and practice.	
9.2 Obligations to employees under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the use of labour-only contracting, sub- contracting, or home-working arrangements, or through apprenticeship schemes where there is no real intent to impart skills or provide regular employment, nor shall any such obligations be avoided through the excessive use of fixed-term contracts of employment.	8.2 Obligations to employees under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the use of labour-only contracting, sub- contracting, or home-working arrangements, or through apprenticeship schemes where there is no real intent to impart skills or provide regular employment, nor shall any such obligations be avoided through the excessive use of fixed-term contracts of employment.	
10. NO HARSH OR INHUMANE TREATMENT IS ALLOWED	**9. No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed**	**C29, R35, C105**
10.1 Physical abuse or discipline, the threat of	9.1 Physical abuse or discipline, the threat of physical	

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physical abuse, sexual or other harassment and verbal abuse or other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.	abuse, sexual or other harassment and verbal abuse or other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.	
11. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS		
11.1 Primark is committed to full compliance with the laws and regulations in each procurement location where Primark conducts business, and will not knowingly operate in violation of any such law or regulation.		
11.2 Primark will not knowingly use suppliers who violate applicable laws and regulations.		

[1] The base code clause on working hours was revised with effect from April 1 2014 and by December 2014 audits will be conducted to this new standard.

[2] International standards recommend the progressive reduction of normal hours of work, when appropriate, to 40 hours per week, without any reduction in workers' wages as hours are reduced.