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## Conditional Cash Transfer Program Design: A Case Study of Parent Educational Attitudes and Experiences in One Honduran Village

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CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAM DESIGN: A CASE STUDY OF PARENT  
EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES IN ONE HONDURAN VILLAGE

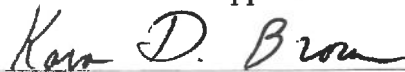
By

Karsen Ward

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
Graduation with Honors from the  
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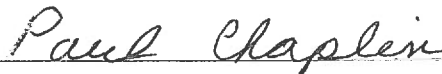
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### **Thesis Summary**

This thesis project investigates the potential of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs to address the need for greater educational achievement worldwide, but specifically in Honduras. Based on the existing literature in the field, it was concluded that CCTs must be implemented in areas that display a need for the intervention, and they also must have an adaptable and individualized design in order to maximize their benefits. To model this, Villa Soleada, a small village in El Progreso, Yoro, Honduras, acted as a theoretical site for the future implementation of a CCT. The parents among 19 families were administered a questionnaire which assessed their educational attitudes and experiences in order to gauge need for intervention and familiarize the researcher with the background, needs, and desires of the community members. The analysis of participant responses shed light on important needs specific to this village so that if a CCT were to be implemented there, a foundation of cultural understanding could be used to create a program design with meaningful incentives for the residents. It was discovered that this questionnaire procedure should be multi-staged in order to be the most thorough and reliable. The outcomes of this trial exemplified the types of significant details and connections that need to be uncovered and understood about the real lives that are being affected by the program prior to any foreign administration of a CCT.

### **Abstract**

In Honduras and other countries globally, there is a large gap to fill in school enrolment and attendance before the Sustainable Development Goal of universal quality education can be achieved. One method that has grown in popularity over the past couple of decades is the use of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs, which serve to incentivize families in the relevant educational area of need. In Honduras, students still need to be encouraged to enroll in and regularly attend school, so this is what is primarily incentivized. The literature review of this paper compiles the takeaways of a variety of existing literature on conditional cash transfer programs in Honduras and elsewhere, to identify some apparent guidelines for effective CCTs. From the existing literature, it was concluded that CCTs must be implemented in areas that display a need for the intervention, and they also must have a design that is adaptable and individualized for the specific community, if they are to have a maximized impact on enrolment and attendance. This information sparked the creation of a questionnaire which assessed parents' educational experiences and attitudes, and which was administered to 19 families in the small village of Villa Soleada, in El Progreso, Yoro, Honduras. The purpose of conducting this research was to model one way in which the beginning stages of CCT implementation could confirm the need for intervention, acquaint program facilitators with the authentic cultures and desires of the community, and ensure that the incentives and program design as a whole are meaningful to the future beneficiaries and therefore truly enact positive change in education. The analysis of the questionnaire results displayed the plethora of connections that can be made among parents' educational experiences and attitudes, and their opinions on what incentives would be most helpful and motivating to them. The analysis process also made clear the need for certain revisions to the questionnaire and methodology, especially the need to plan for a

multi-staged questionnaire to allow for a further clarification of key details. This research is important because it sheds light on how CCTs can ensure that they have a culturally relevant and respectful design that can then create meaningful and sustainable educational change in communities that demonstrate a great need, especially in Honduras.

*Keywords:* conditional cash transfer, education, Honduras

## Introduction

In 2000, the United Nations created several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by the year 2015, one of which was to accomplish universal primary education (Adelman, Gilligan, & Lehrer, 2008). This deadline was never met. Since then, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 have been established to continue and expand upon the MDGs. One SDG intends to achieve universal *quality* education, further described as “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2015).

Immense progress is required to ensure a global right to an education. Tomaševski's (2001) framework for education consists of four different components which serve as powerful indicators of the achievability of this global right. It specifically evaluates the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of schooling around the world (Tomaševski, 2001). The first step to increasing educational attainment globally is to have schools available for every child. In other words, schools must first exist in order for students to attend them. Second, they must be accessible to students. Transportation costs in the forms of safety risks, time, and finances add to the already plentiful obstacles to school enrolment and attendance. Unfortunately, these first two components of the framework have yet to be accomplished in some industrializing regions. Finally, school acceptability and adaptability are indicators that measure how schools provide a quality and inclusive education for their students, beyond simply existing. So, while universal availability and accessibility of schools are a necessary foundation for a global educational movement, we must also consider how meaningful the impacts of schooling can be if acceptability and adaptability are not taken into account as well.



Honduras, a small country in the middle of Central America, is just one of many industrializing nations struggling to increase educational attainment. Honduran schools are lacking in all of Tomasevski's "Four A" indicators, for a number of reasons. Political instability and corruption, extensive gang-related and domestic violence, and widespread extreme poverty have had massive impacts on the attainability of education for children in this country. Gang violence, domestic violence, and femicides have each contributed to the horrific murder rate of 60 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in Honduras as of 2016, which towers over the homicide rate considered high globally: 20 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Crea, Diaz-Valdes, Gruenfeld, Acevedo, Cerney, Medina, Hernandez, & Canelas, 2017). Furthermore, a striking poverty rate of 66% as of 2019, has left families with limited options for making a living (The World Bank, 2019a). Such widespread poverty has created an urgent need within families to find immediate forms of income or assurance of survival. Thus, instead of being able to invest in human capital through the long term returns of education, many families and children make the decision to resort to some form of child labor (Sekiya & Ashida, 2016). Vulnerable youth are especially prone to resorting to gang membership as a result of the lack of promising job opportunities (Williams et al., 2019). Either way through child labor or gang membership, education is continuously sacrificed in an effort to survive in poor conditions.

Current school enrolment and completion statistics for Honduras reflect how these conditions have impacted educational attainment. In early 2020, prior to the start of the pandemic, 1.2 million (or about 40%) of school-aged children in Honduras were not enrolled in school. Once the pandemic hit, this problem was exacerbated, especially in rural areas: "In June 2020, a group of civil society organizations issued a statement lamenting the fact that nearly two million students ages 3 to 17 were dropping out of the education system due to the COVID-19

situation” (“Quality Education, The Other Victim of the Coronavirus in Honduras”, 2021). The pandemic also highlighted societal inequities as 80% of private school students had access to the internet at home, compared to only 30% of public school students. This meant that continuing education remotely was not an option for many students. Even among the students who were connected at the start of the pandemic, only 45% of them belonged to families who were able to continue paying for the internet. For many families, the virtual classes were too expensive to continue paying for, which was compounded by the issues of poor signal and inadequate learning (“Quality Education, The Other Victim of the Coronavirus in Honduras”, 2021). More background information regarding Honduras will be explained in the Context section of this paper.

A foundational issue of the educational crisis in Honduras is the pervasive negative view of schooling held by most families, which has likely prevented them from prioritizing it for their children. Poor perceptions of education and its returns are one of the principal reasons for dropouts in Honduras (Sekiya et al., 2016). One study (1992) determined that in rural districts, the primary reason that students dropout of school is because they and their families do not believe that there is value in attending school past the age of 10 (Sekiya et al., 2016, p. 70). In an environment where extreme poverty and a high chance of hostility causes incessant concern for survival, education can become a secondary concern, especially given the fact that many families have not been made aware of its returns in the long term. A statement from one study on the PRAF II conditional cash transfer program in Honduras supports a push for education incentives within families: “Given the mounting evidence suggesting that house-holds are constrained in their knowledge of the best course of action, social programs that encourage them to pursue desirable actions are potentially welfare enhancing” (Galiani & McEwan, 2013, p. 85).

The pursuit of educational attainment in Honduras is important because of its far-reaching impacts outside of the classroom. Investment in human capital through schooling can alleviate long-term hunger, improve psychosocial outcomes, reduce poverty, and promote social equity (Crea et al., 2016, p. 246). Education can help to address the aforementioned political, economic, and social issues in Honduras. With widespread quality education throughout the country, a more skilled and knowledgeable generation of a workforce could begin to break the cycles of poverty and violence there, and become the future leaders responsible for ending political corruption and diminishing inequalities. However, these returns may only come to be realized through firsthand experience. In order to instigate this process, families need an incentive to serve as an initial push to prioritize schooling. Once this first barrier is overcome, a newly educated generation would ideally help set into motion an era of national political, economic, and social progress centered around a common appreciation for the power and importance of education.

### **Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programs**

Since their origin in the late 1990's in parts of Latin America, the use of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs around the world has developed as a strategy to incentivize the prioritization of education (Doetinchem, Xu, & Carrin, 2008). These programs essentially subsidize schooling costs by distributing finances and/or other resources to families who keep their children enrolled.<sup>1</sup> Parents grapple with opportunity costs and must compare the costs of education to its benefits to decide whether or not to enroll their children in school. Since long-term returns are not as evident to people in these conditions, CCTs offering rewards in the forms of stipends, food, etc., help to strengthen parent rationales for school enrolment (Adelman

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that although I will focus heavily on incentivizing school enrolment and attendance due to the status of education in Honduras, in areas where sufficient enrolment and attendance has already been achieved CCTs can be used to incentivize greater academic performance or other aspects of an education.

et al., 2008). The Oportunidades program in Mexico was initiated in 2002, and is considered a spearhead of the development of CCTs around the world. It has demonstrated the power of incentivizing school enrolment and attendance, as well as the importance of managing school quality simultaneously (Whetten, Fontenla, & Villa, 2019). Since then, the use of and interest in conditional cash transfer programs have increased worldwide. As of 2016, CCTs were operating in over 50 countries, which is more than double the amount in operation in 2008 (Barrera-Osorio, Linden, & Saavedra, 2016). The history and logistics of various CCTs will be further explained in the Literature Review section of this thesis. Essentially, CCTs increase the benefits of education, and make enrolment and attendance more feasible by alleviating some key economic and social obstacles. Organizations that implement them are key to their effectiveness and sustainability, as they work alongside local communities to ensure a CCT design that is viable and customized for that specific community.

Conditional cash transfers are especially relevant to the modern day challenge of keeping education safe, connected, continuous, and fair throughout the COVID-19 pandemic: “An ongoing mapping by World Bank economist Ugo Gentilini (2020) illustrates that 60 countries are already using some kind of cash transfer as part of their response to COVID-19. In other words, cash transfers are being considered internationally as a crucial measure to mitigate the increase in structural and temporary poverty resulting from the pandemic” (Paiva, Souza, Bartholo, & Soares, 2020, p. 1098). The growing interest in conditional cash transfers during this time of global educational deficits points to how CCTs are gaining recognition as effective programs. This boosts the importance of my research as well, because I model the primary steps which previous research point to as essential for meaningful and impactful CCT designs. In other words, if CCTs are increasingly being turned to as an option for sustaining education, it is

important that the organizations who are designing and implementing them do so with the same intent that I demonstrate to understand the community first and foremost, rather than rushing through designs during this educational emergency.

Literature points to the ways the results of existing or previously implemented CCTs can help formulate guidelines for effective incentive programs. The literature suggests that in order for CCTs to effectively incentivize an aspect of education, they must be implemented in localities that demonstrate a clear need for improvement in the said aspect, and they must also have individualized designs that takes into consideration the most immediate needs of the community members so that the incentives are meaningful to them. After explaining in greater detail the current status of education in Honduras and drawing from important studies in the field, I contribute to the existing literature through a questionnaire which assesses the lifestyles and educational attitudes and experiences of parents in a village in El Progreso, Honduras. I then model how the takeaways from this kind of questionnaire could be analyzed to inform what types of CCT designs and incentives would be most impactful in this Honduran locality. In other words, I have taken the combined outcomes of other studies on CCTs to create an informed set of suggestions for successfully implementing one, and I have then modeled what I now believe is one of those fundamental steps: assessing the needs and desires of the potential beneficiaries.

### **Literature Review**

Conditional cash transfer programs are increasingly being explored all over the world in an effort to achieve universal quality education. Schooling's direct material costs and fees, as well as the indirect opportunity costs of children's time, must be offset in impoverished countries like Honduras, so that parents whose main concern is survival will not have to be invested so heavily in weighing the costs and benefits of schooling. Instead, CCTs in a variety of forms can

be implemented to subsidize the costs of an education and in turn strengthen parents' rationales for enrolling their kids (Adelman et al., 2008). CCT program studies that have been completed globally each contribute to the existing literature with unique program designs, community impacts, and areas for improvement to consider.

There is no singular design for a CCT, and the programs I highlight in this section exemplify this. The adaptability of these programs creates greater opportunities for them to be effective in a variety of contexts. Here, I describe the designs and major takeaways from studies regarding the *Oportunidades* program in Mexico, the *Conditional Subsidies for School Attendance Pilot Program (Subsidios Condicionados a la Asistencia Escolar)* in Colombia, the Family Allowances Program (*Programa de Asignacion Familiar* or PRAF II) in Honduras, and various school feeding programs in Central and South America.

### ***Oportunidades***

It was the founding of the *Oportunidades* program in Mexico in 1997 that initially caused rising interests in a new, systematic way to incentivize education around the world (Whetten et al., 2019). *Oportunidades* was one of the first conditional cash transfer programs to be founded. The Mexican government operates in cooperation with international loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and rewards families for school enrolment and attendance (Luccisano, 2006), as well as for regular health checkups and information sessions. Families of students in grades 3 through 12 have been deemed eligible for participation in the program if their household marginality index is lower than their region's mean. Students receive the separate education subsidy as long as they maintain an attendance rate of at least 85% and do not fail more than one class. The scholarship amounts are adapted to the specific needs and trends of the region by accounting for the increasing opportunity costs of children's time as they

grow older, as well as for the differing educational expectations for each gender in the given context (Whetten et al., 2019).

This CCT program in particular yielded many encouraging results. In just its first year in existence, the *Oportunidades* program increased the enrolment rates of children in poverty by 0.85 percentage points (Schultz, 1999). It also has had an influence on the long term educational outcomes of student beneficiaries and their relatives (Whetten et al., 2019). The older, ineligible siblings of beneficiary households appeared to have increased educational aspirations as a result of exposure to the program, and these aspirations became more practical through the budget flexibility that *Oportunidades* was able to offer participating families. In fact, “Household heads just below the eligibility cutoff were 57% more likely than those just above to report post-secondary educational aspirations for their 14–18 year old household members” (Whetten et al., 2019, p. 233). As a result of participating families being able to invest more in their older members, college enrolment and completion rates increased for the cohort aged 39 and over at all of the observed distances from the schools, although the significance of the effects did decrease with distance. Another invaluable benefit of this program was its impact on parents, who after gaining a greater understanding of the returns of education firsthand, also began to develop higher educational aspirations for their families (Chiapa, Garrido, & Prina, 2012). This is just one scenario which models how breaking the initial barrier to education through a CCT program has the potential to mitigate obstacles over the span of generations. As families are given the opportunity to experience the returns of education firsthand, it is anticipated that they will become intrinsically motivated to prioritize school, and newly educated generations may then have the power to break the cycle of poverty.

While the *Oportunidades* program has experienced great success, there is still room for improvement. Studies show that the effectiveness of the program is constrained by the conditions of the region where it is implemented. The findings of this study align with others in that they suggest that areas with greater need for funds and school attendance will experience the greatest impacts from a CCT program. In other words, the greatest impacts on attendance and enrolment from the *Oportunidades* program were revealed in the most impoverished areas, and these impacts dwindled in areas with less poverty (Martínez, 2012). Furthermore, the positive impacts on students' higher education attainment was shown to decrease as their distance from schools increased and as the schools themselves were unable to keep up with the greater demand for an education (Whetten et al., 2019). This finding suggests two major things. Firstly, it reinforces the idea that in the fight for universal education we must first ensure that schooling is available and accessible to children. In order for families to be incentivized (and then intrinsically motivated) to send their children to school, there must first be an educational institution to which they can safely be sent. Secondly, these findings suggest that low enrolment and completion rates cannot be fixed solely through CCTs. On the contrary, the flexibility of these programs should be utilized to pair them with the most helpful complementary programs specific to the community. In some cases, for example, complementary programs that invest in school infrastructure and access would be a necessary step in actually achieving greater attendance and completion. It is important to consider the flexibility of CCTs in terms of what they are conditional upon as well. Some regions, especially in Northeast Mexico, already have satisfactory access and availability of schooling with substantial attendance and enrolment. In these regions, it may be more beneficial for scholarships to be conditional on the performance of students (and even teachers). This way, the learning outcomes and quality (in terms of



acceptability) of education may also begin to be incentivized (Martínez, 2012). All of this being considered, Escobar & González de la Rocha (2005, p. 63) claim, “In general, even in the least poor towns, we believe that the Oportunidades scholarship is essential, that is, without it, only a very small part would attend of the young people that today are observed in the schools.”

***The Conditional Subsidies for School Attendance Pilot Program (Subsidios Condicionados a la Asistencia Escolar)***

Another example of a CCT that provides us with extensive data is one that was founded by the government of Bogota, Colombia in 2005, called the *Conditional Subsidies for School Attendance Pilot Program*, or *Subsidios Condicionados a la Asistencia Escolar* (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2016). One study examined how three different payment structure options within this program impacted secondary school students in the medium term (after 8 years of participation) and the long term (after 12 years of participation) (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2016). The standard treatment involved fixed payments of \$30 every two months to participating families, while the savings treatment was structured much the same apart from a third of the stipend being withheld and saved each payment period until the enrolment decision was made for the following year. Lastly, the tertiary treatment simply offered students finances conditional upon graduation and tertiary school enrolment.

The standard treatment was shown to increase on-time enrolment and high school exit exam completion rates in the medium term, but did not result in the same for students in the long term at the tertiary level.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the savings treatment was shown to increase performance on more outcomes and for greater terms. For example, the dropout rates of students who were beneficiaries of the savings treatment decreased by 3.2 percentage points, and tertiary

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, the medium term was quantified as 8 years after initial receipt of program incentives, while the long term was quantified as 12 years afterwards.

enrolment was increased by 3.6 percentage points in the medium term and 2.8 percentage points in the long term. Tertiary school completion in the long term and secondary school on-time enrolment was also increased as a result of participation in the savings treatment version of the CCT (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2016).

Overall, all three treatments were shown to boost school attendance in comparison to the control group. The pronounced impacts of the savings treatment as opposed to the other two drew attention to the formidable barrier that savings constraints can form to quality education attainment, specifically during the re-enrolment period. This obstacle becomes even greater during the transition from secondary to tertiary schooling. Because the savings treatment resulted in greater medium and long term impacts, these findings suggest that a payment structure that takes local expense patterns may be most effective in increasing quality education attainment. From this study, we are reminded that although the standard form of a CCT may help lead families to realize the importance and potential returns of education, in many contexts it may simply not be sustainable enough to ensure continued enrolment. This is why it is crucial to be extremely familiar with the community of beneficiaries.

### **PRAF II (*Programa de Asignación Familiar*)**

Between 2000 and 2002, a study by Galiani and McEwan used the 2001 Honduran census to explore the impacts of PRAF II on school enrolment and child labor inside and outside of the home. The original form of this CCT was implemented in the early 1990's and is referred to as PRAF I. PRAF II was then introduced in the late 1990's as an improved rendition of PRAF I. It took into consideration four goals for: “1) improved enforcement of conditionalities for subsidy distribution; (2) a renewed emphasis on direct investments in schools and health centers alongside the distribution of cash subsidies; (3) an improved poverty targeting mechanism; and

(4) a randomized evaluation design embedded within the project roll-out” (Galiani et al., 2013, p. 86). Seventy poor municipalities were identified due to their low height-for-age means (indicative of child stunting), and 40 of those were then randomly selected to receive treatment. Individuals were eligible for the education funds of \$50 (or 800 lempiras) per year if they were between 6 and 12 years old and were enrolled in and attended grades 1 through 4. If families had children under three or a pregnant mother they were also eligible for a health component of the CCT, which included \$40 (or roughly 644 lempiras) per year to encourage regular health checkups. The funds were locally distributed as cash.

The findings from the census data showed a great heterogeneity of the impacts of PRAF II among different municipalities. Once again, the largest impacts were observed in the areas that were the poorest, and therefore demonstrated the most need for the monetary support of the program. This caused researchers to realize, once more, the importance of prioritizing effective targeting of areas so that the impacts and cost-effectiveness of conditional cash transfers can be optimised (Galiana et al., 2000). On average, however, the CCT had powerful impacts. Among program beneficiaries, it made them 8 percentage points (or 12%) more likely to enroll in school, 3 percentage points (or 30%) less likely to work outside the home, and 4 percentage points (or 29%) less likely to work inside the home (Galiana et al., 2000). This is promising data, especially if a mechanism is put in place to ensure program targeting occurs correctly beforehand, and therefore benefits are maximized.

### **School Feeding Programs as CCTs**

School feeding programs, such as the McGovern-Dole and other Food For Education (FFE) programs, are another form of conditional cash transfer programs. These programs provide food or other commodities and services to participating families conditional upon their

enrolment and attendance in school, rather than incentivizing with money. This method is relevant because hunger, especially as a result of poverty, is a huge problem in many industrializing nations and can cause students to experience higher levels of anxiety, aggression, mental health problems, and peer difficulties (Crea et al., 2017, p. 247). Honduras is an example of a country whose educational attainment is being stifled by malnutrition.

The McGovern-Dole FFE program was first introduced to Honduras through Catholic Relief Services in 2012, and today there are over 1,000 participating schools in the Intibuca department of Honduras (“McGovern-Dole Food For Education Program”, n.d.). There are now 46 active McGovern-Dole projects in 30 countries (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019, p. 10). This enterprise also points to the significance of complementary programs. In order to ensure sustainability so that the programs can continue to be carried out within the local community rather than by outside facilitators, the program has incorporated other fundamental aspects into its objectives. Aside from providing kids with meals, which have been shown to be effective incentives for enrolment and attendance (Crea et al., 2017), the program has also recognized and delivered on the need for teacher training, hygiene, and school infrastructure support (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019).

Overall, the results of studies on FFE programs indicate increased enrolment and attendance levels, the prevention of short term cognitive impairment (through the alleviation of hunger), and improvements in the cognitive performance of beneficiaries (Crea et al., 2017). Although the effects on literacy vary worldwide, the FFE evaluations done in Honduras between 2012 and 2015 show a great increase in literacy from 21.8% to 42.5% (Crea et al., 2017). FFE programs have also generally been shown to have positive impacts on test scores in a variety of subject areas (Adelman et al., 2008). The impacts they had on test scores were elevated when

the program also facilitated parent-teacher partnerships (Tan, Lane, & Lassibille, 1999). One study on a school feeding program in Bangladesh used an econometric analysis as a way to isolate the impact of the program from other environmental factors, and the results still showed statistically significant increases in enrolment (14.2%) and attendance (6% of the school days in a month). In addition, the dropout probability was reduced by 7.5% (Ahmed, 2004).

From the studies done on school feeding programs as a form of conditional cash transfers, one can once again recognize the need for the program to be tailored to local needs, incorporating the necessary complimentary programs. Some program designs assume that the quality of education available to poor students is adequate and that they will learn more simply by spending more time in school, but this is not always the case. In many areas of need, not investing in complementary programs can mitigate the effects of a CCT (Reimers, DeShano, & Trevino, 2006). For example, the McGovern-Dole FFE program in Honduras recognized the need for greater security, otherwise violence would continue to mitigate the program's benefits. They have since worked to implement school security patrols and adult training for violence prevention and responses (Crea et al., 2017). Other examples of complementary programs that may be foundational to CCTs in certain contexts include teacher training, deworming, micronutrient supplies, and the installation of handwashing facilities (Adelman et al., 2008). Through the existing literature it can be understood that if there is poor school or environment quality to begin with, this can be expected to hinder the benefits of participating in any form of a CCT, not to mention that attendance will be much more difficult to incentivize.

These studies highlight the importance of completing an assessment of the school's needs prior to implementing a CCT and any complementary programs. It has been shown that CCT initiatives are the most impactful in areas where the need is the greatest. For example, the

strongest impacts on attendance and nutrition specifically were realized in contexts where enrollment was low and malnutrition was high from the start (Adelman et al., 2008).

Incorporating an official assessment of school needs beforehand must be the first step in enacting CCT programs so that areas of need are targeted and tailored to. While the need of a region should be high in order to benefit the most from CCT implementation, organizations must also be prepared to address each of these diverse needs with individualized program designs in order for the initiative to be sustainable. My research contributes to these efforts by testing a framework through which the unique needs and desires of a community can be better understood prior to the implementation of any incentives.

Therefore, the existing research on CCTs in education have overlapping findings which seem to suggest guidelines for effective incentive programs. First, they must be implemented in localities that demonstrate a clear need for improvement in the educational aspect that is being incentivized (attendance, enrollment, school performance, etc). Furthermore, it is fundamental that CCTs have an individualized design that takes into consideration the most immediate needs of the community members (cash, food, healthcare, etc.) so that the incentives are meaningful, and so any necessary complementary programs are incorporated into the design.

### **Literature Gaps**

Because conditional cash transfers are a relatively new phenomenon globally, there are some noticeable literature gaps in the field. Firstly, most of the studies done have not evaluated the longer-term impacts of these programs. Barrera-Osorio, Linden, & Saavedra's 2016 review of the Colombian CCT design is one of the only published studies that evaluates the longer term impacts of a CCT on educational attainment. Furthermore, the accuracy of existing studies is difficult to ensure due to the various factors to control for, so the effects cannot be proven to be

causal (Adelman et al., 2008). There is also no proof that CCTs influence the quality of learning in schools single-handedly. That is, the simple act of allotting finances to participating families does not address other possible root problems that may prevent students from attending school. It is important to note that the purpose of a CCT is to facilitate the initial investment in human capital, so that families can realize the greater opportunities an education can offer them. If the quality of the school environment, teachers, and other resources is not adequate, then educational benefits will not be realized, and the intrinsic motivation to prioritize education will be difficult to achieve. This is why there is also a great need for opportunity cost studies in the field. It would be extremely helpful to know how the costs of implementing a CCT compare to the costs of allocating resources directly to certain problem areas in order to increase instructional quality (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2016). It is possible that directly investing in forms of the aforementioned complementary programs on their own would be sufficient for achieving greater school attendance in some contexts.

### **Conditional Cash Transfers in Terms of the Four A's**

As a way to conceptualize the potential benefits of implementing customized CCTs alongside complementary programs in Honduras, we can think about their potential in terms of Tomaševski's "Four A" framework for education. These four indicators (i.e., availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of schooling) serve to evaluate the progress made towards achieving the SDG of universal quality education by the year 2030 (Tomaševski, 2001).

The first two indicators listed, availability and accessibility, are heavily addressed and influenced by the implementation of conditional cash transfer programs. These indicators essentially state the need for schools to not only exist and be located at safe and reasonable distances from student homes, but also to be practical in cost for the students and their families.

The conditional allocation of funds to impoverished families makes educational attainment more practical for children. They assist in ensuring that the benefits of schooling outweigh the opportunity costs of a child's time which could be spent working for wages or helping around the house, for example. A metaanalysis done by UNESCO on the benefits of CCTs determined that overall, CCTs were shown to increase school attendance, grade promotion, and the number of years children attended school. Across the board, they were also shown to either increase enrolment or have no impact on it, and the majority of dropout rates decreased (Reimers et al., 2006). In Honduras specifically, participants of the *Programa de Asignaciones Familiares* (PRAF) program attended school one day per month more than nonbeneficiaries, and enrolment increased by 17 percentage points between 2000 and 2001. Furthermore, the dropout rates of scholarship recipients dropped from 7% to 2.4% (Reimers et al., 2006). By facilitating the attainment of an education for impoverished children, CCTs help to work towards equity in the surrounding community. *Bolsa Familia* is a federal CCT that incentivizes education and healthcare in Brazil, and it has been identified as the government program that contributes the most to reducing inequality in the country (Paiva et al., 2020). These methods and statistics explain how CCTs are beneficial in aiding with the availability and accessibility of schooling. It is still important to note, however, that since program benefits were shown to diminish with greater distances to the schools, the versatility of CCT designs should be utilized to best cater to local needs.

The acceptability of schools aligns heavily with the goal for universal *quality* education, and can greatly influence whether or not families believe it is worth it to send their children to school. As previously mentioned, more research needs to be done on how CCTs actually impact school quality and learning. However, the ability of CCTs to adapt and have modified designs



within each context is what should be utilized not only to have the greatest effect on attendance and enrolment, but also to improve other aspects of a child's schooling experience. CCTs have flexible designs in that they can easily be altered in their payment structure and payment form, as well as in which complimentary programs they invest in and offer as well. It is especially important for these programs to be adaptable as attendance increases because with more students, it may be necessary to invest in more school resources. The adaptability of CCT programs makes them a plausible option for increasing quality educational attainment in impoverished areas.

### **Context**

Honduras is a Latin-American country home to an unstable and corrupt government, and to a population that suffers from widespread poverty and severe gang and domestic violence. Over 66% of the country's population lives in poverty (The World Bank, 2019a), which has had massive impacts on the attitudes towards, and prioritization of, schooling, as the need for earning any income begins to outweigh educational concerns within families. Although rates have fluctuated with updated poverty lines, as of 2018, 50.3% of the population lived on the equivalent of \$5.50 per day (The World Bank, 2019b). The World Bank reported the country's Gross National Income for 2019 to be \$2,390 which pales greatly in comparison to the United States' GNI of \$65,910 for that same year (The World Bank, 2019). The inequality in Honduras is striking as well, as evidenced by a nearly nonexistent middle class, which makes up only 11% of the population (The World Bank, 2019a). All of these distressing circumstances make prioritizing and achieving an education much harder for the majority of families in Honduras.

Honduras was known as the "Murder Capital of the World" from 2006 until 2015, during which the highest murder rate was 98 per 100,000 people, and 15 times the global rate. As of

2019, Honduras dropped to become the country with the fourth highest murder rate in the world, although the accuracy of the statistics are questionable, as a significant amount of murders go unreported every year (Williams & Castellanos, 2019, p. 398). Domestic violence is a huge issue in Honduras. The mistreatment and murder of women is so prevalent in the country, that the homicide of the particular sex has been termed separately from other murders as femicides. Femicides increased by 263.4% between 2005 and 2013, and less than 3% of femicide cases are resolved by courts (Reynolds, 2016, p. 39). Many more go unreported altogether. Witnessing and/or experiencing violence at home has been shown to cause the intergenerational transmission of it, and to also encourage children to seek protection and relationships elsewhere, especially in gangs (Williams et al., 2019).

Gang activity is probably the greatest concern when it comes to violence and murders in the country, and it primarily affects younger populations. There is no shortage of opportunity to join a gang, and vulnerable children and adolescents often view them as a potential path to securing money, power, and progress in a society that allows for barely any chance to do so. Gang membership pulls kids away from their studies as they try to devote more time to their exclusive community and reap the most benefits, while simultaneously proving themselves within the group in order to avoid the worst types of backlash. In one study which investigated how the Honduran youth population perceived violence, there was a focus on the Social Disorganization Theory, which shifts the blame for these wrongdoings away from individuals and towards the nature of their chaotic community instead (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2017). In other words, the theory claims that the disorganization in the environment essentially forces individuals to act criminally in order to survive. It quoted another article which explained that “High crime rates exist, therefore, not because oppositional values are anchored in the

community but because limited opportunities make it difficult for residents to pursue conventional goals” (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2017, p. 379). The kids interviewed in this study identified a lack of education and insufficient economic resources as being two of the greatest motives for violence (Williams et al., 2019, p. 404). So, gang violence is a barrier to education, but the lack of an education also increases the vulnerability of youth to joining gangs. It is a toxic cycle that can only be broken through the attainment of a quality education. The political, social, and economic hurdles in Honduras are an important part of this research because they depict the extreme need for and potential benefits of increased educational attainment in the country.

### **Villa Soleada**

My research, a questionnaire-based study, demonstrates how an analysis of the lifestyles, educational attitudes, and educational experiences of parents in a community can be analyzed to ensure a thoughtful and successful implementation of a CCT. This study took place in a small rural village called Villa Soleada, which is in El Progreso, Yoro, Honduras. Map 1 below shows the 18 departments of Honduras. The city of El Progreso is a part of the Yoro department of Honduras. These departments are further divided into municipalities (World Atlas, 2021).



*Map 1.* Departments of Honduras map. Adapted from “World Atlas,” 2021. Retrieved from World Atlas. Copyright date by World Atlas.

The research participants, from 19 families, are members of the Villa Soleada community. The story of Villa Soleada begins in 2004 with Shin Fujiyama, a graduate of the University of Mary Washington, working with groups of people in El Progreso to better understand their lives, needs, and goals. At this time, the area was rampant with poverty and gang violence, and not one person in the community had graduated high school. Two years later, after persevering through countless fundraising and other logistical challenges, Fujiyama was able to officially found Students Helping Honduras (SHH) alongside his many supporters. It was this program, with a mission to build 1,000 schools and train teachers all over Honduras, that was able to continue working alongside the native inhabitants of this community and transform a

13 acre plot of land into what is now Villa Soleada. Photo 1 shows a fairly recent aerial view of the entirety of the village, including the bilingual school (A), hostel (B), Children's Home (C), resident homes (D), community soccer field (E), and the guard watchtower (F). This community is a unique and coveted one in the area, as evidenced by students from more than 10 other villages attending the Bilingual School and a large waitlist of many more who wish to (Students Helping Honduras, 2015). The children in the community, including those who are raised in the Children's Home (for orphaned or vulnerable children), are able to attend the Villa Soleada Bilingual School, which now runs from preschool all the way through high school. Not only do these students have access to schooling, but they are also ensured a quality education through access to school materials, trained teachers, and curricula that are centered around English, a skill that creates countless opportunities in Honduras. Students who live in Villa Soleada attend the Bilingual School at no cost, but there are also many students who come from outside of Villa, as far as 45 minutes by car. Due to limited space and high demand, students who do not live within the community, but wish to attend the Bilingual school, are placed on a wait list with an opportunity to be chosen through a lottery system. These students must pay \$60 per month in tuition and an additional \$37.50 per month for transportation if they need it. This year, they gave out 21 additional full scholarships to cover the costs of schooling due to the homes of these students being hit the hardest by Hurricanes Eta and Iota (KW Interview with Fujiyama, February 27, 2021).

It is important to note that Villa Soleada, as it relates to this research, can be viewed as both a site and an intervention within itself. The survey which was completed was a tool used to analyze the community as if they were to be future beneficiaries of a CCT, however in reality, there was never an intention to implement one there. Fujiyama's work in this locality has done

wonders to increase educational opportunities and attainment there, and I was able to utilize my connections with the site in order to model a process of assessing community needs and desires.



*Photo 1.* Aerial shot of Villa Soleada. (2015). Retrieved from

<https://shhkids.org/projects/villa-soleada/>

In its 15 years of existence, SHH has opened chapters at universities and high schools all over the US, whose students helped to cumulatively raise over 5 million dollars. Student members also have the opportunity (under normal circumstances) to travel to Honduras and assist in building schools at the direction of the local masons. Now, 50 schools have been built and ground has been broken on 6 more, 160 teachers have been trained, and 60 jobs have been created within the village for Hondurans as a result of program efforts. In 2020 alone, Villa Soleada and SHH as a program not only survived the Covid-19 pandemic, but they also endured

Hurricanes Eta and Iota and successfully hosted about 100 displaced people from the surrounding communities.

At the end of 2019, SHH completed an impact report which shares the results of program influences. After the completion of each project, communities experienced on average a 39% increase in school enrollment. The average number of school day cancellations due to weather complications decreased from 14 days annually, to less than one day. The teachers, students, and surrounding community at each site overall expressed great satisfaction and pride in their new school, and 98% of teachers and directors reported that the project helped them to perform their jobs better. Some communities also participated in the Train for Change program, which is a 2 year teacher training program with professional development that facilitates sustainability by encouraging newly trained teachers to share their knowledge with others in their community and beyond. An additional and unforeseen benefit of the projects was that 94% of participants also reported that they now believed more in women's ability to contribute to projects (Summers, 2019).

The central values of SHH resonate with what current research seems to suggest are the best approaches for increasing educational attainment around the world. Fujiyama has prioritized the creation of a program culture that is very much focused on connections with the local community. Rather than viewing himself and his supporters as a part of the widespread narrative of western saviors from "first-world" countries, he has instilled within his team and program the identity of "sidekicks." In other words, the 24% of the SHH staff who are not Honduran should remain cognizant of their role as fundraisers for and facilitators of the change that the local community wants and leads. SHH works to create jobs, not handouts, in order to avoid dependency and instead enable sustainability in communities of positive change. More

information on Students Helping Honduras and the story of Villa Soleada can be found online on the SHH website (Students Helping Honduras, 2015).

### **Methodology**

This section explains the details of how and to whom the questionnaire was administered. It assessed the demographics of the parent participants in Villa Soleada, as well as their lifestyle and attitudes towards and experiences in education. The questionnaire also features questions that assess what types of incentives may be most helpful in this setting. This practice of attempting to better understand the community's experiences, priorities, and opinions is in line with the aspects of the thesis that emphasize creating individualized plans for any communities that may participate in CCTs.

### **Participants**

Nineteen participants from 19 families in Villa Soleada each participated in a brief questionnaire. Each participant was a parent of a child or multiple children in school, except for one who was an older brother enrolled in the university, most likely responsible for his younger sibling in the 7th grade. All but 2 participants were females, and their ages ranged from around 20 years old to over 50 years old. Each person participated voluntarily. The average number of kids in each family was about 2, however not every child in the family was currently enrolled in school. All but 3 participants lived with a significant other. On average, parents had been enrolled in school themselves until about 5th grade, while the median years of schooling completed was 4 years.

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was carefully constructed in cooperation with Shin Fujiyama, who also currently lives in Villa Soleada, in order to ensure that the questions would make sense in



translation, and that they respected the local culture. The questionnaire was also reviewed by my thesis director.<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire was broken down into 3 sections: Demographics, Lifestyle, and Attitudes Towards Education. It was conducted orally (in Spanish), one-on-one in person. The final version of the questionnaire, in both English and Spanish, can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. It is important to note that the data from the third question was omitted after the questionnaire took place, as the meaning of it seemed to have gotten lost in translation and responses were given in the form of an expense.

## **Procedures**

This community questionnaire, which was completed in April of 2021 in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, relied heavily on communication with Shin Fujiyama, who assisted me in finding individuals who could implement the surveys in my stead. First and foremost, I met virtually with Fujiyama, who, having lived in Honduras on and off for many years, was very knowledgeable about the culture there. I presented to him some of the topics that I wanted to learn about from resident perspectives, and he helped me to form them into appropriate questions. The questionnaire was designed with the intention of creating a lens through which to view the relationships between participant demographics, lifestyles, and attitudes towards education.

We also included a disclaimer section informing participants that their participation was not going to result in them receiving the incentives that they were being asked about. Village expectations were an obstacle that Fujiyama anticipated having if this disclaimer was not included. Once the questionnaire received final approval from him, the entire survey was translated into Spanish by an American translator, which Fujiyama then looked over once more.

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<sup>3</sup> If this survey was to be conducted again in any other context, it is important to note that the questions may need to be revised in order to be sensible, relevant, and acceptable in a different community.

Together, Shin Fujiyama and I worked out the details of how the questionnaires would be administered. He selected two university students that live in Villa Soleada to implement the questionnaire for compensation. Because the village is so small, they were instructed to go door to door and ask the questions aloud to each participant. The questions were delivered orally, in Spanish, due to the illiteracy of many parents in the village. They recorded responses on paper copies of the questionnaire, and then Fujiyama forwarded pictures of the papers to me via WhatsApp. Appendix C shows the Interview Guide that he read aloud in Spanish to the interviewers in order to ensure that the directions were clear, and also to ensure safety during the pandemic (they needed to wear masks). Finally, the responses were uploaded into a spreadsheet to help categorize similarities and differences between participant responses so that greater understandings of the community's experiences, priorities, and opinions could be developed.

In terms of the background research that was done beforehand, I utilized the Academic Search Complete database from the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper Library. I included different variations of key words such as education, Honduras, and conditional cash transfer (CCT). In order to have a greater repertoire of resources, I identified potentially valuable Spanish sources as well. The American translator that I worked with was then able to read through them, provide me with an English overview of the article, and translate key phrases she identified as relevant to my research into English. Personal communication with Fujiyama was also a key source of information for better understanding the inner workings of Villa Soleada prior to my research.

### **Reliability**

The completion of this research was the culmination of over a year's work which took into account first and foremost the importance of safety and respect of my participants. The

entire process relied heavily on virtual international connections with qualified individuals.

Numerous conversations about participant privacy, safety, and respect took place in combination with Shin Fujiyama and my Thesis Director, Dr. Kara Brown, in order to ensure that the project was carried out ethically and produced meaningful results. The Literature Review section took into account both English and Spanish journal article findings in order to give a more comprehensive and relevant view. My Thesis Director guided me throughout the research process, which she is incredibly familiar with, especially on this international scale. Fujiyama was also an invaluable resource because not only was he able to provide an insider's perspective when formulating the questionnaire for local Hondurans, but he was also able to find students who were willing to administer the survey in person, and he managed this process on the grounds. These two individuals brought key new perspectives to the process and guided my work into producing dependable and principled results.

### **Positionality**

My positionality as the researcher in this project is something that is important to consider, especially as it relates to the research design and analysis. I am a white female who is native to the Columbia, South Carolina region in the United States of America. At the time of conducting this research, I was in my early 20's, and completing my final two years of college as an Elementary Education major at the University of South Carolina. My connections to Shin Fujiyama and Villa Soleada were first facilitated through my participation in Students Helping Honduras on campus. I went on my first volunteer trip in the winter of 2018, and was able to return once more in the winter of 2019, right before the onset of the pandemic. These trips are what familiarized me with Villa Soleada and allowed me to develop authentic relationships with some of the kids there. I also got the chance to have many conversations with Fujiyama while

there, which unknowingly formed the foundation for this research partnership. These trips and the mission of SHH to expand access to schooling are what first began to cultivate my questions about educational attainment in Honduras. My research led me to the increasingly popular concept of Conditional Cash Transfers, and I proceeded to find a way to utilize my connection to Villa Soleada to further explore the potentials of this option.

As a part of my growing passion for this program and country, I decided to take three more semesters of Spanish classes. Taking these courses and compounding them with week-long immersive experiences in Honduras caused my Spanish language acquisition, especially in terms of understanding, to improve greatly. This being said, part of my positionality as a researcher includes my background knowledge of the Spanish language. I am not fluent in the language, and therefore hired a translator, but my basic skills allowed me to select relevant Spanish articles for my translator to then evaluate. This way, important Spanish-speaking perspectives were not ignored.

It is also important to discuss how bias throughout the research process was controlled for, given all of these different parts of my identity and experiences. During the creation of the questionnaire and the analysis of responses, I had to keep in mind the perspectives and culture of the Villa Soleada community members. Discussions with Fujiyama guided me into creating culturally sensitive questions and understanding analyses of results. Furthermore, my prior experience on the grounds in Villa Soleada helped me to better understand the conditions and cultures from which these individuals were sharing their experiences and opinions. I was cautious to create informed inferences from the data rather than baseless assumptions.

Due to the pandemic, I was unable to go to Honduras to conduct the questionnaire myself. I believe this had both positive and negative impacts on the research. On the one hand,

having Spanish-speaking students from Villa Soleada conduct the questionnaires eliminated the language barrier and also likely helped mitigate any nervousness on the part of the participants. However, if I were present for these interactions I would have been able to pick up on more details like side conversations, the environment of the home, body language, etc. which could have contributed to the lens through which I evaluated the responses.

After my initial involvement in SHH, I realized how remarkable the program's impacts are, and they inspired my interest in further research about how to incentivize education in communities. I began to wonder how to encourage the same desire for an education that other communities approached SHH with. I remained cognizant of my positionality throughout the completion of this research to ensure a responsible design and reliable results. I am aware, however, that there is no way to eliminate all bias.

## **Results**

The following is a descriptive analysis focused on the commonalities and differences among families and their responses to the questionnaire. It is structured in the same way that the questionnaire is, which includes sections about demographics, lifestyles, and attitudes towards education. The link to a spreadsheet which has all participant responses recorded can be found in Appendix D.

## Demographics

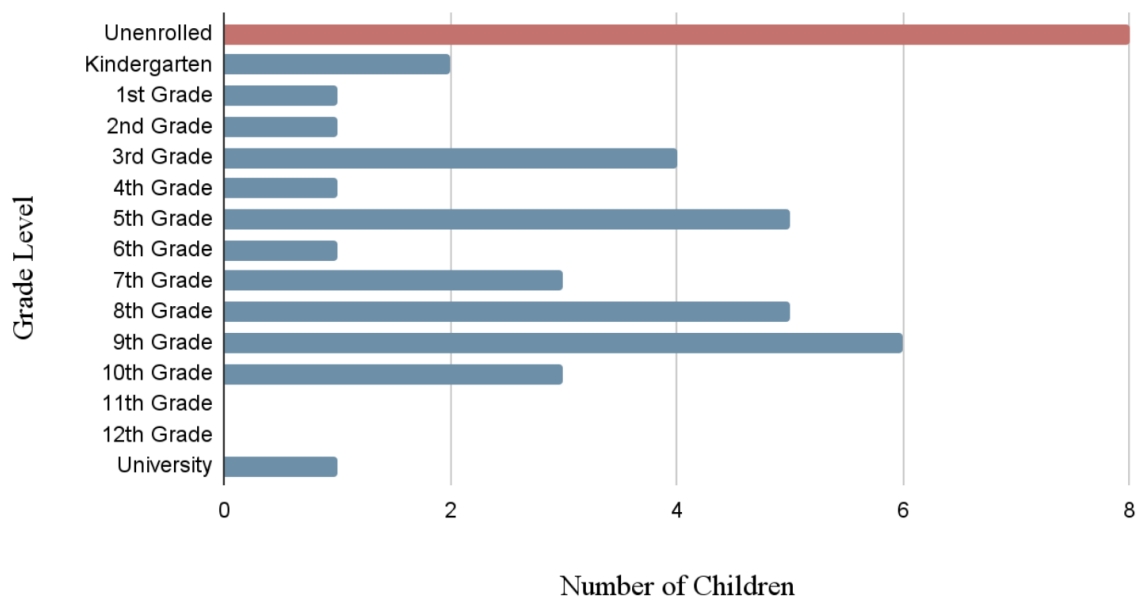


Figure 1. Number of Children Enrolled at Each Grade Level.

In the demographics section of the questionnaire, my aim was to paint a picture of the parents and families that make up this community. Its questions provide information on the ages and educational backgrounds of parents, as well as the current enrollment levels of their children. This data becomes useful in showing whether or not there is a notable need for intervention.

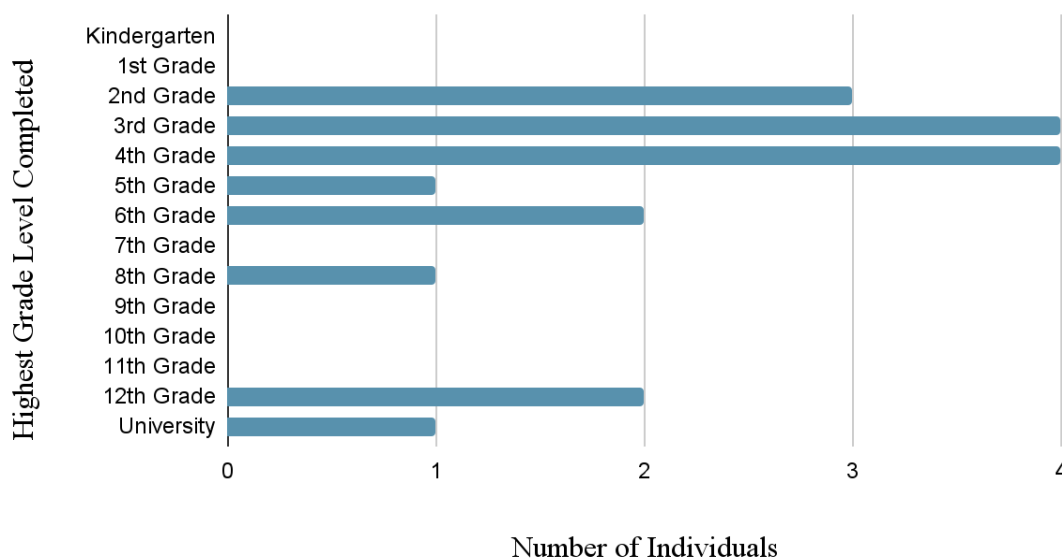
One parent (or guardian) in 19 different households was interviewed as a part of this process. Most of the participants fell within the age range of 36-50 (about 53%), 37% of participants fell within the age range of 20-35, and only 2 participants were over 50 years old. All but 3 of the respondents live with a significant other. Each household in Villa Soleada had an average of 2 children, although one household had 5 children. It is important to note however, that approximately 74% of the households in participation had all of their school-aged children enrolled. In all, 34 of the 42 kids split among the households were enrolled in school

(approximately 81% of the children in these families). Normally in Villa Soleada, this percentage would be much closer to 100%, whereas the national rate of enrollment for primary school aged children was about 82.5% as of 2017 (Global Partnership for Education, 2020). It is difficult to find more recent data regarding enrollment rates of children in Honduras during the pandemic. After discussing this finding with Fujiyama, I was informed that many students have dropped out of school due to depression or other mental health issues throughout the pandemic. Villa Soleada was also heavily impacted by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in November of 2020. During this time, the school was converted into a shelter for displaced persons around the country whose homes had been destroyed in the storms. Gangs have also proven to be an obstacle that is persistent even within this relatively safe village, as one of the dropouts was due to an affiliation with the MS-13 gang. The grade levels of the students in the households ranged all the way from kindergarten to the university level. Figure 1 shows a graph of this distribution (1 participant did not respond to this question).

In contrast, the school completion levels of the parents and guardians are displayed in Figure 2. Although one participant did not respond to this question, the data collected displays that most participants completed between two and four grades of school. One participant is currently enrolled in a university and is the older brother responsible for a younger child in the village.

One demographic that was not recorded in this interview was participant sex. I was informed that all but 2 respondents were female, however which responses belong to which participant was kept confidential. Likewise, the genders of the children are unclear when analyzing the questionnaire results. Although question 3 did ask how many sons and daughters each participant had, their responses did not specify how many of their children were male and

how many were female, and furthermore which were enrolled in school. If further research were to be completed in a similar manner, I would recommend revising the structure of this question so as to receive clearer answers that could be further analyzed on account of gender.



*Figure 2. Participant School Completion.*

### ***Lifestyle***

This section of the questionnaire was created with the goal of better understanding the employment, expenditures, and challenges within families so that the specific types of needs of the community could start to be identified.

Within this particular sample, it was interesting to find that only one family had a child who was working. This family is the one with a child who attends a university, so it is possible that he/she is the student who is working, although this was not clarified in the interview.

National statistics would point one to expect much higher percentages of child labor. According to the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2015), as of 2014, the percentage of children in



Honduras aged 5- 14 who were engaged in some form of child labor and not in school was 7.8%. Another 4.4% of children aged 7- 14 balanced work and school.

The next part of the questionnaire asked about the quantities that families spent on various aspects of their lives per month (prior to the onset of the pandemic). The average expenses were calculated to be about 4,863 lempiras on food (~\$204), 1,026 lempiras on medical bills (~\$43), and 826 lempiras on electricity (~\$35). The conversation was left open for participants to list any other expenses they felt were significant, although no other data was collected. Another necessary questionnaire edit that did not become evident until the analysis stage was the need to also ask about school supplies expenditures<sup>4</sup>. This would have given more clarity on the very last question of the interview, which gauged what types of incentives participants would value most. School supplies were one of the incentives listed.

Perhaps the most striking result from the questionnaire was the fact that 100% of participants listed the pandemic as the greatest obstacle for keeping their children enrolled in school. This response is compatible with the background information that Fujiyama shared in his explanation regarding the lower enrolment rate. In regards to the environment in which these individuals live, 32% of respondents reported that they were very worried about gang violence affecting them and their families, and 68% reported that they were slightly worried. It is important to note that not a single participant reported that they are not at all worried about the potential effects of gang violence in their community.

### ***Attitude Towards Education***

This section was created with an intent to collect data on the educational aspirations of parents for themselves and their children, as well as their current satisfaction with the school

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<sup>4</sup> Family school supply expenditures may include a backpack, notebooks, and school uniforms (S. Fujiyama, personal communication, October 6, 2021).

their children attend. Furthermore, this section was integral for understanding the types of incentives that would be most effective in encouraging school attendance.

Across the board, 100% of participants shared that they believed their child would graduate from high school. It is unclear whether all of the indications of “yes” also pertained to beliefs about children graduating from a university, due to the structure of the question. If this questionnaire were to be implemented again, I would divide this question into two separate ones. The following question asked participants what level of education they thought they would achieve when they were a child, in other words assessing their youthful educational aspirations. About 56% of the participants who responded to this question shared that as a kid they believed they would complete college. Another approximately 28% believed they would complete high school. Only three participants believed they would only complete primary school or less. Although 88% of the participants who fully answered the necessary questions did not achieve their educational aspirations, it is possible that the extent of their aspirations may have had an impact on how many years of school they completed. The average grade completion of the five individuals who aspired to complete secondary school was about 3rd grade, while the average grade completion of the 10 individuals who aspired to complete college was about 7th grade.

When parents were asked why they choose to send their child/children to school, the responses varied slightly but in potentially significant ways. Fifty-eight percent of responses contained phrases centered around their child having a better future and/or quality of life. Twenty-six percent of them were career-oriented, containing ideas about better and more varied job opportunities, as well as about learning how to be a professional. 32% of participant responses were more holistic in reasoning. Their explanations contained phrases about learning and being a better or good person overall.

When asked to rate various aspects of the Villa Soleada Bilingual School, few participants were critical of them. Every participant gave “safeness from gang activity” and “overall quality of education” a 10/10, except for one participant each who rated the respective categories a 5/10. Approximately 84% of participants gave “teacher quality” a 10/10. Two respondents rated it a 9/10, and one gave it an 8/10.

The final question on the survey asked participants what type of incentivization would be most helpful to them, if they were to be incentivized to send their children to school. Table 1 shows the average ratings that were given to each of the categories. It makes sense that monthly food rations would potentially be the most valued by families, especially considering their expenses on food each month were the highest of all the categories, averaging 4,863 lempiras or about \$204. The low rating for a cash incentive is clear and unexpected. Once again, it would have been very insightful if explanations to these responses were also captured on the ground. Some families' medical expenses were very high, and the average medical expenses across families ranked the second highest of the categories, so a high rating for a free healthcare incentive seems compatible with the previous data. As previously stated, if the questionnaire were to be revised, it would be helpful to know how much families are currently spending on school supplies in order to potentially relate that to this incentivization rating. Lastly, families spent the least amount of money on electricity, so it also makes sense that help with electric bills would have a lower rating than most other categories.

<b>Incentivization Category</b>	<b>Average Rating (Approximate)</b>
Monthly Food Rations	10
Cash	5
Free Healthcare	9

School Supplies	9
Help with Electric Bills	8
Other	No data

*Table 1. Incentive Ratings.*

These interview questions leave a lot of room for potential future research on the relationships that these questions and graphs/tables explore. The Discussion section will connect the major findings from the questionnaire back to other research and the thesis question.

### **Discussion**

The data collected from this questionnaire are very useful in understanding both the particular dynamics in one community and the ways these details might shape the most impactful types of CCT designs with the most motivating types of incentives for residents there. First and foremost, this type of questionnaire can be used to further confirm a need for intervention, a primary step suggested by research (Adelman et al., 2008; Galiana et al., 2000; Martinez, 2012). As previously mentioned, Villa Soleada is already an intervention site in itself, so the need for an additional intervention was not necessarily apparent. That being said, COVID-19 has proven to be a truly global barrier to education, as only 81% of the children split among the 19 families interviewed were enrolled in school. Normally, school enrolment rates in Villa Soleada approach 100% for the children above 4 years old. The pandemic has caused a rise in depression and other mental health issues within the community, thereby causing dropouts. This community also experienced the impacts of two hurricanes and the continued threats of gang violence, likely on a much smaller scale than in other areas of the country. This modeled how compounded crises are leading to deepened and persistent vulnerabilities, and how even in an area where a need was not expected, a similar questionnaire could be used to explore the need for an intervention like a CCT.

The universal response that the pandemic was the main hindrance to keeping children enrolled in school was very informative for filling in these enrollment gaps, and it shows that a question like this should be reassessed over time in any beneficiary community. It would be very important to know what families view as the most significant barrier to education at any given time so that CCT program designs can be responsive and adjusted accordingly. A model for this approach is the Mc-Govern Dole FFE program in Honduras, which was adjusted to increase security measures in response to beneficiaries reporting violence hindering school attendance (Crea et al., 2017). The questionnaire also showed that although pandemic related concerns seem to be at the forefront, worries about gang violence persist. Likewise, funds allocated to protection from such violence should not be redirected elsewhere if this were the site of a CCT intervention. In short, the CCT should be additive.

This village is also unlike other rural villages in Honduras because child labor is not, at present, as large of an issue as it is outside of this community, in large part due to SHH underwriting the costs of attending school. This labor-related question suggested that hurdles to education lie elsewhere in this specific community, and not in the need for children to be working to earn money for the family. The incentive ratings were arguably one of the most important parts of the questionnaire, which was then further informed by the collection of data on monthly expenditures in different categories. This question gave insight into which types of incentives would be the most influential for residents. Without asking this question, it may have been tempting to reward families in this locality with cash, but this was clearly not valued as much as direct help with specific expenses.

Carrying out this process has made it clear that the questionnaire should be multi-staged or include a follow-up portion. Unanticipated questions come up in the process, and clarification

is required in order to have a full understanding of the community. In this case for example, it would be enlightening to understand why residents so clearly preferred not to have the cash reward over the other incentives. The questionnaire would also need to be altered in order to include a question that assesses how much families spend on school supplies monthly so that the expenditures can be related back to the desired incentives of the community. There is also room to historically compare what the greatest obstacle was for child enrollment prior to the pandemic. Analysis of the educational aspirations and accomplishments of parents also inspired new questions regarding the power of having high educational aspirations to begin with. Future research could investigate these relationships on a larger scale.

One of the primary focuses of conditional cash transfers should always be that the intervention is sustainable, meaning that the facilitator can eventually pull away from the situation, and the program and its benefits would continue on just as strongly when run responsibly from within the community. Just as Shin Fujiyama himself emphasizes as the founder of SHH, we must all act as sidekicks to the local community in order to ensure the sustainability of an intervention. This should apply for the implementation of foreign-run conditional cash transfer programs as well. A questionnaire similar to the one that was used in this study ensures that the facilitators of a CCT are familiar with the goals, desires, attitudes, and backgrounds of beneficiary families, and therefore that they do not simply implement what they feel would be best without taking into consideration all that the community culture itself brings to the table. It gives insight into the ways in which a CCT can be effective in achieving its primary goal of getting children enrolled in and attending school, while also achieving the other goals of the community as a whole. A CCT that is implemented on the foundation of a similar questionnaire will more likely address all of Tomaševski's Four A indicators on the right to an

education (Tomaševski, 2001). Schooling will become more available and accessible to families because they will have extra support in the areas that they want and need it most. In other words, the obstacles to attending school will be minimized. Furthermore, by assessing family attitudes towards and reviews of the current schooling facilities and system, the appropriate complimentary programs can be identified to ensure that the program and schools are acceptable to families. In other words, the aspects of schooling that are still lacking can then be addressed on a case-by-case basis. A personalized questionnaire like this also increases the adaptability of the CCT program and the related school(s) by providing opportunities for community-driven change in education.

This questionnaire and its results could inspire plenty of future research. It has taken into account what previous research on CCTs has suggested is needed in order to have a successful program design. Further research could be completed on the logistics of program implementation, especially in terms of the global organizations that are willing to partner with local communities in order to effectuate CCTs. It was also interesting to compare the educational aspirations of parents to their actual achievement through the questionnaire. Their aspirations for themselves could also be compared to those they have for their children. It would be compelling to perform a study on how educational aspirations impact educational achievement, both for an individual and for their offspring over time.

If this specific study were to be completed again or expanded upon, it would be ideal for the researcher to be present on the grounds in order to gather as much initial, and follow-up, data as possible. Certain questions should be restructured, as previously mentioned, and a follow-up session should be included as well to fill in any gaps in information. The goal of implementing this questionnaire was to become familiar with the residents of the community in preparation for

the hypothetical design of a thoughtful and successful conditional cash transfer program, and this methodology has proven to be a useful start for community analysis.

### **Conclusion**

This project was over a year in the making, and it involved a huge learning curve, many unforeseen obstacles, and some unanticipated results. Just as most researchers begin, my research process started with a natural passion for education. When I embarked on my first trip to Honduras with SHH in 2018, I had no idea that I was conducting research then too. A new passion was ignited in me from the respect I developed for the Honduran people, and the desire I had to learn more about the state of education in the country as a whole. I began to brainstorm ways in which the pervasive problems of government corruption, gang violence, and poverty could be solved, particularly through education. As I researched education initiatives in industrializing nations, the concept of conditional cash transfers caught my attention. I delved into more research surrounding them and found commonalities in the takeaways of various projects. Specifically, research uncovered that the most impactful CCTs were administered in areas where there was a clear need for intervention, and were also tailored to address the most immediate needs of the community members. I then created a questionnaire in cooperation with Fujiyama and Dr. Brown, my thesis director, in order to model these steps and analyze the results from one small village. In doing so, I found that there were limits to my design, especially given the obstacles that the pandemic brought, but I was surprised to find how deeply these 15 questions could be analyzed to shed light on important qualities that were unique to this specific village. The main revisions I advised for this procedure involved the nature of some of the questions, the need for a multi-stage questionnaire design, and of course the preference for the data to be collected directly by the researcher.



I learned through this process that research is at times unpredictable, but always important. It starts with an authentic interest and initial ideas, and change should be expected from there. I also learned how important it is to have the support of others who have been through the process before, and who have different perspectives which add to the reliability of the project. My research has contributed to the field an example methodology through which to become familiar with a community before designing and implementing a CCT. I have also learned that research is never complete. This project opened the door to many other opportunities for either repeated research, or research on very connected ideas. Education in Honduras and around the world will continue to be a pervasive issue until we truly achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of universal quality education.

## Appendix A

### English Questionnaire

#### **Disclaimer/Consent:**

The following questionnaire is for a research project being conducted by Karsen Ward from the University of South Carolina in the United States. The purpose of this questionnaire is to help me to better understand your personal experiences and opinions about education as a resident and parent in Honduras. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time. The surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. Thank you sincerely for your time.

#### **Demographics**

1. What is your age?
  - a) under 20 years old
  - b) 20- 35 years old
  - c) 36- 50 years old
  - d) Over 50 years old
  - e) Prefer not to answer
2. Do you live with a significant other?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
3. How many sons and daughters do you have? Are they each enrolled in school?
4. What grades have they completed?
5. How many years of schooling did you complete?

#### **Lifestyle**

- 1) Do your children have paid jobs? If so, how many hours do they work per week?
- 2) Before COVID, how much money did you spend on each of the following categories monthly?
  - a) School supplies
  - b) Food
  - c) Electricity
  - d) Medical expenses
  - e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) How many meals per month would your family be skipping without the food aid from SHH?
- 4) What is the greatest challenge to keeping your child/children enrolled in school?
- 5) How worried are you about gang violence affecting you and your family?
  - a) Very worried
  - b) Slightly worried
  - c) Not worried at all

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**Attitude Towards Education**

1. Do you think your child/children will graduate from High School? Do you think they will graduate from college?
2. When you were a child, what level of education did you think you would achieve?
  - a) Completion of some primary school
  - b) Completion of primary school
  - c) Completion of secondary school
  - d) Completion of college
3. Why do you choose to send your children to school? What do you believe are the benefits of an education?
4. Please rate the following aspects of the Villa Soleada Bilingual School (before COVID) from 1 to 10, 1 being the worst it could be, and 10 being the best.
  - a) Safeness from gang activity
  - b) Teacher Quality- Teacher knowledge, passion, and skill
  - c) Overall quality of education in the school- Student learning achievement, etc.
5. If you were to be incentivized to send your child to school, what would be the most helpful to you? Please give each category a score of 1 to 10, 1 being the least helpful, and 10 being the most helpful.
  - a) Monthly food rations
  - b) School supplies
  - c) Cash
  - d) Help with electric bills
  - e) Free healthcare
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Reminder: Your participation in this questionnaire will not result in you receiving such incentives. Your responses are only being used to further my understanding of local attitudes and obstacles to education.*

## Appendix B

### Spanish Questionnaire

#### Descargo de responsabilidad/consentimiento:

El siguiente cuestionario es para un proyecto de investigación dirigido por Karsen Ward de la Universidad de Carolina del Sur (USC) en los Estados Unidos.

El propósito de este cuestionario es ayudarme a entender mejor sus experiencias y opiniones sobre la educación como residente y padre en Honduras. Su participación en este estudio de investigación es totalmente voluntaria. Si decide participar, puede retirarse en cualquier momento. Las encuestas no contendrán información que le identifique personalmente. Gracias sinceramente por su tiempo.

#### Demograficas

1. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
  - a) Menos de 20 años
  - b) 20- 35 años
  - c) 36- 50 años
  - d) Más de 50 años
  - e) Prefiero no responder
2. ¿Vives con pareja?
  - a) Sí
  - b) No
3. ¿Cuántos hijos e hijas tienes? ¿Están cada uno de ellos registrados en la escuela?
4. ¿Cuales grados han completado?
5. ¿Cuántos años de escuela cumpliste?

#### Estilo de vida

- 1) ¿Sus hijos tienen trabajos remunerados En tal caso, ¿cuántas horas trabajan cada semana?
- 2) Antes de COVID, ¿cuánto dinero gastabas en cada una de las categorías cada mes? Materiales de escuela
  - a) Comida
  - b) Electricidad
  - c) Gastos médicos
  - d) Otro: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) ¿Cuántas comidas al mes le faltaría a su familia sin la ayuda alimentaria de SSH?
- 4) ¿Cuál es el mayor desafío para mantener a su(s) hijo(s) registrado en la escuela?
- 5) ¿Qué tan preocupado está de que la violencia de pandillas afecte usted y su familia?
  - a) Muy preocupado
  - b) Un poco preocupado
  - c) No preocupado

**Sentimientos hacia la educación**

1. ¿Cree que su hijo o hijos se graduarán de la escuela secundaria? Cree que se graduarán de la universidad?
2. Cuando era niño, ¿qué nivel de educación pensaba que alcanzaría?
  - a) Compleción de parte de escuela primaria
  - b) Compleción de escuela primaria
  - c) Compleción de escuela secundaria
  - d) Compleción de universidad
3. ¿Por qué decide enviar a sus hijos a la escuela? ¿Cuáles crees que son los beneficios de una educación?
4. Por favor califique los siguientes aspectos de la Villa Soleada Bilingual School (antes de COVID) de 1 a 10, dado que 1 significa lo peor que podría ser, y 10 significa lo mejor.
  - a) Seguridad de la actividad de las pandillas
  - b) Calidad de profesor - conocimiento, pasión y habilidad del profesor
  - c) Calidad general de la educación en la escuela - logros de aprendizaje de los estudiantes, etc.
5. Si tuviera un incentivo para enviar a su hijo a la escuela, ¿qué sería lo más útil? Por favor, asigne a cada categoría una puntaje del 1 al 10, ya que 1 significa lo menos útil y 10 significa lo más útil
  - a) Raciones de comida cada mes
  - b) Materiales de escuela
  - c) Efectivo
  - d) Ayuda con la factura de la luz
  - e) Asistencia médica gratis
  - f) Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

*Aviso: Su participación en este cuestionario no resultará en que reciba tales incentivos. Sus respuestas solo se están utilizando para mejorar mi comprensión de los sentimientos locales y los obstáculos a la educación.*

## Appendix C

### Interview Guide

Hello! Thank you so much for agreeing to implement this questionnaire in the Villa Soleada community. The results of these questionnaires will be used for a research project that is being done at the University of South Carolina in the United States. Your help is so appreciated!

**Prior to the Interviews:**

- Read over the interview questions.
- The parents of about 20 households will be interviewed in all.
- Make sure you have these materials with you: A copy of the interview questions, paper, and a pen/pencil

**During the Interviews:**

Please follow these procedures:

- Wear a mask.
- Take *detailed* notes on all of the parent responses, including any extra comments they make.
- Take a picture of all of your final notes and then upload them to our shared google drive folder.

**After the Interviews:**

- Record how many hours you spent interviewing families.

## **Appendix D**

Link to Questionnaire Results

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OFIdVY9pqcRnXrwdv9XH2vR38BGtRPzuT39ezHTats8/edit?usp=sharing>

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I also could not have completed this research with the same level of credibility and efficiency if it were not for Kimi Coleman, who translated the documents I needed for use in Honduras and also gathered relevant data from Spanish journal articles. Thank you also to the generous participants of this questionnaire, who are residents of Villa Soleada and volunteered their time, information, and opinions in order for this research to come to fruition. Furthermore, I am incredibly grateful to the university students who conducted the questionnaire with the 19 families in the village. They devoted their time and energy into collecting this important information in a safe and reliable way at a time when I was unable to be there and do it myself. Their expert level of proficiency in the Spanish language is a skillset that I am sure strengthened the process, and one that I would not have been able to bring to the table.

Finally, I truly cannot express enough gratitude towards Mr. Shin Fujiyama for his help and guidance over the lengthy duration of this process. He firstly provided me with the experience that sparked my interest in this country and topic. Then, during a time when I could



not be on the grounds to facilitate the research myself, Fujiyama stepped in to organize the participants, questionnaire conductors, and the sharing of the results. He also was integral in the brainstorming involved at each stage, and he ensured that the research was culturally relevant and respectful. He was much more of an active participant than I could have expected of anyone who is so busy and invested in concepts larger than himself, but his generosity once again shone through in all that he did for me throughout this work.

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