BUILDING INCLUSIVE MARKETS IN RURAL BANGLADESH: HOW INTERMEDIARIES WORK INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS

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Much effort goes into building markets as a tool for economic and social development; those pursuing or promoting market building, however, often overlook that in too many places social exclusion and poverty prevent many, especially women, from participating in and accessing markets. Building on data from rural Bangladesh and analyzing the work of a prominent intermediary organization, we uncover *institutional voids* as the source of market exclusion and identify two sets of activities—redefining market architecture and legitimating new actors—as critical for building *inclusive* markets. We expose voids as *analytical spaces* and illustrate how they result from conflict and contradiction among *institutional bits and pieces* from local political, community, and religious spheres. Our findings put forward a perspective on market building that highlights the *on-the-ground* dynamics and attends to the *institutions at play*, to their consequences, and to a more diverse set of *inhabitants* of institutions.

If someone who has no property rights under the law, who has had no formal education, who has no legal right to divorce, who will very likely be beaten if she seeks employment outside the home, says that she endorses traditions of modesty, purity, and self-abnegation, it is not clear that we should consider this the last word on the matter.

-Marta Nussbaum

Researchers and policy makers have long argued that markets are engines for economic growth and that market-based activities constitute an important tool for social progress, economic empowerment, and human development (Seelos & Mair, 2007; Stiglitz, 1989; UNDP, 2008). In this spirit, many contemporary policy initiatives make poor women's market access and participation central to their experiments and pilot programs—an aspect of policy broadly referred to as "developing inclusive markets" (Mendoza & Thelen, 2008). Yet these well-intended interventions often overlook the role that local institutions such as customs, religious credos, and social norms play in compromising the potential for women's economic activity. One of our fieldwork informants in Bangladesh said, "How can I go to the market? I am a woman!" Her words exemplify how women in too many places are excluded from market-based activities and expose how social conventions prevent them from market access. The simple quote also points to the limits of promoting the role of markets without analyzing how local context and institutional arrangements shape markets and market-based activity (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

Institutions, metaphorically referred to as the "rules of the game" (North, 1990), matter for markets; they enable and support market activity (Campbell & Lindberg, 1990; De Soto, 2000; Greif, 2006; Sen, 1999). Where such institutions are absent or weak, management and strategy scholars point to the pres-

ence of "institutional voids," realities that can impact market formation, economic growth, and development (Khanna & Palepu, 1997; Webb, Tihanyi, Ireland, & Sirmon, 2009). Researchers further note that absent and weak market institutions reinforce existing social inequalities as market access and opportunity are governed by local institutional arrangements (Crow, 2001; Rodrik, 2007). Such local arrangements consist of complex interlocks of formal institutions, such as constitutions, laws, property rights, and governmental regulations, and informal institutions, such as customs, traditions, and religious beliefs (Fligstein, 2001; North, 1991), that not only enable but also constrain market activity. They determine the rules of the game and, importantly, who is allowed to play.

Local realities are the point of departure for this study. Our objective is to clarify market-building processes by interrogating the concept of institutional voids in institutionally complex contexts—particularly where markets and market-based activities are seen as tools for economic development. Drawing on an in-depth qualitative study, we focus our empirical efforts on the case of Bangladesh and the work of BRAC,[1] a prominent, pervasive local intermediary agency. Whereas many studies view institutional voids as "empty" of specific institutions, our findings suggest that voids occur amidst institutional plurality and are the intermediate outcome of conflict and contradiction among local political, community, and religious spheres. This fresh perspective detects institutional voids as an important driver of market exclusion and provides an analytical anchor for the study of market-building processes. Our analysis of the varied work of BRAC over several decades suggests that market access and participation are negotiable and market boundaries are potentially permeable for actors who have been excluded.

The perspective on market building we put forward highlights "on-the-ground" dynamics and attends to the consequences of market building for the people involved. Our findings complement and extend research on the institutional formation and infrastructure of markets by highlighting market building as *inhabited*—that is, as replete with people and activity, albeit focused to varied purposes.

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[1] BRAC originally stood for "Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee," in line with its focus on relief work after natural disasters. In 1973, BRAC was renamed "Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee" to reflect its focus on development. Almost three decades later, when BRAC was already working in the country's urban slums and had started to work internationally, it became "Building Resources Across Communities."

More specifically, we explain how markets can become *inclusive* places: legitimated arenas for interdependent social and economic activity where formal possibilities align with practical access across gender, race, religion, and social class.

MARKET BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS

Markets, Institutions, and Context

Institutionalists throughout the social sciences agree that markets are systems of economic exchange and spaces for social interaction as well as complex bundles of institutions (Geertz, 1978; La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1998; McMillan, 2002; North, 1990). A context-specific and often complex assembly of institutions including both formal rules and informal norms generates market microstructures and assembly of institutions that configure sociopolitical contexts and organize the "terms of action" (Fligstein, 2001). These institutional architectures vary across polities, comprising rules for what issues are public and collective and which actors are authorized to engage these issues (Jepperson & Meyer, 1991). Along with recognizing such cross-polity variation, scholars warn of the "need to maintain a healthy scepticism toward the idea that a specific type of institution is the only type that is compatible with a well-functioning market economy" (Rodrik, 2007: 162–163). This contention signals the need for inquiries about market-building processes in institutionally complex contexts (Granovetter & McGuire, 1998; Mair & Martí, 2009; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009; Spicer, McDermott, & Kogut, 2000).

Building markets is neither easy nor unproblematic. Regardless of how efficient a particular institutional arrangement has proven itself in a specific context, the efficacy and impact of that same institutional assembly will likely vary in a different context. Institutional frameworks of meaning and authority shape the conditions of market building and the particular tactics that actors use (Biggart & Guillen, 1999; Hamilton & Biggart, 1988). Recent work in the economic sociology of markets (Fligstein, 2001; Zelizer, 2005), the varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001), and institutional economics (Greif, 2006; North, 1990; Rodrik, 2007) points to the varied intertwining of culture and politics in the social organization of markets and economies. Despite observing differences in foci and mechanisms, scholars argue that markets are constructed rather than "natural" or spontaneous entities. This scholarship also challenges the dominant, simplified (and simplifying) view of markets

as cleanly distinguished from the infrastructure of their local contexts. Careful attention to the rules of the game in markets points to the relevance of the context and processes by which they emerge (Fligstein, 2001; Greif, 2006; North, 1990; Rodrik, 2007). The process of institutionalizing the rules that govern exchange and market-based activity is ongoing and observable, and as such it provides a lens for observing market building and the activities of diverse institutional actors (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009; Spicer et al., 2000; Stark, 1996).

Institutional Voids

Recent work on institutional voids in strategy and economics recognizes the central role that institutions—and their absence—play in developing market economies and in shaping the behavior of a particular set of actors: firms and entrepreneurs. Standard claims locate the source of key market institutions such as property rights and autonomy in state action and rules (Campbell & Lindberg, 1990; La Porta et al., 1998; North, 1990). Where properly designed and implemented, these institutions provide the rules of the game that support formation of ideal typical markets to form. If these institutions are absent or weak, the argument goes, institutional voids occur, and a compensatory social structure is needed to spur market formation and operation (Greif, 2006; Khanna & Palepu, 1997). Building on new institutional economics and agency theory, Khanna and Palepu (1997, 2000) extended Leff's (1976) work on business groups in developing economies, to contend that large business groups imitate and substitute for missing institutions to ensure market function in the event of market failures due to the presence of institutional voids (Khanna, Palepu, & Sinha, 2005; Khanna & Rivkin, 2006). In this stream of research, institutional voids are typically presented as inhibitors of the establishment of Western-style markets. The proposed solutions typically favor the transfer of institutional technology as a compensatory mechanism over local experimentation and recombination.

Following Khanna and colleagues, and drawing from a broader spectrum of research on institutions (North, 1990; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), recent scholarship in organizational theory and strategy has focused on the consequences of institutional voids on business strategy. Meyer, Estrin, Bhaumik, and Peng (2009) showed that the relative strength or weakness of various institutional frameworks impacts alternative modes of entry in India, Vietnam, South Africa, and Egypt. Puffer, McCarthy, and Boisot (2009) revealed that weak and lacking formal institutions in Russia and China force entrepreneurs to rely on trust within networks as well as on *blat* and *guanxi*, respectively (see also Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2006). Additionally, Chakrabarty (2009) showed that institutional voids influence family ownership patterns in 27 countries.

A second set of studies points to the impact that institutional voids have on entrepreneurial processes in "base of the pyramid" (BOP) markets and local informal economies. Webb et al. (2009) suggested several ways that institutional incongruence and weak enforcement of formal institutions facilitate entrepreneurial processes in an informal economy. Cross-sector alliances between commercial companies and local social entrepreneurs have been shown to remove the "hurdles of implementing BOP models" (Seelos & Mair, 2007: 49) by reducing the uncertainty caused by weak market institutions (Webb, Kistruck, Ireland, & Ketchen, 2010). Together, these studies reinforce the importance of understanding the institutional infrastructure of markets and foreground the impact of institutional voids on effective market functioning (North, 1990; Peng, Sun, Pinkham, & Chen, 2009). They also showcase a productive conversation between institutional economists and strategy researchers, one that highlights a shared interpretation of institutional voids as spaces empty of institutions. This interpretation stands in contrast to the interpretation favored by sociologists and anthropologists, who emphasize the abundance and complexity of institutions present in similar contexts and situations and who focus on the people participating (and not participating) in markets (Banfield, 1958; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Geertz, 1978; Zelizer, 2010). Engaging the economic and strategy line of research with the sociological and anthropological line of research opens up a salient debate on the processes involved in building markets as inclusive arenas for social interaction and economic exchange. Although previous studies have elaborated on a varied set of consequences resulting from the presence of institutional voids, much is still unknown about how institutional voids are constituted, how they relate to existing institutional arrangements, and how they matter for local populations.

Market Building in and around Institutional Voids

Institutional economists and their colleagues in finance have developed substantial empirical and theoretical arguments about the institutional infrastructures and rules that support market formation and associated economic development (La Porta et al., 1998; Morrison, 2004; Morrison & White, 2009; North, 1990). This diverse work finds substantial policy expression in the legacy of North and in the work of neo-Hirschman scholars (Chan, 2002; Rodrik, 2007). The gist of the argument is that specific

configurations of (micro and macro) institutions conduce to market formation. In the absence of these institutional arrangements (i.e., in the presence of institutional voids), there is much difficulty in establishing markets and the necessary outcomes such as transparency and efficiency. Much of the policy translation of this work, however, reinforces the imagery that markets come into being in equilibrium. Moreover, although the attention to the "putting in place" of markets and market reforms is important, it neglects the complex work and lessons for policy from attending to the early stages and dynamics of market building.

For this focus on early moments, we have recourse to economic and cultural sociologists whose work is reinserting activity into market formation. At the broader societal level, work on markets as politics views the institutional architecture of markets as the outcome of social movement–like struggles between incumbents and challengers (Bourdieu, 2005; Fligstein, 2001), highlighting the struggles among actors to harness the cultural, political and institutional resources to organize markets and economies (Anteby, 2010; Biggart & Guillen, 1999; Hamilton & Biggart, 1988). This research makes explicit the link between social movements, corporations, the state apparatus, and markets (Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003; Schneiberg, 2007; Tilly & Tilly, 1998). Such emerging imagery of market building draws on an understanding of institutions as both obdurate and stable but also not without activity and contest.

A parallel stream of scholarship from the social sciences prompts yet another useful reading on the role of institutions and institutional dynamics in the process of market building. An important line of work by sociologists shows that markets are often built *with*, rather than *on*, the bit and pieces of institutions (Stark, 1996). These insights reposition attention onto the plurality of incumbent institutional arrangements that support economies and markets (Hamilton & Biggart, 1988; Ostrom, 1990; Thelen, 2004). This scholarship also shows how, in many cases, these incumbent institutional arrangements supplant institutions that support Khanna et al.'s model of the market economy or "market capitalism." Moreover, whereas many studies on institutional voids have, to a large extent, omitted people (for an exception see Webb, Tihanyi, Ireland, & Sirmon [2009]) and neglected the disenfranchised, an emerging body of literature is beginning to focus on the reality of activity present in "inhabited institutions" (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006: 231). This nascent trajectory in the field is (re)infusing institutionalism with a "lost" microsociology (Barley,

2008; Hallett, 2010; Kellogg, 2009), in turn enriching the context of economic sociology.

We draw on this understanding of institutional configurations and dynamics to investigate the sources of institutional voids. We treat voids as analytical spaces at the interface of several institutional spheres, each with its own animating logic of meanings and social practices (Friedland & Alford, 1991). This reading departs from the conventional view that privileges modern/Western interpretations of key market institutions and emphasizes the functioning of ideal markets. By accentuating the situated and intermediate nature of institutional voids, we develop a view of voids that originates in the presence of plural, often contending, institutional arrangements (Banfield, 1958; Fourcade, 2007; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Kogut et al., 2000; Sako, 2009; Stark, 1996), rather than continuing the view of "empty" institutional space. The analytic point to be made here is that even the ideal typical market promised by standard market institutions can reflect broader inequalities in a society and thus result in exclusionary markets. Our approach links institutional voids to grounded sources for limits on market participation and access. This approach also generates conceptual and empirical claims about how institutional plurality, conflict, and contradiction contribute to theorizing on inclusive markets and toward their potential implementation. We also see this as an opportunity to integrate scholarship focused on market consequences with the standard work on markets and institutional voids. Studies of market consequences vary in focus, but are especially well developed in terms of policy issues such as the distributional impacts of markets (Easterly, 2002; Stiglitz, 2000), cultural effects on endogenous preferences (Bowles, 1998), questions of social empowerment and the exclusion from labor markets (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011), and the emerging work on inclusive markets (Mendoza & Thelen, 2008).

To summarize, we extend the research on institutions and markets to put forward a perspective on market building that highlights the on-the-ground dynamics in complex institutional contexts. To advance this perspective, we pose two broad questions to guide our empirical analysis of building inclusive markets in rural Bangladesh: (1) How do institutional voids arise in institutionally complex settings, with what consequences for market access and participation? (2) What organizational and other activities *work these voids* to build inclusive markets? To answer the first question, we focus on two standard market institutions, property rights and autonomy, engaging this standard view with work on plural institutional spheres. Drawing on this analysis, we ex-

plore the second question with a detailed case study of a prominent local intermediary agency in Bangladesh and its portfolio of initiatives and activities to address market inclusion.

RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA, AND METHODS

Research Setting

To probe the concept of institutional voids and to examine market building processes in an institutionally complex context, we focus on the case of BRAC (Mair & Marti, 2009; Sachs, 2005; Smillie, 2009). Bangladesh is a complex country setting in which to analyze institutional voids and market building. Despite substantial progress in poverty alleviation and an overall economic growth rate of 6 percent in recent years within the country, nearly half of the estimated 156 million inhabitants of Bangladesh live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2010). BRAC, considered to be the world's largest development organization in reach and staff scale (*Economist*, 2010; Smillie, 2009),[2] is present in all 64 districts of Bangladesh, operating in about 70,000 villages—a reach that affects the life of 80 percent of the entire population (BRAC, 2009).

Prevailing institutional configurations in Bangladesh act to limit poor, rural inhabitants—particularly women—from accessing and participating in markets. These arrangements have a disproportionate impact on access, despite formal constitutional and political guarantees for the equal status of all Bangladeshi citizens in all areas of public life (Crow, 2001; Pereira, 2002). Market access and participation are further complicated by the amalgam of secular and religious dimensions that define public and economic life in Bangladesh (Kabeer, 2000). Such structural and institutional complexity also poses a serious impediment to sustaining economic and social development (Heritage Foundation, 2010).

Bangladesh's institutional arrangements make it a telling analytic case in which to explore the experimental and "extreme" nature of rural market-building processes (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Pettigrew, 1990; Yin, 1994). Our high-relief observations also support a welcome agenda of formulating generalizable insights in this scholarly area. Finally, our case selection responds well to recent calls for "unconventional" organiza-

tional research conducted to develop new knowledge about organizational phenomena (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010: 665): our emphasis on an organization-rich view of market-building processes directly links organizational theory and studies of market building representing other perspectives.

The Organizational Case of BRAC

Development researchers typically distinguish among a set of different development strategies and orientations among agencies (Korten, 1987). Korten identified three distinctive orientations: (a) relief and welfare, (b) local self-reliance, and (c) sustainable systems development. He further observed that there exists an "underlying direction of movement that makes it appropriate to label these orientations as first, second, and third generation" (Korten, 1987: 147). Although these generations of orientations simultaneously coexist within the larger community of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), it is only in rare cases that they coexist in a single NGO (Korten, 1987). BRAC is one of those rare cases.

Fazle Hasan Abed founded BRAC in 1972 as a small-scale relief and rehabilitation project in Bangladesh after the War of Liberation in 1971 (Chen, 1983; Smillie, 2009). Over the years, BRAC has shifted in mission and focus from being a relief operation focused on strategic development and poverty alleviation to being a social mobilization organization rooted in a Marxist tradition, to, most recently, a poverty alleviation agent characterized by system building for and around markets for the least advantaged. Currently, BRAC reaches about 80 percent of the total number of villages in the country via its core organizing vehicle, the village organization (VO)—a decentralized model of local activity and intervention.

BRAC has experimented with an array of different activities and programs ranging from microfinance, health services, nonformal education, and human rights and legal aid support. In the 1990s, BRAC began to incorporate market mechanisms as a means of poverty alleviation into its primary approach (Lovell, 1992). In parallel, BRAC shifted from targeting village-level communities, as was customary in its 1970s and 1980s programs, to a near-exclusive focus today on women's economic empowerment and participation.

Over time, BRAC leadership has come to recognize that access to financial services is an important, but insufficient, means of involving poor and marginalized people in market-based activities (Mair & Martí, 2009). This recognition led to the decision to set up social enterprises that facilitate entrepreneurial efforts and sustainable livelihoods

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[2] The original and primary work of BRAC is in Bangladesh. Since 2002 BRAC has also expanded operations into other countries in Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda), and Latin America (Haiti) with experiments to diffuse its core models.

in the late 1990s. These enterprises, which include livestock and fisheries (e.g., dairy, poultry), health (e.g., iodized salt), and agriculture (e.g., cold storage, sericulture), provide access to assets, support product marketing, and foster entrepreneurial and market activities that create local jobs.

BRAC and its contemporary portfolio of market-based programs provide a useful analytic opportunity to examine market building in a complex institutional context in which market access and participation are impeded for many. Thus, we focus on BRAC's initiatives to build inclusive markets and leverage market-based activities as they simultaneously address the complex institutional context.

Data

The data we present come from multiple rounds of data collection and a variety of sources: participant observation, retrieval of archival documents, and in-depth interviews by two of the authors intermittently over six years, 2005–11. Between March 2005 and January 2006, two of the authors conducted 58 semistructured interviews, primarily at BRAC offices and in local villages in Bangladesh. The interviews increased in focus and depth over the period because of the iterative and cumulative nature of the fieldwork process.

We identified informants by sampling from various programs across multiple hierarchical levels in BRAC; we sampled within other organizations as well. The bulk of our interviews were conducted in English; interviews with Bangla-speaking informants (primarily participants in rural areas) were conducted with the assistance of a local interpreter. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and three hours, followed a standard protocol for capturing emerging themes in field research (Spradley, 1979; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

At the end of the first round of interviews, we decided to focus our data collection on a few BRAC programs in greater depth. We applied theoretical sampling (Denzin, 1989), a recommended approach for analytical induction (Bansal & Roth, 2000), to identify these programs. We sought to capture a broad set of activities and practices as well as different periods in BRAC's strategic development within the sample. We used the cases to organize and stimulate data analysis, rather than as a means to expose variance.

In consultation with BRAC leadership, we selected four programs: Education; Social Development; Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE); and Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFRP/TUP). Table 1

displays a detailed list of the different data sources utilized to investigate each of the four target programs. Each has a distinctive focus, target population, and inception date. They are also all ongoing into the current period. Additionally, each program took shape at a different point in the evolution of BRAC's strategies for poverty alleviation. Because of this, we treat each program as exemplary of a key challenge regarding market building (Rodrik, 2007). With these selected areas of investigation in place, we conducted 17 additional interviews between 2008 and 2010 with internal and external informants. We used our direct and repeated interview access to the BRAC founder and chairman, Fazle Abed, to identify program directors for interviews. Using these leads as a basis for snowball sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), we identified a second set of informants. Using a purposeful sampling strategy (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson, 1993), we sought to uncover key insights or information about the origins, development, or activities of the four programs. Throughout the interview phase, we used a repeated comparison strategy to compare data across both programs and informants and identify substantive points of synergy or juxtaposition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As we completed the second set of interviews, we started to refine emerging themes and asked respondents to comment directly on specific aspects of these nascent findings. We used our conversations with the chairman and the four program directors to check our analysis. This use of external informants mitigated the potential biases of any individual respondent (Miller, Cardinal, & Glick, 1997) and enabled us to induce richer insights from our aggregate data (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). Appendix A summarizes the final roster of persons interviewed from BRAC ($n = 56$) and from other agencies and sectors ($n = 19$).

Interviews were supplemented with several periods of participant observation. Two of the authors observed a total of 17 meetings, which included both on-the-ground meetings within the different BRAC programs (e.g., popular theater performance, legal education classes) and also meetings at other organizations (e.g., microcredit meetings, garment factories). Meeting observation time totaled approximately 40 hours over the course of the fieldwork. During observations, we took field notes on site and wrote up detailed accounts after each visit. Field observation notes were not coded in detail but were used to illuminate the complex nature of the situation in which BRAC works, particularly key cultural and situational specificities that emerged from direct contact with the women in

TABLE 1
Overview of Focal Programs

Characteristics	Education	Social Development (SD)	Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE)	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/ Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR/TUP)
Main objectives	It aims to improve the quality and delivery of services in education appropriate to the needs of poor children, particularly girls, and to increase their access to these services. The purpose is to help fill the remaining gaps in coverage, retention, and quality of compulsory primary education in Bangladesh.	It aims to enhance the human and social capital of the poor and marginalized, especially women, so that they are aware of their rights and are empowered to claim their entitlements and resist exploitation. Also it attempts to help local government to become more transparent and responsive to the needs of the poorest.	It aims to protect and promote human rights through legal empowerment and to ensure access to justice through both formal and informal systems, especially for the poor and marginalized.	It aims to assist the ultra poor population graduate up from poverty levels and assist the ultra poor get access to the mainstream development programs.
Year of inception	1985	1986	1998	2002
Focus on:				
Property rights	Not directly	Not directly but increasingly important	Yes	Yes
Autonomy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Archival data	1,700 pages	1,800 pages	1,300 pages	1,600 pages
	1,900 pages	1,600 pages	1,200 pages	700 pages
Internal sources	3	4	3	2
External sources				
Number of audio/video				
Number of interviews	10	9	6	7

BRAC programs. Appendix A summarizes the participant observation details in full.

In addition to interviews and observation, we also collected a wide variety of documents for analysis, including secondary historical, legal, and political studies. We negotiated access to the extensive documentation generated by BRAC's research department as well as newsletters and local news articles. For each of the four focal programs in BRAC, we obtained procedural and organizational information, including descriptions of work tasks, project plans, training materials, and internal appraisal documents. These materials provided us with a specific understanding of the institutional context in which BRAC's market building initiatives are situated. We also reviewed provisions of the Bangladesh legal framework and a set of specialized legal texts (Pereira, 2002). This review proved especially important because it permitted us to illuminate the gap between the "in text" and "in reality" embodiments of the two focal market institutions. Finally, we discussed legal aspects of market participation with lawyers, BRAC staff members (some legally trained), and other NGO field staff.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two main stages, a process that allowed us to go back and forth between the data and the emerging theoretical arguments (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Before either stage, we developed a narrative account of our findings by chronologically ordering the raw data. The narrative account included quotes from interviews, documents, annual and committee reports, and field notes. To corroborate our understanding of historical events as reflected in the emerging narrative, we checked the accounts with a set of informants that included the BRAC founder and chairman, several BRAC managers, and independent historians, legal experts, and Islamic scholars. The production of an historical narrative permitted us to better trace the history of BRAC's shift from a relief/assistance organization to a market-focused development organization.

This historical overview revealed a way to organize the data around the different BRAC programs. We used the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 9.0 to accomplish this analysis. Our primary data set in-

cluded data from four portfolio programs. We used data collected on additional BRAC programs to complement and to corroborate these data. Our coding scheme built out a map and comparison of BRAC program features, paying particular attention to the variety of practices that the organization engaged in to intervene in market building. Our scheme also included a categorization of some institutional challenges evident from theory and data (e.g., patriarchal system and kinship, political structures, social norms, religious beliefs) that BRAC addresses in its efforts to promote women's market access.

Stage 1: Assessing the nature of the institutional voids. In our first stage of formal analysis, we identified instances of on-the-ground market building. We grouped these instances into relevant thematic categories (performing open coding). In this work, we built on the Weberian conception of society as a multi-institutional space, and specifically on the classic statement by Friedland and Alford (1991) that redescribes society not as an integrated whole, but rather as system of interlinked institutional arenas. Per this view, society comprises several distinct spheres of activity, each one built around a central institutional logic that specifies distinct meaning systems and orderings of reality, along with social practices that support each of these "social worlds." Everyday activities often take form at the intersection of these spheres, through contradictions or reinforcement between logics and practices (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Our analysis in stage 1 suggested that three central institutional spheres in rural Bangladesh have direct relevance for market building: community, politics, and religion. This is consistent with findings from related studies that focus on the institutional constitution of society, specifically its economic activities (Campbell, 2004; Greif, 2006; Hamilton & Biggart, 1988; Heimer, 1999; Thelen, 2004). Moving forward, again using Nvivo, our analysis identified relevant bits and pieces of institutions (Schneiberg, 2007) and assigned each of these instances to one of the three identified institutional spheres. For instance, we allocated evidence related to "early marriage," "patriarchal system," or "kinship norms of behavior" to the community sphere category.

Once these institutional assignments were complete, we reviewed the data again to refine the initial categorical assignments. Two BRAC members and two independent informants (a legal specialist and the director of an indigenous NGO in the field of education) were also asked to verify the categorization. These outside reviewers agreed on all the assignments except one, the practice of *purdah*. One BRAC member suggested that this prac-

tice should be assigned to the community sphere because it fit there more precisely than in the religious sphere. Given the high degree of agreement among the multiple reviewers, as well as corroboration provided by the literature, we sustained our initial decision to assign purdah practices to the religious sphere.

Using our first research question as a lens (Eisenhardt, 1989), we focused our analysis next on identifying the interfaces between the three spheres and two focal market institutions. The community, political, and religious institutional spheres are analytically distinct and segregated, but in actual practice, their boundaries blur and interface. Our analytic challenge, then, was to acknowledge the distinct practices and systems of meaning that characterize each sphere while closely examining how their interfaces create possibilities for action. We intuited that conflicting and potentially contradictory accounts, demands, and solutions that occur at these interfaces imprint the institutional voids that configure possible markets.

To develop our empirical analysis regarding this supposition, we elected to focus on two specific and well-accepted institutions central to standard accounts of markets and institutions: *property rights* and *autonomy*. In specific, we wanted to discover how each the three societal spheres we identified impacted these two market institutions. Market economies are understood to rely on the creation and enforcement of property rights (De Soto, 2000; La Porta et al., 1998). Property rights exemplify a governing and stabilizing market institution (Greif, 2006; Rodrik, 2007) because they determine "the social relationships between owners and everyone else in society" (Fligstein, 2001: 33). Regarding autonomy, modern market dealings are understood to be made by—and only by—autonomous actors (McMillan, 2002). As such, autonomy is an example of what development economists and experts have called an enabling institution (Sen, 1999): it influences whether individuals are able to offer their goods and services or benefit from the offering. Moreover, both property rights and autonomy are legal and institutional outcomes of authority and power relations (Campbell & Lindberg, 1990; Carruthers & Ariovich, 2004; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2009).

These two market institutions provided focal points for exploration of the institutional interfaces and market-building challenges identified in the BRAC data. In our interviews, informants repeatedly singled out autonomy as the primary focus of NGO activity in Bangladesh. Many interviewees also mentioned that property rights have gradually gained preeminence as a focus for intervention be-

cause of the importance of property for women's self-definition (Nussbaum, 2000). To understand how the three societal spheres in Bangladesh affect property and autonomy, we developed a set of narratives, or detailed memos, to describe each of the interface possibilities. In total, 17 narratives (approximately 5–30 single-spaced pages each) were created; each narrative contained direct quotes as well as clarifying comments produced by the research team (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). By way of example, one of the narratives detailed the interface between autonomy and early marriage (associated with the community sphere). We cross-checked each narrative with three informants (one internal to BRAC and two external) to validate their fidelity with lived experiences.

Stage 2: Surfacing activities in and around the voids. Our second formal stage of data analysis focused on investigating BRAC's activities in relation to the identified institutional interfaces. We focused specifically on four BRAC programs, as described above. Although it would have been possible to focus on a greater number of programs, it became evident during the initial phase of analysis that few additional ideas and issues were emerging when we looked beyond the four portfolio programs (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We opted for an intensive analysis of these programs.

Our second stage of analysis comprised three steps (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of this analytic process. The first step involved the creation of provisional categories and first-order codes (Van Maanen, 1979). We used Nvivo to keep track of the emerging categories and to view similarly coded texts simultaneously, which helped to manage the large amount of data. Following the procedures suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), our first categorical codes provided descriptive labels for the different sorts of activities that we observed at the different interfaces. The codes were largely built upon the vocabulary of the interviewees, which included, for instance, "giving voice," "raising questions," and "building ties with the elites." Once codes were named and categories developed, we returned to the data to review categorical fidelity with the data. As Pratt et al. (2006) suggested, we either corrected a category or reconceptualized it when the revisited data did not fit it well. For instance, after several iterations and discussions we agreed that our initial category "embracing religious arguments" inaccurately highlighted the use of religion by BRAC, so we changed it to "demystifying [available religious arguments]."

The second step involved axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), wherein we compared first-order codes with one another to clarify themes and to create second-order constructs. This was an inductive, recursive process through which we identified a set of more abstract, theory-rich constructs. To illustrate, when comparing the codes referring to BRAC's facilitation of conscientization (Freire, 1970) with codes referring to building knowledge of repertoires for poor women, we noticed that BRAC's work often helped actors develop their capacity to make sense of their situational context. To capture this idea we created a second-order construct called "developing sensemaking capacity."

FIGURE 1
Analytical Coding Process to Induce Theoretical Dimensions

First-Order codes	Second-Order Constructs	Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions
● Creating spaces for equals ● Creating spaces for unequals	Creating spaces for interaction	Redefining market architecture
● Tying up with government systems ● Teaming up with social service providers	Expanding resource system	
● Building on local means of issue resolution ● Making use of customary sources of support	(Re)defining local arrangements	
● Facilitating conscientization ● Knowledge of repertoires	Developing sensemaking capacity	Legitimating market actors
● Demystifying ● Adopting artistic traditional performances	(Re)combining norms and traditions	

The axial coding was done by individual researchers as well as jointly by the research team. The team met numerous times to create constructs and assess the categorical fidelity of the emerging codes. These iterative discussions helped to refine the code base and to delimit the emerging theory (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010; Pratt et al., 2006). Appendix B provides coding statistics for the key codes from each of the four portfolio programs.

Finally, in the third step we identified important dimensions from the sets of second-order constructs. For example, some categories looked structural (e.g., "creating spaces") whereas others appeared cognitive and cultural (e.g., "recombining norms and traditions"). Next, we generated alternative theoretical frameworks to make sense of how these constructs related to one another and to the literature on market building. Then we worked through the relevant insights each provided. We consolidated these available factors into two broad theoretical dimensions: "redefining market architecture" and "legitimating new actors and activities." The theoretical dimensions resonated with the data and provide further analytic guidance to understand BRAC activities to build inclusive markets. Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of this process, showing our first-order codes, second-order constructs, and derived theoretical dimensions.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Our analysis explores the resonance between the views and experiences of people on the ground in Bangladesh, the abstractions characteristic of the institutional voids literature, and the conceptual and practical work involved in market building. We present our analysis of market building in this section to illustrate the issues and to develop a provisional model of inclusive market building. Our initial findings reinforce the importance of *institutional interfaces*, as exemplified when three institutional spheres (community, politics, religion) shaping life in rural Bangladesh meet formal market institutions of property and autonomy.

Our analysis of property rights and autonomy relative to the institutional interfaces in rural Bangladesh points to a fresh understanding of institutional voids as the intermediate outcomes of conflicting institutional demands, norms, and reinforcing mechanisms. Voids occur at an interface because it is here that different bits and pieces of institutions (Schneiberg, 2005) collide and reconfigure spaces for social (and economic) action. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the three-way interfaces identified by our analysis and provide illustrative, direct quotations from our fieldwork. Our investi-

gation of BRAC's initiatives also surfaced two key sets of market-building activities in and around institutional voids: (1) redefining market architecture and (2) legitimating new market actors. Tables 4 and 5 present data that describe these two activities in detail.

Institutional Interfaces: Conflict among Institutions as a Source of Voids

Property rights. In recent scholarship, property rights have emerged as a critical pillar of market economies (De Soto, 2000; North, 1990). The legal corpus by which Bangladesh is governed includes extensive legislation regarding property rights. According to the constitution, citizens are equal with respect to their entitlement to ownership and protection of property. Yet numerous studies have characterized Bangladesh as a country that has poor standards of property rights (Fernandez & Kraay, 2007; Islam & Asaduzzaman, 2008) and a judiciary system that ineffectively enforces these rights (Heritage Foundation, 2010; World Bank, 2010). Although property rights are established by law, our analysis shows that they constitute very weak pillars for markets to act as a means for poverty alleviation or a vehicle of economic and social progress. The specifics of this situation are important in illustrating the effect of institutional interfaces.

Community sphere. Poor women's market- and nonmarket-based activities in Bangladesh follow the rules of interaction established by the community. In specific, our data illustrate that institutions that relate to patriarchal and patrilineal systems, community norms, and kinship norms are in conflict with and sometimes contradict constitutional property rights. This finding offers a potential explanation for why formal property rights often go unclaimed and unenforced by many sectors of the population and therefore govern market activities and transactions weakly (see Table 2 for examples).

Social organization in Bangladesh is consistent with typical patriarchal and patrilineal rules and norms (Kabeer, 2000). The patterns of behavior and cognition associated with this social system structure women's positions in society, impacting both public and household economies. One informant assessed the situation of property rights as one in which women have little control over resources they own:

Property rights are very unfavorable to women . . . even if they have something in their name, legally, it is controlled by either husband or sons or whoever, family member . . . and because of their illiteracy, backwardness, they cannot claim ownership. (interview, man, social activist)

TABLE 2
Institutional Interfaces: Property Rights in Rural Bangladesh[a]

Community and Societal Sphere	Political Sphere	Religious Sphere
Patriarchal and patrilineal system 2.1 "The husband believes that his woman should not own anything because that would make her powerful." (interview, man, microcredit officer)	*Patronage* 2.7 "In having justice, what really matters is whether or not you have the support of a patron . . . and if you have money to offer to officials . . . or your patron is willing to give you that money." (interview, man, microcredit officer)	*Purdah* 2.13 "It is mostly because of social and religious norms that women do not go to *shalish*. They believe that women lose *purdah* if they participate in *shalish*." (interview, man, local journalist)
Community norms of behavior 2.2 "We are trying with this new Alternative Dispute Resolution to address some of these problems. However, often women have to face and are afraid of social sanctions for seeking justice outside the community and bypassing the elites." (interview, man, SD manager)	*Local powers corruption* 2.8 "We could not convince *dewani* (*shalisker*) unless we offered them at least two hundred taka before the session in village shalish." (man, HRLE internal document)	*Local interpretations of Koran* 2.14 "Our observation identified lack of respect the existing laws of women rights, specially from *imam*. It has also been observed that whenever *imam* dissented on these issues, others got an inherent tendency to keep quiet." (HRLE internal report)
Kinship norms of behavior 2.3 "Kinship norms argue against the sale of land generally. Given an option, a landholder would prefer not to sell land, especially that belonging to his father or kin." (*BRAC rural studies series 1*: 161)	*Access to formal justice* 2.9 "Often we also found that some of the elite members believed that it would be bad to involve women in formal courts because it would reduce the social status of the victims and of their family." (interview, man, SD officer)	*Islamic pre-emption* (shuf'a) *laws* 2.15 "According to the Muslim *Shariah* there exists what is called the right of pre-emption. Among other things, it is interpreted as forbidding to sell inherited land outside the family or the kinship group provided a member of the family or some kin can offer the market price." (interview, man, Islamic law scholar)
	Access to informal justice 2.10 "Women are not welcome in *shalish* because they are said to create chaos." (interview, man, research department)	

[a] The text and Table 1 give the spelled-out forms of abbreviations used here and in subsequent tables.

The patriarchal system in rural Bangladesh reinforces norms that confer control of women's property, income, and labor to men. Because of the risk of social sanction, women often avoid rightful claims of ownership or inheritance and do not make use of existing [formal, legal] means to convey and protect property rights. A male BRAC Social Development Program manager explained:

> Wives know they must listen to and obey their husbands, and this includes the in-laws. If the woman would ask for shalish[3] or other means of dispute resolution, immediately community people pass bad comments towards the woman and also the whole family, and that damages the social status within the community.

Kinship norms also constrain women's opportunities to sell and rent assets or property because they foreclose the possibility of transacting with members outside kinship groups.

Political sphere. Village life in Bangladesh is shaped in important ways by the decisions of local village councils. Our examination of the interaction between property rights and the local patterns of influence (i.e., patronage, corruption, and justice processes) suggest that rural Bangladesh is characterized by strong power asymmetries between different segments of the village. For example, having a patron is a key factor in favorably resolving asset and property conflicts. An informant illustrates this point:

> Many poor women were exposed to a high risk that the assets they received would be stolen or damaged. Because of their lack of connections with more powerful actors . . . these women cannot get the support of elites as patrons in either formal or informal—shalish—courts to enforce their own rights over their assets. (interview, woman, CFPR/TUP director)

Corruption and bribery also affect the legal and practical implementation of property rights (Transparency International of Bangladesh, 2009). Several of the people we interviewed in rural villages explained that the police were quick to accept "informal payments." Women, however, are excluded

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[3] *Shalish* is a community-based, largely informal process through which small panels of influential local figures help resolve community members' disputes and/or impose sanctions on them.

from participating in these practices. As one Social Development program officer, put it, "Husbands can bribe the police or lawyers to prevent going to court," but not women.

Finally, we found that the legal protection of women's property rights was further impeded by taken-for-granted beliefs and practices regarding participation in courts of informal law. As a Social Development Program coordinator explained, "We have been long trying to engage our members in traditional [informal] forms of dealing with conflicts [shalish] . . . but it is very difficult since they are dominated by the male elite, which makes women's participation rather limited" (see also quotation 2.9, in Table 2).

Religious sphere. Practices and beliefs associated with religion also impact the scope and content of Bangladeshi women's social and economic activities (Kabeer, 2000). Very often these practices and beliefs are at odds with modern conceptions of property rights. Purdah is an exemplary instance of this tension. Purdah, which literally means "curtain," refers to the obligation that Muslim women have to stay close to their family relations, limit contact with unrelated men, and avoid being visible in public venues such as the village market or a court (Chen, 1983). In this way, purdah directly limits women's ability to claim or protect their property rights.

Local interpretations by rural clergy—i.e., *mullahs*—often promote a version of Islam that reinforces norms about virtuous women as docile and submissive. These norms create a set of social expectations that reinforce women's seclusion and foster the invisibility of women in the public sphere. These religious interpretations also constrain women's use and enforcement of property rights and conflict directly with women's constitutional rights.

When women seek to control assets and resources or participate in formal or informal courts, these claims are often interpreted as challenges to religious norms and laws. A male Social Development Program manager explained:

> In disputes where some people or groups intend to appropriate some resources that have been stolen from a family or a group, there are always excuses found and in many cases fabricated, in stating that a woman from that family or group has broken the norms of Islam.

Our data reveal that the interaction between property rights and local institutional spheres is both complex and multifaceted. One of the reasons for this is that the boundaries that separate these societal spheres are highly permeable (Heimer, 1999). For example, traditional kinship norms in Bangladesh, a set of behaviors that we attributed to the community

sphere, are also reinforced by Islamic pre-emption laws (*shuf'a*), which pertain to the religious sphere. This interaction of elements across multiple institutional spheres is particularly important to explaining the weak enforcement of property rights in Bangladesh. By way of illustration, Islamic law contains a provision for the pronouncement of *fatwa* (religious opinion), which many clerics and village patriarchs grossly misuse. Although the High Court made the practice of fatwa illegal in Bangladesh in 2001, religious leaders at the local level continue to exercise it widely (Pereira, 2002). An imam quoted an internal report from the Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE) program in an interview that described the challenges of using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms when religious-legal practices are so common:

> We cannot give the legitimacy of practicing such legal rights, which is controversial with Islamic laws. If we find such activities, we will protest first, and we will go against whoever goes for so.

Autonomy. As mentioned, scholars from different research traditions have emphasized the central role that autonomy plays in market building and the distributional effects of markets (McMillan, 2002; North, 1990; Sen, 2009). Bangladesh's constitution places women on an equal footing with men in all dimensions of public life. For example, Article 28(1) states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth (Pereira, 2002). However, our data reveal that local community, political, and religious spheres act to limit women's autonomy and erode the ability of poor women to participate in markets.

Community sphere. Women in rural Bangladesh are socialized to be dependent. Our examination of the interaction between autonomy and the community sphere illustrates that patriarchal and patrilineal norms, as well as customs such as early marriage, stand at odds with constitutional provisions and modern conceptions of women's autonomy (see Table 3 for illustrations). The patriarchal and patrilineal system is omnipresent in Bangladesh. Women are "spoken for" first by their fathers, later by their husbands, and finally by their sons, brothers, or other male relatives. Women are also considered subordinate in most situations. When there is not enough food to feed an entire family, for example, girls are given less than their brothers. The husband of a microcredit borrower articulated, "Girls must be beaten to maintain strict control." A female manager in BRAC's Education Program explained further:

> Once she is married, a girl has to sacrifice her life. She has to give service to her husband and family

TABLE 3
Institutional Interfaces: Autonomy in Rural Bangladesh

Community and Societal Sphere	Political Sphere	Religious Sphere
Patriarchal and patrilineal system 2.4 "You know, what we are taught is that a father always wants what is best for his son and his daughter. This means he can oblige his daughter to get married without her consent." (interview, woman, local journalist) *Early marriage* 2.5 "Parents give much more attention to their sons' schooling and education than to their daughters' education. Parents feel that the best they can do for their daughters is to find a good groom for them. Hence, they start searching for brides for their daughters, not for a good school." (interview, woman, education program manager) *Community norms of behavior* 2.6 "The social stigma attached to divorce is so pernicious for women as opposed to men, that a woman in many cases would remain with her husband, even though this would mean an intolerable and sometimes life-threatening existence. Frequently a woman has no choice but to remain in an unpleasant marriage because in the alternative she would be destitute, without any financial or social means of survival." (interview, woman, HRLE program, director)	*Patronage* 2.11 "For instance, to get a position as a teacher in a public school, while "education" merits are important, what really matters is having the support of a patron." (interview, man, SD coordinator) *Civil laws* 2.12 "Sections 64 and 65 of the Criminal Procedure Code deal with the service of summons of person who cannot be found. . . . Here we see a law that intentionally bypasses women, indicating *all* women lack agency, all being variations of some form of *pardianishin*. In most other laws the assumption is the thread into the procedure, sometimes managing to obscure the normative assumption." (Pereira, 2002: 8–9)	*Purdah* 2.16 "Women are under constant surveillance. It is necessary to ensure that they do nothing that brings *sharam* (shame) to their kin." (interview, woman, local journalist) *Local interpretations of Koran* 2.17 "Well, there exist some progressive laws in recent years. However, they are often ineffective because of extraneous factors. One of the main such factors in the case of Bangladesh is that of religious political pressure. Particular religious attitudes are so entrenched in Bangladeshi society that they strike at the foundation of progressive laws and deprive them of much of their effectiveness." (interview, woman, HRLE director)

members. She is supposed to follow her husband whatever he orders to do.

Customs related to family and marriage force women to defer to men, both consciously and unconsciously, in ways that constrain their autonomy. In the case of marriage, fathers make all of the decisions. In the case of early marriage,[4] which is illegal, giving a dowry[5] is perceived as a moral obligation. Since the amount of dowry goes up with the age of the bride, early marriages are typically favored. Early marriage further reduces women's autonomy by limiting their access to education. Community norms also stigmatize divorce, which heavily restricts a woman's autonomous capacity to terminate her marriage. Elements from the religious sphere reinforce marriage norms. In particular, Islamic law accords impose severe conditions on women seeking divorce by requiring them to undergo a process that is "time-consuming, expensive and in most of cases socially humiliating for the woman and her family" (Pereira, 2002: 25).

Political sphere. The public and private life of poor women in rural Bangladesh is also sharply influenced by rules and norms associated with patronage and civil laws. In the countryside, the poor secure protection from patrons by providing them services such as proxy voting in elections. In exchange, the poor receive remunerated positions or

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[4] The legal marriage age in Bangladesh is 21 for boys and 18 for girls.

[5] Dowry refers to the money, goods, or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage. In the last few decades, the practice of dowry has become widespread, though supported neither by state law nor personal law. It is a very common source of violence against women.

opportunities, such as "a position as a teacher in a public school" (quotation 2.11), access or voice in *shalish* processes, social security, or links to public resources such as food cards or food-for-work programs (see Matin, 2002). Well-entrenched patron-client relationships and their resulting asymmetric exchanges conflict with the quest for women's autonomy in the country. As the director of the CFPR/TUP program explained,

> It comes at the cost of dependency obligations which may endure over generations and become demeaning or arduous.

Our data also suggest that different elements of Bangladesh's legal framework, as constituted by constitutional law and general law, contradict Western conceptualizations of autonomy both in content and spirit. As we pointed out above, the constitution, especially part III ("Fundamental Rights"), embodies multiple provisions that grant rights and reinforce women's autonomy. However, our examination of institutional interfaces suggests that constitutional law may be only one of several forces in play. Several legal scholars have revealed that different pieces of legislation within the general law do contribute to hinder women's autonomy. For example,

> There are several examples of what I term ultra-protective laws, impinging on fundamental rights of women with impunity, calculatedly taking on only a selective notion of women's capacity. All of these laws gravely restrict women's right to movement or choice of employment. For instance, these laws prohibit employment of women and children between the hours of 8 pm and 6 a.m. or other than between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. (Pereira, 2002: 9)

Religious sphere. Finally, the autonomy of poor women is severely restricted by many local religious beliefs and practices. In particular, norms associated with *purdah* reinforce the existing gendered division of labor that is prevalent throughout society. Because women are strictly confined to the private sphere, they are prevented from becoming involved in market transactions and income generation. Even marketing products in public is prohibited for women. As one of our informants, a microcredit borrower, explained:

> I cannot go to the market. My husband and my son can go . . . I am a woman.

Women's economic contributions are traditionally restricted to activities that can be performed on family property, such as rearing poultry or postharvest activities. Selectively, women do disobey the restrictions of *purdah*, yet our analysis suggests that restrictive institutional rules often prevail. One

woman we met in a primary health care office confessed, "I used to work in the fields at night or when it was difficult to be seen." However, another young woman told us that her parents pressured her to stop working the fields because they were afraid that she "might fall in love with someone."

According to a female BRAC volunteer health worker, rural clergy also reinforce norms associated with the practice of *purdah*, solidifying the commonly held belief that "Allah made women weaker." Although this interpretation can be understood as the enforcement of a religious tenet, it is also appears as a clear cultural exemplar of men trying to consolidate their power and reinforce patriarchal structures.

Up to this point in our analysis we have looked at how the two focal institutions of property rights and autonomy are often contradict and conflict with existing beliefs and practices associated with the community, political, and religious spheres in Bangladesh. As a result of our investigation, we suggest that contexts such as Bangladesh can be seen as an area where multiple institutions exist simultaneously to shape market dynamics rather than as a locale devoid of institutions. One informant, a male social activist, articulated this thesis as follows:

> Of course we have laws on property rights; of course women are, in theory, equal before the law in our constitution. The issue is not that we have few institutions, but that we have way too many! And often, well almost always, the ones that matter in our communities go against women having a more active role in society, in markets, at home, etc.

The lack of primacy regarding market institutions is due to the plurality of institutions that support local action. As evident from our informants, local practices and beliefs interact with Western conceptions of market logics; coding this interaction as simply "weakness" or "absence" of modern market institutions misspecifies the situation and underrecognizes the significance of the institutional plurality.

The results of our analysis provide evidence for a theory that institutional voids are situated, intermediate outcomes of contestation at institutional interfaces. Rather than empty spaces, institutional voids are, we suggest, dynamic spaces reconfigured by conflicting and contradictory institution flux. We emphasize the situated and intermediate features of voids as a way of better understanding why and how market exclusion occurs. This insight also serves as a starting point for both practical and policy-related efforts to build inclusive markets.

Next, we report findings from our analysis of the on-the-ground activities by BRAC as its members

have endeavored to build inclusive markets in recent years in a context of institutional plurality and complexity.

Building Inclusive Markets

Building on data from our four identified BRAC programs, we found two broad repertoires of interventions that address the indeterminacy of the key market institutions, private property and autonomy: (1) activities that redefine market architecture and (2) activities that legitimate new actors. "Redefining market architecture" refers to the renegotiation of existing institutional arrangements to define who can access and participate in markets and under which conditions. "Legitimating activities" include building awareness and identity as well constructing social narratives that support and authorize women's roles in and access to markets.

Redefining market architecture. Within the larger category of activities that redefine market architecture, our analysis exposed three sets of activities (second-order constructs) that BRAC engages in that provide structural interventions within a complex institutional context. Table 4 maps the relevant first-order codes to direct quotations from BRAC workers, beneficiaries, experts, and policy observers that illuminate these activities. Appendix B displays descriptive statistics for the complete set of codes related to the BRAC programs in our analysis.

Create (social) spaces for interaction. The first set of activities within the frame of market architecture redefinition correspond to the construct "creating spaces for interaction." These activities consist of building platforms for interaction and dialogue. This second-order construct aggregates two first-order codes: creating "spaces of equals" and creating "spaces of unequals."

From its beginning, BRAC's social mobilization approach has been an attempt to build equal rather than hierarchical communities. The objective has been to create "free places" (Goffman, 1961) in which women feel they belong—places that contribute to the development of women's sense of self and break women's dominant relations of dependence. For instance, in referring to BRAC's village organizations (VOs), a VO member told us that "[we] had learned how to get together and help each other." VOs, which consist of 35 to 50 women from a single village, are seen by BRAC as "the key" and "the base" of their activities (quotation 3.2) because of their ability to redefine women's traditionally passive roles. Building these VO spaces requires a small, but continuous, set of interactions. According to Social Development Program organizer:

Then you have a small group in another community then you ultimately expand the small group into the village level and then you meet the VO each and every day, well formally once a week in a meeting setup. But informally, everyday day and night, morning and evening you´re visiting and you are having contact with them. That is how you're becoming very close to them and part of them. That is how it begins.

These spaces for equals isolate and "de-integrate" (Touraine, 1995) women from their traditional positions and encourage them to take social action.

BRAC also builds spaces for "unequals" to reintegrate women into arenas where traditional relations, roles, and practices can be understood as elements of a negotiated and negotiable order (Strauss, 1978). The Village Poverty Reduction Committees (*Gram Daridro Bimochon* Committees, or GDBCs) are examples of these spaces for unequals. These include members of the local elite along with members of BRAC, VO women, and the ultra poor. These spaces are contingent, tentative, and carefully managed by BRAC because they often create conflicts at political, cognitive, and emotional levels by their very nature. BRAC facilitates consensual solutions by helping elites to reinterpret their support for women rather than withdraw it. The CFPR/TUP program director explained further:

The language we use in motivating them [the elites], is the most important aspect . . . we tell them, listen, we are a stranger here in your village, but you are the people who have been supporting them for hundreds and hundreds of years. Otherwise it would be very, very difficult to mobilize them and have them sitting with the ultra poor women.

Outreach to existing systems of services providers. The second category of activities that emerged from our analysis highlights the way that BRAC reaches out to existing service provision systems. This second-order construct aggregates the first-order codes "tying up with government systems" and "teaming up with social service providers." As our prior analysis shows, women are often impeded from accessing many of the structures, services, and organizations that exist to support them (i.e., judiciary, education, health services). To address and modify such restricted access, BRAC has worked to "build partnerships and referral linkages with the Government" (quotation 3.12). One example of this activity is the primary education school BRAC developed when it recognized that interrupted education was a major issue impacting the develop-

TABLE 4
Data Supporting the Theme of Redefining Market Architecture

Program	Creating Spaces for Interaction		Expanding Resource Systems		(Re)defining Local Arrangements	
	For Equals	For Unequals	Tying Up with Government Systems	Teaming Up with Social Service Providers	Building on Local Means of Issue Resolution	Making Use of Customary Sources of Social Support
Education	3.1 "In the school level, gender is addressed in the curricula through pictures and so on, and in the classroom girls are developed as group leaders. In every classroom there are five groups and the group leaders are girls, and the boys can very well see that girls can be leaders." (interview, woman, Education Program manager)	3.5 "The trainees from the program have the responsibility of helping the program organizers (POs) to arrange the *uthan boithak* (courtyard meeting) by informing all villagers, no matter if they are BRAC VOs members or not. They would also suggest a suitable meeting place, normally in someone's house in the village. POs have to make sure that BRAC members and nonmembers are invited and participate in the meetings to talk about gender issues." (interview, woman, Education program manager)	3.9 "We also work to improve also the quality of the government primary schools. . . . We train teachers. In government schools the curricula is completely developed by the government, but we train teachers who do not have training on how to teach children, poor children, in particular girls. . . . And we also mobilize the community, so that they can come out for maintenance of the school building, for setting tub wells, for setting toilets, etc." (interview, woman, Education program manager)	3.13 "Through our Education Support Program we work with NGOs located in areas in which BRAC does now work, providing education for indigenous or linguistic minority children, or like in a recent initiative with sight-impaired children. We provide support in the form of technical services, goods and financial support." (interview, man, Education Program director)	3.17 "*Shalish* is an old, traditional institution that is there to serve the needs of the villagers. We know this is not the whole picture. Many times they are not fair and can be degrading, but we also know that it is what the poor people prefer. We know also that they see as closer to them and that they speak in a language they can understand." (interview, woman, Education Program manager)	3.21 "We try to help the village elites understand the short falls of the ad hoc, traditional support that they are providing to the ultra poor members for generations. One of the specific shortcomings has to do with education. We work with elites for them proactively encourage and facilitate the school admission and attendance of very poor children." (interview, man, BRAC chairman)

Continued

TABLE 4
(Continued)

Program	Creating Spaces for Interaction		Expanding Resource Systems		(Re)defining Local Arrangements	
	For Equals	For Unequals	Tying Up with Government Systems	Teaming Up with Social Service Providers	Building on Local Means of Issue Resolution	Making Use of Customary Sources of Social Support
Social Development	3.2 "In every village we start by building a village organization (VO), which is like the key. The fundamental of BRAC development. It is the base. and then when you have the VO then you have all the programs that you see around. They are made up of several small groups of about five women. They meet without the man and this helps to change their gender identity." (interview, man, SD senior program manager)	3.6 "What we basically do is to bring these other structures together, apart for the power structure, that we're trying to develop in the villages: the local leaders, government officials, school teachers, elites, landers, and women representatives. We invite them, to come and to help our organization what should we do, basically to have, to try to convince them to work as a support group for these poor people, as a kind of support group for these poor people." (interview, man, SD program director)	3.10 "The group members help the local government to identify appropriate recipients of government safety net programmes or social protection schemes such as food aid cards, and allowances for the elderly, widows, freedom fighters and disadvantaged people. They also assist in accessing other resources such as stipends for students, installations of tube wells and latrines, and skills development training provided by the government." (interview, man, SD program manager)	3.14 "We observed that many poor people use often traditional health providers. In the case of disease [tuberculosis], quite often, husbands are still very reluctant to look for a proper treatment for their wives. Quite often what they do is to send them to their parents' house. They have to rely on self-help and home remedies and then look for sources that are not professionals, like drug-sellers or traditional healers. You see, training and even sometimes rely on these people, even if they are not real doctors, is important. . . . Hence we had to integrate this somehow because they provide a vital and often effective form of treatment for them." (interview, man, SD program manager)	3.18 "We have been long trying to organize our people through the VOs and *polli shomaj* to engage our members in these traditional forms of dealing with conflicts, *shalish*. It is cheaper, faster and closer to people." (interview, woman, SD program manager)	3.22 "I thought that even if there're conflicting interests there is some, you know, sort of, you could explore the goodness in people and try and exploit them to some extent for somebody who is working in their village or somebody near them, so they may not to have all the poor but, in their own village, they take responsibility for their poor, so it's kind of a *noblesse oblige, oblige [laughter]* kind of thing . . . instructions on this kind of thing but we say that this your responsibility and how can you see somebody living such subhuman condition and you are not doing anything about that?" (interview, man, chairman)

Continued

TABLE 4
(Continued)

Program	Creating Spaces for Interaction		Expanding Resource Systems		(Re)defining Local Arrangements	
	For Equals	For Unequals	Tying Up with Government Systems	Teaming Up with Social Service Providers	Building on Local Means of Issue Resolution	Making Use of Customary Sources of Social Support
HRLE	3.3 "We organize workshops with community leaders to increase gender awareness, encourage participation and develop human rights awareness amongst union level leaders. Most of the cases have to do with marital conflicts, related with dowry, divorce, physical torture or acid throwing, but also with land-related matters." (interview, man, HRLE senior program specialist)	3.7 "We increasingly try to bring men to help empower women and prevent the violence against them. Our experience shows that by having men in different groups with women participating that strengthens women's rights." (interview, woman, HRLE manager)	3.11 "Besides traditional *shalish* we are working also with alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. What we are trying to do now is to develop more strong relationships with the police and also local elites to improve the effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution for the rural women. Most of the cases have to do with marital conflicts, related with dowry, divorce, physical torture or acid throwing, but also with land related matters." (interview, man, HRLE officer)	3.15 "Since the end of the 1990s, legal education and human rights are a central part of BRAC. In particular, we work with several organizations, such as *Ain O Shalish Kendra* (ASK) and the Bangladesh National Women Leader's Association (BNWLA) to create legal aid clinics. We operate them together." (interview, man, BRAC chairman)	3.19 "Shalish is an informal process, by the community in which . . . elites try to solve local disputes. They can also impose sanctions. The problems treated can be disputes about land, divorce, illicit relationship, or fights between individuals. We know that it is not perfect and that women are not well seen. And what we do is to encourage the women to go, to participate together. It is not easy but we need to work with it . . . to make *shalish* more effective." (interview, man, SD program manager)	3.23 "We thought that undermining older, village-based practices of assistance to the poor would be a negative effect of the program. It would reduce their already limited sources. The idea, the objectives, is trying to get some of the basic elements of elite protection for the participants." (interview, woman, HRLE coordinator)

TABLE 4
(Continued)

Program	Creating Spaces for Interaction		Expanding Resource Systems		(Re)defining Local Arrangements	
	For Equals	For Unequals	Tying Up with Government Systems	Teaming Up with Social Service Providers	Building on Local Means of Issue Resolution	Making Use of Customary Sources of Social Support
CFPR/TUP	3.4 "One of the most important things we have learned with this program (CFPR) is that with the ultra poor face-to-face interaction is very important. We do some group meetings for health and legal issues, but we work first with them individually so that they feel later they can meet, engage and so on with other ultra poor. This is a fundamental shift in BRAC programs." (interview, woman, CFPR/TUP director)	3.8 "What we need to make it function for those committees, these are all—we then list here in our strategy. But on top of it I always told my managers that if and when you go to the village and you are talking to this, to a rich man in the village and are trying to convince him to become a member of this committee then never say that this is what we are doing and you also need to do this and this and this. This should not be the language that we will speak to them." (interview, woman, CFPR/TUP director)	3.12 "A key element is the building of partnerships and referral linkages with the government and other health facilities, as well as ensuring that those who cannot pay for them receive free or subsidized health services." (interview, women, CFPR/TUP manager)	3.16 "Well, you have to know that the original motivation for this program comes from the problems with the IGVG program to reach the ultra poor. Basically, the main problem was that the beneficiaries were selected by members of the local government, and this created many problems. Now, we have a whole methodology for targeting and we get support from different local providers who know well who the ultra poor are." (interview, man, CFPR/TUP manager)	3.20 "Staff cannot stay at the village level 24 hours and do the policing. And police and administration of these departments are not very efficient. Who can provide all the supports that are needed? We needed to have some kind of alternative mechanism in place. We felt that if we could mobilize the elites in a proper manner then they will be able to provide this support. When some of the ultra poor assets were stolen, some GDBCs they have called *shalish* to resolve the problem." (interview, woman, CFPR/TUP manager)	3.24 "The [CFPR/TUP] program is a way to get some of the basic elements of elite protection for the participant. What we do is to work to facilitate the process for the village elites to engage in a more systematic and organized manner in helping the poorest to achieve a more sustainable improvement in ultra poor's lives." (interview, man, CFPR/TUP manager)

ment of girls' autonomy. A female Education Program manager told us:

> Well, this was for children [70 percent of girls and 30 percent of boys] who had dropped out from the government school or who do not have access to government school. And these children are definitively poor from rural areas. They will be in school for one year, and after the conclusion of the program they will go to the government public schools, not to BRAC schools.

BRAC also teams up with service providers outside the government, such as NGOs. These alliances serve to increase women's "exit options" (Nussbaum, 2000). According to research, a woman is far more likely to stand up to abuse if she is able to read and access alternative means of issue resolution, such as legal aid clinics, employment cooperatives, and traditional healers. BRAC's partnership with Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid and human rights organization, exemplifies this form of outreach. An internal document from the HRLE program elaborates on the nature and objectives of such collaboration:

> BRAC-ASK joint legal aid program is designed as a partnership. ASK provides orientation and training to BRAC staff . . . to familiarize them with existing laws, court procedures, and filing of cases at the police station.

Purposeful integration of BRAC initiatives with existing local support structures. The third activity we observed was the purposeful way that BRAC integrated local support structures into its various programs. The second-order construct labeled "(Re)defining local arrangements" aggregates two first-order codes: "Building on local means of issue resolution" and "making use of customary sources of social support." According to our analysis, making market access and participation for women possible seems to require learning about, making use of, and adapting to prevailing institutional arrangements—even if they are considered to be dysfunctional or if they reinforce patterns of exclusion.

Access to formal justice is tedious, costly, and frequently unavailable to women, as described above. As an alternative, BRAC attempts to engage its members in *shalish*, a "traditional form of dealing with conflicts" (quotation 3.18) when issues such as "land, divorce, illicit relationships, or fights between individuals" (quotation 3.19) arise. A BRAC Social Development Program manager said:

> Shalish serves the needs of the villagers . . . well, we know this is not the whole picture. Many times they are not fair and can be degrading, but we also know

that it is what the poor people prefer. We know also that they see the members of the shalish court as closer to them and that they speak in a language they [the poor people] can understand.

In promoting the use of *shalish* under certain conditions, BRAC acknowledges that the needs of poor women might well be served by alternative, local sets of arrangements (Unger, 1998). Similarly, BRAC recognizes and incorporates the value of existing "older, village-based practices of assistance to the poor" (quotation 3.23) into its programs. This is a radical departure from BRAC's traditional approach to poverty alleviation, since it makes use of practices that are thought to perpetuate relationships of dependence. As the director of the CFPR/TUP program explained:

> We thought that undermining older, village-based practices of assistance to the poor would . . . reduce their already rather limited sources of support. But it's good that we learned from our field and responded immediately . . . we asked [the village committee] to stand up for the women in shalish processes, in ensuring the education of the children of our ultra-poor members . . . to ensure . . . that whatever support they are providing to the community . . . in a more organized, in an even more popular manner, will . . . produce a more long-term, sustainable result.

In sum, we have identified a set of activities that redefine market architecture in ways that begin to allow poor women to engage in markets and market-based activities. Our analysis reveals how BRAC has shifted the boundaries of spaces and activities to be more accessible and available to women. BRAC accomplishes this redefinition by extending resource and support systems and building various platforms. In so doing, BRAC brings poor women into positions that have the potential for increased discretion and autonomy at the local level.

However, development scholars and practitioners have long warned about the limits of this narrow type of liberation and empowerment (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). Although these arrangements may temporarily ameliorate local difficulties, deeper, more taken-for-granted institutions that "identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997: 97) can remain unchanged. Our findings highlight a second set of activities that deepen and embed market-supporting institutional infrastructures into local institutional arrangements. This set of market-building activities focuses directly on legitimating women as market actors.

Legitimating new market actors. We found that BRAC engaged in two specific types of activities

(second-order constructs) that legitimate women's access and participation in markets. Table 5 provides quotations from our data that illustrate each of these activities along with the corresponding first-order codes. Appendix B displays statistics for

the key codes used to categorize these instances within the BRAC program data.

Develop "sensemaking" capacity. The first set of legitimating activities we found, "developing sensemaking capacity," aggregates the two first-or-

TABLE 5
Data Supporting the Theme of Legitimating New Market Actors

Program	Developing Sensemaking Capacity		(Re)combining Norms and Traditions	
	Facilitating Conscientization	**Knowledge of Repertories**	**Demystifying**	**Adopting Artistic Traditional Performances**
Education	4.1 "In our education programs, one of our main objectives is to help them to collect and reflect on their experiences, what they know, the work they do, that their parents did. This is important to increase their dignity. And of course, creating the VO is the key. They have to learn that it is their organization, that they manage it." (interview, woman, Education manager)	4.5 "These are people where maybe they're not able to see that they are not ignorant. They can think, and they can build up their own, you know, you can facilitate it. So, a teacher, she or he is a facilitator in a common thinking process to improve understanding among people, and so we still believe that it's action and refraction which provides the knowledge, the source of knowledge and not from books or from other people; the source of knowledge is internal. You act and refract and your knowledge, sort of, comes from a process of action and refraction rather than from books." (interview, man, chairman)	4.9 "With the local community leaders workshops what we try to do is basically to convince the other structures, apart for the power structure, that we´re trying to develop the villages. . . . We invite all of them to come and to help our organization: what should we do, basically to have, to try to convince them to work as a support group for these poor people, as a kind of support group for these poor people. We also talk about the laws we teach and that they are not contradictory to religious Islamic laws." (interview, man, SD manager)	4.13 "Popular theatre also attempts to engender building a different system of education within the community— nonformal education accessible to all. Implying that it does not rely on literacy—that would at once exclude the vast majority of the poor. It is a process centered round the people, starting and ending with the expressive potential of the human body. Thus, learning over here is more than entertainment, as the process of learning is user-friendly. Popular theatre is inexpensive to organize as it does not require an expensive outlay in equipment or infrastructure." (education report)
Social Development	4.2 "[We always] start with the VO. It is the tool that permits the women to start thinking about their problems and their lives. Also to start thinking about what they can do if the work together. This is how we have always understood our work, like Freire. It has to contribute to raising awareness and start breaking unequal relationships." (interview, man, SD manager)	4.6 "So what the women members of the *Palli Shamajs* have realized is that they can include themselves as members of the local committees, the mosque committee, madrasa committee, school committee. And many have succeeded . . . so they then become more powerful." (interview, man, SD program officer)	4.10 "When POs visit households, they are usually offered with chairs or stools to sit. However, as a matter of strategy, POs instead of sitting on stool/chair, sit on the ground. This makes the people embarrassed, but happy! They are embarrassed because they are not used to seeing an educated outsider sitting on the ground with them. But they are happy because the PO sits with them in an informal way as a nearer one which creates a fellow feeling among them and the gap becomes narrower." (Social Development report)	4.14 "It comes from our folk, popular culture. We realized we can use it as a communication tool, communication network. As in the early days there was no electricity, no radio, no television, people used to do this kind of drama in the rural areas. So we actually went back to borrow this idea. People have nothing else to do, so they come and see the drama. People love to see, and through this people can become educated, more aware about their situation, their rights, their problems, issues." (interview, man, SD manager)

Continued

TABLE 5
(Continued)

Program	Developing Sensemaking Capacity		(Re)combining Norms and Traditions	
	Facilitating Conscientization	Knowledge of Repertoires	Demystifying	Adopting Artistic Traditional Performances
HRLE	4.3 "It is very difficult to stop early marriage, so now we organize community workshops with imams, religious people, with those who hold power in the community. We are creating awareness among stakeholders, like religious leaders, etc." (interview, woman, HRLE director)	4.7 "In our training programs one of our objectives is to help them to collect and reflect on their experiences, what they know, the work they do, that their parents did. This is important to increase their dignity. And of course, creating the VO is the key. They have to learn that it is their organization, that they manage it." (interview, woman, HRLE director)	4.11 "Our objective with the HRLE Program is, mostly, to let the poor know their own rights, that they have the law and human rights. And also to convince them that they can ask for these rights, and fight for them. In a way, we want to demystify the law." (interview, man, Social Development manager)	4.15 "But popular theatre also has problems. We believe that it is very important to have actors that are women. But sometimes religious leaders or the village leaders are against it, because there are women acting and also because they think that the topics are not correct. However, actors and also program organizers resist that opposition. They talk about how important it is to talk about problems that the poor have, but also problems of sanitation, violence." (interview, woman, HRLE and Advocacy coordinator)
CFPR/TUP	4.4 "The objective is awareness about gender norms and relations; better understanding of rationality of joint ownership by men and women of family resources and women's participation in decision-making in the family." (interview, woman, CFPR/TUP director)	4.8 "Understanding that knowing the law and rights is not enough for seeking redress—one has to know where to go, who can help, what do. To help women gain basic legal skills." (interview, man, CFPR/TUP senior program officer)	4.12 "To convince elites to participate in the committees (GBDCs), we explain the tasks and activities in terms that are very close to common understandings of the traditional and religious obligation they have to help the poor." (interview, man, CFPR senior program officer)	4.16 "The theaters not only view society as a dichotomy of good and bad where the latter oppresses the former, but by following the trend of popular theater highlights the cause of the oppressed in the society. The theatres not only highlighted the implication of the problems, but also the causes behind the problems, and most importantly hinted on how these problems could be resolved." (CFPR/TUP report)

der codes "facilitating conscientization" and "knowledge of repertoires." "Conscientization" refers to efforts to build awareness by provoking individual and collective self-reflection (Freire, 1970). Confronted with the strong inner sense of nonentitlement that women have, BRAC starts by leading women to think about their lives. In the words of a male Social Development Program manager:

> This is a . . . two stage process. First they would come to see themselves as in a bad situation, oppressed; and then would come to see themselves as citizens who had a right to a better situation.

BRAC's use of the term "conscientization" stems from the deep influence that the Brazilian educator Freire's (1970) work had on Fazle Abed. Activities that trigger conscientization aim to provoke women into seeing and questioning their condition so that they can begin "de-naturalizing" it (Douglas, 1986). Conscientization processes involve women's becoming aware of their own sense of self and visualizing the possibilities for expanding the boundaries of permissible behavior. To develop women's sensemaking in this direction, BRAC works to generate a repertoire of resources and inner capabili-

ties for women to mobilize (Nussbaum, 2000). Martha Chen, an early BRAC staffer, wrote in a note in 1976 (published later in 1983):

> These village women possess many skills. They must be made to feel these skills are valuable. Then the women must decide for themselves what they can and want to do. (Chen, 1983)

BRAC also provides tools, skills, and resources for women. These tools and resources range from basic math and accounting training to more substantial knowledge lessons about citizen rights. For instance, referring to a new initiative by the HRLE Program to empower poor women through property rights, the program director explained:

> Before property rights can empower people, people must be empowered to claim their property rights. Our legal literacy courses combine legal aid with rights articulation, taking legal empowerment beyond courts and to hands-on application at the grassroots.

(Re)combine norms and traditions. Developing women's sensemaking capacity is inherently political. BRAC's efforts to build self-awareness and foster women's mobilization are not uncontroversial and often generate opposition. In response, BRAC works to provide alternative definitions to traditional notions such as "household property." This second type of legitimating work is about "(re)combining norms and traditions" and aggregates the two first-order codes, "demystifying" and "adopting artistic traditional performances." Our epigraph at the beginning of this paper, from the work of Marta Nussbaum on human capabilities, provides a direct statement of the rationale for these activities.

Efforts to change prevailing institutionalized practices, customs, and beliefs challenge many conventions and sometimes breed opposition. A very graphic example of this occurred in the 1990s, when 110 BRAC schools were set on fire by radicals who used religious arguments to claim that mixing boys and girls in class violated the values and norms of Bangladeshi society (Riaz, 2005). Opposition can be understood as an expression against dominant actors' produced meanings—meanings that articulate implicit hierarchies, reproduce their advantages, and stabilize a particular "local world" (Fligstein, 2001; Tilly, 1998).

The evidence from our informants suggests that in traditional arrangements, women are often socialized to occupy and treated as holding dependent positions. Our analysis suggests that BRAC's engagement with poor women via participation in VOs denaturalizes and demystifies the traditional

relations of male-female subordination and patronage and helps women feel at ease in the company of nonfamily "strangers." As the following quote from an internal report from the Social Development Program illustrates, this demystification is purposeful:

> When Program Organizers visit households, they are usually offered with chairs or stools to sit. However, as a matter of strategy, POs instead of sitting on stool/chair, sit on the ground. This makes the people embarrassed, but happy! They are embarrassed because they are not used to see an educated outsider sitting on the ground with them. But they are happy because the PO sits with them in an informal way. Then the gap between them becomes narrower.

BRAC also works with women to demystify their view of the law as opaque, out of reach, and inapplicable to themselves. In HRLE training in particular, women discuss and learn that the law is not necessarily "contradictory to Islamic religious law" (quotation 4.9).

BRAC also works with local elites—e.g., village chiefs, religious leaders, teachers, policemen—to demystify BRAC's own interventions. For example, when CFPR program organizers approach elites to provide support to women (e.g., granting fair justice in traditional *shalish*), they emphasize that such support is nothing more than a more formalized version of what the local elites have always been responsible for in the community. The CFPR director told us:

> First of all we acknowledged their contribution to their community, so they come to see what we ask them to do as nothing extraordinary, but . . . what their father did.

In addition, BRAC carefully uses religious arguments to support its own initiatives, such as framing elite support for the poor in "terms very close to common understandings of the [elites'] traditional and religious obligation." A local journalist explained:

> It directly resonates with one of the Five Pillars of Islam, which states that the rich have a moral obligation to help the needy.

The issue of public framing and presentation is important when dealing with institutions such as women's autonomy and property rights. We observed that BRAC purposively draws upon and integrates traditional artistic and cultural performances in its activities. These actions facilitate sensemaking and help to legitimize discourse that favors inclusion. This integration can also be interpreted as an experiment with old rules and practices that attempts to make sense of new situations

(Fligstein, 2001). For instance, BRAC draws on Bangladesh's rich popular folk culture by incorporating *popular theater* performances into its advocacy efforts and educational projects. Theater provides a medium for discussing controversial issues that all villagers understand. A Social Development manager referred to theater's ability to

> ease the public discussion about issues such as domination and exploitation, land grabbing, women discrimination, village arbitration, or harassment of women.

Elaborating on the plot of a performance one of the authors attended that gathered 300 people, including local government members and a religious leader, the manager further recalled:

> Someone is beating his wife, they know there is this problem in the village, because they are from there. They take story, and they represent the drama and they ask to the audience: Do you think this should be done? Should he beat his wife? And at the end of the drama they ask to the audience, what can be learned from this drama?

Thus, via the highly legitimized institution of popular theater, BRAC introduces a new image of women's autonomy into a community and provides a venue that safely fosters debate about community norms, appropriate behaviors, and the evolution of old practices. Furthermore, by employing the medium of theater, BRAC not only permits viewers to visualize this new reality and its possible implications, but also creates a reason to discuss the causes and potential responses for the situations on display.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper centers on market building in institutionally complex contexts. Our analysis of the institutional context in Bangladesh and the activities of BRAC allow us to develop a grounded theory of institutional voids built on a rich empirical case in which market building is being undertaken as a tool for economic and social development. We now elaborate on how our findings contribute to and extend existing institutional accounts of the formation and functioning of markets.

From Institutional Voids to Institutional Interfaces

There may well be some instances and arenas that are "empty" of institutional arrangements; however, they are uncommon. Although the extreme nature of such instances makes them potentially useful for analysis, our study focuses not on the absence and weakness of modern market institutions but rather on their "situatedness" within a multi-institutional context—constituting what we have called an "institutionally complex context" (Greenwood, Magán, Li, & Céspedes, 2010; Greif, 2006). The unitary view of voids makes it difficult to imagine how markets can be built or operate within anything other than a very narrow set of institutional contexts. This view also reinforces a compensatory view of institutional arrangements, rather than recognizing how indigenous institutions do support varied complex market activities and governance (Ostrom, 1990; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002). Our research enables a move away from abstraction toward a grounded knowledge of institutional voids shaped by investigating how they take form and are managed in the process of market building. We arrived at this insight by acknowledging the existence of multiple institutional logics and analytically identifying interfaces as the points at which these logics come together. This perspective made it possible to conduct a fine-grained examination of two core institutions related to market creation and stability: property rights and autonomy.

Our data reveal that property rights and autonomy—taken for granted as pillars of markets in modern societies and economies—often contradict and thus stand in conflict with existing rules of the game in local community (e.g., patriarchy, early forced marriage), political (e.g., corruption and patronage), and religious (e.g., interpretations of religious credos, *purdah*) spheres in Bangladesh. These institutional interfaces configure exclusionary markets, a point we note is secondary in the literature on institutional voids and merely noted in passing by institutional economists concerned with distributional outcomes of markets. The approach introduced in this study focuses on those who are denied the chance to "play the game" and explains how many poor women in Bangladesh are excluded from market-based activities.

Attention to the interfaces between market institutions and local institutional arrangements has at least two important implications for the study of institutional voids. First, our analysis illustrates the importance of looking at a full array of interlinked institutional spheres (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Understanding what prevents women from accessing and participating in markets permits us to see how various institutional logics shape existing rules of the game (North, 1990). Our findings that patriarchal systems, religious beliefs, and local conceptions of "proper" behavior limit women's access to and participation in markets suggests that existing institutional arrangements, and the result-

ing institutional voids, can be seen as outcomes of cultural and political contention among actors with differential power and competing frames (Bartley, 2007; Campbell, 2004; Rao, 1998). We show that the protection of property rights is variably granted by the powerful to some but not to others. As a result, the institutional arrangements that shape institutional voids can be understood as relatively durable, but contestable, compromises based on specific coalitional dynamics that are potentially vulnerable to shifts.

Second, our focus and mapping of both market and nonmarket institutions specifies more fully the institutional arrangements relevant for understanding market-based activities in developing countries. In referring to bottom of the pyramid markets, Webb et al. pointed out that there is "little to no property rights protection available in the event of violations" (2010: 506). Our analysis suggests that alternatives such as traditional means of issue resolution have consequences for market building and access. Not only do these alternative mechanisms exist, but they are often preferred by local actors because of their cultural and cognitive proximity and ease of use. Of course, such mechanisms are not ideal; as we show, they are often captured by dominant actors and serve to reproduce existing patterns of subordination and exclusion. However, our investigation of BRAC's interventions shows that it is not always necessary to create replicas of Western institutions when they are absent or weak. Rather, adding to one of the main lessons derived from developing countries (Rodrik, 2007) and "marketization" processes in Eastern Europe (Kogut et al., 2000; Stark, 1996), we echo Dixit, who wrote "It may be possible to work with such alternative institutions as are available, and build on them" (2004: 4).

In sum, we propose that apparent institutional voids can be seen as useful problem-sensing tools. They can help to diagnose conditions that need to be addressed for inclusive market initiatives to develop. They are analytical spaces (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) in which elements from a variety of institutional spheres, each built around central systems of meanings and social practices (Friedland & Alford, 1991), come together and affect the interpretation, enforcement, or embodiment of certain focal institutions—such as, in our case, property rights and autonomy (Carruthers & Ariovich, 2004).

On the Work of Building Inclusive Markets

This article builds on existing scholarship on markets and institutions but refocuses on actors and activities on the ground. In contrast to previous work that highlights the role of the state, firms, social movements, or entrepreneurs in market-building processes, we begin with a focus on a key intermediary actor, BRAC, but we also provide a more detailed analysis of a range of individual actors and communities, along with various inhabitants of existing social structures and institutional logics. We focus on market building, not simply market formation, to emphasize the activity and processes involved. And we also focus on market building that has the explicit purpose of including the formerly excluded.

Our reading of autonomy and property rights as void for many becomes the starting point for examining BRAC's efforts to build inclusive markets. Like other liminal spaces, the interfaces we examine represent spaces that illuminate the conflict that occurs over and within institutions (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Morrill, 2006). These interfaces, though seemingly fixed in many ways, are also unstable and contested, and therefore represent opportunities for actors to create and transform the relations, boundaries, or rules of the game within them (Fligstein, 2001; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). Our approach reflects the centrality of such microsocial processes, interactions, and (re)negotiations for understanding how institutions "act and play" (Barley, 2008).

We find that on-the-ground market-building activities situated in institutionally complex contexts enable market access and participation through the renegotiation of existing social orders. An intermediary organization initiates this process of renegotiation, but it unfolds on behalf of and with the people affected, the marginalized (poor women) and the ones who marginalize (elites, religious leaders, etc.). It includes two distinct categories of activities: redefining market architecture and legitimating new actors.

Our findings support a perspective on market building in which markets are viewed as built *along with* rather than *on top of* existing local institutions and that allows "markets to become" rather than pushes for "markets to exist." In contrast to previous work, we integrate market consequences into our argument. This move underscores the value of attending to plural institutional spheres and provides a more complete understanding of how markets form, how intermediaries impact markets, and why it is important to take into account dimensions of inclusiveness. This perspective suggests that the inclusive market that BRAC is striving to build amalgamates with the existing local institutional arrangements rather than constituting an isolated institutional sphere.

Our findings illustrate how market-building activities are located at the interfaces of institutional spheres and how they often modify existing norms, beliefs, and practices to alter the underlying social order (Strauss, 1982). Our study sees market access and participation as negotiable and market boundaries as potentially permeable for actors who have been excluded. These findings and interpretations reinforce ongoing conversations about inhabited institutions (Barley, 2008; Hallett, 2010; Scully & Creed, 1999).

Our findings related to redefining market architecture extend the current view that markets can adopt different architectures. According to the sociology of markets literature, markets and their supporting institutions are built through rules, conventions, and the codification of meaning in the form of standards (Beckert, 2007; Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Fourcade, 2007). Once a particular architectural configuration takes form, it defines who can do what and who has access to what, and it becomes difficult to stray from the configuration (Fligstein, 2001).

This stream of work emphasizes market structures, however, in ways that are sometimes overly stylized or abstract. Instead, we suggest that attention to negotiation activities surrounding existing institutional patterns can show how inclusive markets can be renegotiated even from initially restrictive structures (e.g., to formal justice). Moreover, focusing on market architecture highlights the pivotal role that different types of social spaces play relative to market building. Some purposively designed spaces may be privileged settings in which individuals from disparate groups can (re)negotiate existing social orders and seek microinstitutional change. Recent work by social movement scholars (Polleta, 1999) and organizational theorists (Kellogg, 2009; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010) suggests the importance of different social spaces for these ends. Our findings speak to and provide an empirical path to continue these conversations.

Our analysis also reveals how purposeful effort to legitimate new market actors complements initiatives to define and shape market architecture. Our findings echo perspectives in entrepreneurship that combine legitimacy and cognitive-based strategies and suggest that persuasion and influence can be used to overcome the skepticism and resistance of those who guard the status quo (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994). In addition, various studies have shown how actors bestow legitimacy on practices, products, and services (Suchman, 1995; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) by using speaking and writing (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 56), rhetoric (Green, 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), or

analogies and metaphors (Etzion & Ferraro, 2010; Hargadon & Douglas, 2001).

In line with this tradition, our study illustrates how rhetorical strategies and culture can be used as a tool kit (Swidler, 1986) (e.g., popular theater performances; local means of issue resolution) and can be actively and strategically deployed by an intermediary actor to convey legitimacy. Moreover, our study allows for an in-depth look at how legitimacy is constructed and negotiated (Barley, 2008; Strauss, 1982). "As institutional analysis takes its interpretive turn, it is well worth remembering that writing, reading and rhetoric are important for negotiating legitimacy, but words break no bones" (Barley, 2008: 507). Our study represents an attempt to do so by applying a more diverse repertoire of methods (see also Dover & Lawrence, 2010) to study institutions inhabited and at play in less than comfortable or conventional contexts (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010).

Limitations and Conclusions

This study reports on the activities of BRAC to build inclusive markets in rural Bangladesh. We do not intend to claim that our findings represent the only way in which inclusive markets might be built. In fact, we do not believe that there is only one way to build markets (Rodrik, 2007). Our intention was to illustrate how exclusion from market activities can be traced back to institutional voids and to surface the microprocesses involved in building inclusive markets by examining the activities and role of an intermediary.

Markets are not constructed *de novo* (Stark, 1996). The choice of setting and the local conditions exemplified in this case restrict the generalizability and transferability of its findings, particularly with regard to modern societies in which processes of secularization have diminished the centrality of religious institutions and to societies in which what we call the *emporium of the law* grants inclusion effectively. However, our analytical approach of spotting possible voids and theoretical insights on the negotiated order of market access and permeability of market boundaries might provide a useful lens for researchers and decision makers studying a variety of phenomena. For example, the recent demographic shifts and the consequent rise of "Islamic banking" in Europe represent an interesting setting for analyzing how to make [financial] markets more accessible in modern societies.

Despite these boundary conditions, an extreme case in complex institutional context such as the one presented in this paper offers an opportunity to

study a familiar set of processes and phenomena on fresh terms and to focus in on key elements that existing work has neglected (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010). Moreover, too much research on institutions has been "embarrassingly . . . constructed by U.S. scholars based on data collected from U.S. organizations" (Scott, 2005: 478). Our case stands apart in showcasing an "unusual" (albeit, in reality, very customary and ubiquitous) and a largely unexplored setting. This case of market building in rural Bangladesh is uncommon and analytically extreme in the literature, but common in the world and hence, relevant and timely for our research community

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APPENDIX A

Interview and Participant Observation Data

Informant	Type of Interviewee (Number of Interviews)	Type of Participant Observation (Total Number of Observations)
Internals		
BRAC management	Chairman (4), advisory board member (2)	
BRAC university	Pro-vice chancellor (1)	
BRAC programs		
Education Program	Director (1), senior manager (1), manager (2), program organizer (2), teacher (2), students (2)	Attended courses in primary school (2)
Social Development Program	Senior manager (3), program officer (2), village organization leader (1), village organization member (2)	Attended popular theatre performance (1)
HRLE Program	Director (2), manager (1), program officer (1), beneficiary (2)	Attended legal education classes (1)
CFPR/TUP	Director (2), manager (2), junior manager (1), Beneficiary (2)	
Economic Development	Senior manager (2), program officer (2), borrowers (6)	Attended microcredit meeting (2)
Health Program	Senior manager (1), program officer (1), volunteer health worker (1)	Attended health meeting (1)
Research and Evaluation Department	Senior researcher (1), junior researcher (1)	
Social enterprises		
Aarong (retail)	Senior manager (1)	Visited (2)
Dairy & Food Project	Senior manager (1)	Visited (1)
BRAC Agriculture & Livestock Enterprises	Senior manager (1)	
Externals		
Other NGOs and social activists	General manager (1), program organizer (1), branch manager (1), borrowers (2)	Attended microcredit meeting (2) Visited local branch office (1)
Microfinance institution 1	Chairman (1), program organizer (1)	Attended microcredit meeting (1)
Microfinance institution 2	General managers (1)	
NGO in education field 1	Teachers (2)	
NGO in education field 2		
Other	Local journalist (2), Islamic law specialist (2), missionaries (2), lawyer and member of Supreme Court of Bangladesh (1), expatriate manager (2)	Visited garment factories (3)

APPENDIX B

Statistics for Key Codes from the Programs Studied[a]

Second-Order Constructs	Code Name	Education		Social Development		HRLE		CFPR	
		Passages	Sources	Passages	Sources	Passages	Sources	Passages	Sources
Creating spaces for interaction	For equals	20	11	34	17	31	18	11	5
	For unequals	11	6	12	8	19	15	37	23
Expanding resource systems	Tying up with government systems	15	8	21	15	19	14	12	7
	Teaming up with social service providers	19	14	14	8	26	18	24	14
(Re)defining local arrangements	Building on local means of issue resolution	5	3	15	10	23	16	26	18
	Making use of customary sources of social support	16	9	15	10	23	16	26	18
Developing sensemaking capacity	Facilitating conscientization	44	26	34	24	25	19	9	6
	Knowledge of repertoires	24	17	19	12	18	13	19	12
(Re)combining norms and traditions	Demystifying	12	8	16	13	31	20	14	7
	Adopting artistic traditional performances	14	8	7	4	21	14	18	10

[a] "Passages" presents the number of passages with the code indicated. "Sources" presents the number of sources with passages having this code.

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