

**Regendering nigade: Transforming the gendered distribution
of power in Addis Ababa's business community**

by

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Abstract

Compared with male entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia have a lower stock of all of the resources of symbolic power: economic, cultural, and social capital. Based on interviews with 23 women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa and more than twenty other individuals in the NGO, government, and private sector development space, I identify four key challenges facing women entrepreneurs. I argue that entrepreneurship development programmes that focus on building women's business networks have significant potential to change the balance of power between men and women in the Ethiopian business community, primarily because they allow women to leverage increased social capital (Bourdieu 1984) to achieve greater economic and cultural capital as well. I also find that male family members serve as an important form of social capital for women entrepreneurs, allowing them to access information and traditional male business networks.

Keywords: International development; gender equality; Ethiopia; entrepreneurship; social networks; symbolic power.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to the Addis Ababa women who made it possible. And to my grandmother, for helping me get to Ethiopia; and to my grandfather, who never wanted me to go there in the first place.

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List of Acronyms

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International & Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ADLI	Agricultural development-led industrialization
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act (United States)
AMDe	Agricultural Markets Development Program
AWEP	Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program
AWiB	Association of Women in Business (or Boldness)
BDS	Business development services
CAWEE	Center for the Advancement of Women’s Economic Empowerment
CGD	Center for Global Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSP	Proclamation for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies (a.k.a. ‘Charities and Societies Proclamation’)
DFATD	Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (Canada)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EDC	Entrepreneurship Development Center
EPRDF	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party
EWFDA	Ethiopian Women’s Fashion Designers Association
EWLA	Ethiopian Women Laywers Association
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GNI	Gross national income
GONGO	Government-organized non-governmental organization
GTP	Growth and transformation plan
IFC	International Finance Corporation
LLC	Limited Liability Corporation
MSE	Micro- or small-enterprise
MSMEs	Micro-, small-, and medium-enterprises
MWCYA	Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs (Ethiopia)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

PECs	Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies
PLC	Private limited company
SME	Small- or medium-enterprise
SNNPR	Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UNCTAD	United Nations Commission on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WALN	Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network
WAO	Women's Affairs Office

Chapter 1.

Introduction

“A shy priest, a blind donkey, and a courageous woman are useless.” Amhara proverb, Yeshi 1995 in Ashenafi 2009

Dahab Mesfin is 43 years old, married, and has three children, ages 18, 16, and 9. She is educated as an accountant. She has been running her own specialty coffee export business for three years, since her husband—a successful entrepreneur in his own right—gave her control of one of his subsidiary companies. Since then, she has hired 46 permanent employees, launched a successful export business, and been recruited by numerous U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) projects to take her business further. Her coffee is 100% shade-grown and traceable. She is active in the Ethiopian Coffee Growers Association, Women in Coffee, the Ethiopian Women Exporters Association, and the new, ACIDI/VOCA¹-sponsored Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN). Dahab is part of a growing class of women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, small- and medium-enterprise (SME) owners with the potential to fuel Ethiopian industrialization and the potential to redefine women’s roles for successive generations of Ethiopian girls.

¹ Formerly Agricultural Cooperative Development International & Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance; now known almost exclusively by its acronym.

“If I go away for three days to visit the farms, I have to leave explicit instructions with my husband for feeding the kids, helping them with their homework, you know, and still when I return it’s most likely not done,” Dahab explains. For all his business savvy, her husband struggles a bit as a primary caregiver. I had been asking Dahab questions about what challenges women entrepreneurs face based on their gender through a translator when she broke from the current topic to tell me in English: “I’m very proud of my husband. He gave me this business.”

Women in Ethiopia have traditionally been relegated to the low end of value chains and the informal sector, while men have controlled high-value assets and the top end of value chains. Women like Dahab are changing that, and disrupting men’s long-standing dominance in Ethiopia’s business community. How and why Ethiopian women entrepreneurs are rising in wealth, number, and prominence are loaded questions. The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party, which holds all of the seats in the Ethiopian Parliament, has promoted affirmative action programs to assist women entrepreneurs and civil servants in their advancement in its rhetoric. The Ethiopian government collaborates with a plethora of domestic and international actors to create opportunities for women entrepreneurs to get training, access international markets, and even organize into industry associations. Well-educated women are also tapping into existing, male-dominated business networks to advance their business agendas with the help of male relatives. *Ahoun yishallale*: ‘now it is better.’ Every woman entrepreneur I spoke with agreed: In Ethiopia, it is better for women who want to start a business now than it was ten years ago. “Everywhere there is an opportunity,” says Rahel Moges, President of the Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program, “You just have to be willing to take it.” I argue that the most promising existing opportunities for women entrepreneurs to

increase their power and, as a result, the power of women in business generally, are opportunities that increase their connectedness to existing power networks and their power to create networks of their own.

Most days during my fieldwork, I joined the rest of humanity, putting my faith in the Jesus stickers that lined the roof of a rusty blue minibus to get over Entoto Mariam and down the rutted mountain road into Addis Ababa to meet the city's trailblazing women entrepreneurs and hear their stories. On three days late in my fieldwork, I had four interviews scheduled between 9 AM and 6 PM. On those days, I hired a driver that my lodge recommended.

On the last of the three days, I recruited a friend and gender advisor, Melat*, to help me translate interviews with several entrepreneurs with limited English proficiency. Our hired driver, Samuel*, asked me what kind of car I could have, if I could have any kind of car. An Audi, I said, or maybe a Tesla. Samuel didn't know either make. Melat mocked him. The argument that followed surpassed my modest Amharic comprehension.

Samuel dropped us off at our appointment at Dahab Trading Company in Gerji. Dahab was waylaid at Bole Airport, overseeing an export shipment. We waited.

"Tell me what Samuel was saying in the car when you started arguing."

"He's a typical Ethiopian asshole. He was saying like 'Women in Addis don't have drivers license, they don't know how to drive, they drive their husbands' car, it's all their husbands' money.' He said like 'If I am rich and I have a big car then I can have a different woman every night.' But he didn't even know what an Audi is."

I later found that Samuel's opinions were indeed 'typical', or at least commonplace. The cultural imagination of a rich woman in Addis Ababa sees her as a sexually attractive and fertile young wife of a much older *nigade*, 'businessman.' If she were driving, it would certainly be her husband's car. With the rise of *yaset nigade* 'businesswoman', two competing imaginaries of women entrepreneurs have arisen: the first simply grafts business ownership onto the older model of a rich man's wife, and assumes no competency or responsibility on the woman's part for the operations of the business. The second and newer imaginary of a woman entrepreneur is the one that haunts real women entrepreneurs: She is *ibt* 'crazy', a careerist who shuns her traditional feminine responsibilities for the social reproduction of the family and the community, and bound for divorce. "I had no intentions of marrying an educated woman," their husbands will accuse when they file for divorce (Haileselassie Tadesse 2014: 97). Through entrepreneurship, women are increasing their stock of symbolic power and the share of power held by women in Ethiopian society as a whole. And, whether or not they intend to, Addis Ababa's new class of women leaders in the business sphere are challenging long-held beliefs about the role and place of women in Ethiopian society. They are at the center of a heated public debate about gender ideology and gender relations.

Over the course of eight weeks in Addis Ababa in July and August 2015, I conducted over 40 interviews with 23 women entrepreneurs and other individuals involved in private sector development in Ethiopia, including current and former officials from the Ministry of Trade, ACIDI/VOCA's Agricultural Markets Development (AMDe) project team, and officials at the Entrepreneurship Development Centre. I also consulted with several self-identified feminists within the business community and feminist activists

to help me answer the question: What are women SME owners accessing in their activities as entrepreneurs that are increasing their stock of symbolic power? As a group, how are women entrepreneurs achieving their strategic gender needs and contributing to greater gender equality in Ethiopian society—or, at least, in Addis Ababa?

The goals of this research project are twofold: The first goal is to describe the ways in which Ethiopian gender ideologies inhibit women entrepreneurs' ability to achieve their personal objectives in business. The second goal is to develop a theory of how women's entrepreneurship development programs can truly promote gender equality, and allow women to overcome the gendered business challenges they face. Compared with male entrepreneurs, women on the whole have a lower stock of all of the sources of symbolic power: economic, cultural, and social capital. Based on interviews with 23 women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa and more than twenty other individuals in the NGO, government, and private sector development space, the four primary gendered business challenges I identify in this research are (1) women's domestic and social obligations; (2) a lack of access to capital; (3) a lack of information, which has its roots in women's exclusion from male-dominated social networks within the business community; and (4) corruption. I argue that entrepreneurship development programmes that focus on building women's business networks have significant potential to contribute to a more fair and equal society in Ethiopia primarily because they allow women to leverage increased social capital (Bourdieu 1984) to achieve greater economic and cultural capital as well. Further supporting the relevance of social capital to women's entrepreneurial success and gender equality is the fact that many of the women in this study have received significant support—connections, start-up capital, and business know-how—from male relatives. Male family members are a form of social capital for

women entrepreneurs: with the growth of women's business networks, women entrepreneurs can become sources of social capital for one another, and thus increase their collective symbolic power. Through collective action, women entrepreneurs may then leverage this power to reform the institutions through which they and other women experience gender discrimination.

The space for Ethiopian civil society actors to transform gender relations and create a more equal society is limited by the government's dominance over "The Woman Question", and by the restrictions it places on civil society (Biseswar 2008, 2011). Instead of pursuing transformative change, the government and NGOs alike pursue activities to improve women's ability to meet their practical gender needs—those obligations arising from normative cultural expectations of women, such as caring for children, cooking, and attending to sick relatives (Molyneux 1985; Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003). Women may also have strategic gender needs—for autonomy, power, or control over their bodies—based in a desire to transcend the subordinate position that women find themselves in within patriarchal societies (Moser 1989). Women entrepreneurs, particularly small- and medium-enterprise owners, contribute substantially to the FDRE's economic development strategy, and promoting women's entrepreneurship aligns nicely with the ruling party's promise to pursue women's empowerment to honor the many women who fought for liberation against the Derg. As a result, women SME owners in Ethiopia are receiving an increasing amount of attention and support from a variety of domestic and international sources. Supporting women's empowerment is often discussed as a powerful means of achieving other development outcomes, such as increased school attendance, reduced fertility rates, and even climate change mitigation. This "gender economics" paradigm, most prominently put forth by the World Bank in its

2012 World Development Report, is a popular subject of critique for feminist scholars of development, who argue that initiatives grounded in gender economics instrumentalize women, while leaving gender inequality fundamentally unchanged in the end result (Batiwala & Dhanraj 2007). While supporting women entrepreneurs is deeply rooted in the gender economics school of thought, I argue that programs that help women entrepreneurs connect with one another and with other actors in the international marketplace are, in fact, advancing these women's strategic gender priorities and transforming the distribution of power at the elite level. These programs are fundamentally altering the structure of existing Ethiopian business networks by increasing women entrepreneurs' social capital and personal networks (Bourdieu 1984). A number of women SME owners are also gaining power in the business community through the support of male relatives: men who might have previously channeled power in the form of connections, information, and capital to their brothers and sons now also channel that power to their wives, sisters, and daughters. It is through these changes in the structure of Ethiopian networks that women are gaining more symbolic power within the business community in Ethiopia (Bourdieu 1984).

Small- and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent the “missing middle” in developing countries (IFC 2010). Microenterprises are plentiful in the Global South; They can access loans with minimal collateral at microfinance organizations, but they are perceived as unlikely to grow substantially in the medium term. Many microenterprises are also informal, and thus not a source of business tax revenue for the government. Large corporations, particularly multinationals, have the resources to grow on their own—although they still occasionally receive development assistance money as a reward for providing several hundred jobs for women. Formal SMEs are an important

part of the tax base of developing countries, and are also seen as having substantial room to grow. The women and men who own these enterprises are generally wealthy compared to the rest of the population, but their position as potential drivers of economic growth and employment makes them magnets for development assistance.

As the Ethiopian government pursues its agricultural development-led industrialization strategy (ADLI), it has created incentives for SMEs in key sectors as well as affirmative action provisions to promote women's entrepreneurship. The class of women this research sample represents is deeply connected to Ethiopia's economic development plan. Female community leaders of any kind have been rare throughout Ethiopian history, and whether or not it is proper for women to be in positions of power is hotly debated in cafes and taxis and on the radio across Addis Ababa. Successful women entrepreneurs are lightning rods for criticism based on traditional and church-sponsored ideologies of women's proper sphere of influence. Women SME owners frequently interact with institutions such as banks, government and non-governmental agencies, and other actors in global market systems. Detailing their experiences in these interactions illuminate institutional gender discrimination in ways that a study of poorer women could not. From a feminist perspective, wealthy women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa bear a complex set of gendered experiences that reflects broader struggles over gender power and the role of women in Ethiopian society.

For good reason, the bulk of the research on women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in Ethiopia focuses on micro- and small enterprises (MSEs), particularly those benefitting from microfinance capital (Geleta 2014; Mergesa 2013; Leach et al 2000). The results of microfinance interventions, however, have been mixed, with more rigorous evaluations yielding modest positive results at best. The Center for

Global Development's (CGD) recent meta-analysis of microfinance programs globally found mixed results (Roodman 2014). The CGD's report and other microfinance impact evaluations focus primarily on economic outcomes; the true impact of trainings or microfinance on gender relations is difficult to measure. While Leach et al's (2000) study of women micro-entrepreneurs receiving microfinance and business development services (BDS) in Dire Dawa suggests that women who are successful as business owners receive greater status within the community, their research also found that husbands had a propensity to take over their wives' enterprises when they became substantially more lucrative, and "there did not appear to be any great shift in power and authority in the household" (2000: 100) as a result of the trainings.

Microfinance programs are most successful at increasing women's wealth when husbands and wives keep separate "purses" (whether physical purses, bank accounts, or other savings formats). This is not the case in most parts of Ethiopia; when microfinance capital enters a joint resource pool, husbands can redirect the funds for their own objectives. A former Packard Foundation-funded microfinance and reproductive health trial program found evidence to suggest that some women who were accessing microloans were doing so at their husbands' directive (Desai 2014). As Mergesa (2013) observes, "If women are permitted to earn money without retaining control over it or gaining status in their households or the community, men are the ultimate beneficiaries" (110). Additionally, a woman MSE owner may find that her husband will seek involvement in or resources from her business once it begins to generate significant profits (Leach et al 2000). "If a woman gets some success in her business, then her husband will want a piece of it," one feminist asserted. Dairy products, for example, are typically produced by women. Mergesa (2013) finds that, in

households that transition from traditional production to commercialized production, women's income rises to 4 times its previous level—while men's rises 14 times (109). Thus, potential gains in women's household bargaining power would be offset by the increase in income inequality between husband and wife.

Theoretically, the more income a woman generates, the more bargaining power she can typically exert in discussions of household finance (Leach et al 2000). For the reasons outlined above, this may not be an entirely appropriate model for assessing women's power in Ethiopia. While economic empowerment, determined in terms of women's increased purchasing power, can stand as a proxy for overall empowerment, Endeley (2001) cautions that an excessive focus on income can distract from the central issue of gender equality; the "true meaning of empowerment as transforming unequal gender power relations is forgotten and patriarchy is not challenged" (in Mergesa 2013:110). Instead of assessing the distribution of resources between men and women within households, I propose to look at middle and elite-class women's relative power at the group level, in terms of their access to power in Ethiopian leadership networks.

This analysis is rooted in feminist critiques of development (Mohanty 1984/2003; Spivak 1988; Smyth 2005) and seeks to theorize how women's entrepreneurship promotion might lead to more equal gender relations. Yet, it is not a study of poor women. It is a study of women who have already achieved many of the traditional indicators of empowerment: a college education, good health, access to family planning, and high incomes (relative to per capita GDP). It is unlikely that the women represented by this research sample will transform the unequal gendered experiences of poor women throughout Ethiopia, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Women's experience of gender oppression in Ethiopia is too strongly connected to these two other identity

variables for that to be the case. Women entrepreneurs experience discrimination in institutions—banks, government offices, and businesses. As they gain more and more power, they have ever greater potential to challenge these discriminatory practices within Ethiopian institutions. By working to eliminate gender discrimination from institutions through laws, regulations, and business practices, Ethiopia’s women SME owners have the potential to make a more just society for all Ethiopian women.

Some men in Ethiopia claim that feminism is a Western ideology with no basis in Ethiopian culture. They are right and wrong: Amhara folktales discuss women’s labor as more difficult than men’s; illustrate women as capable of accomplishing impossible tasks; and recount women’s unsuccessful attempt to lobby a king for control of a city council (Price 1971). Yet modern feminist consciousness and calls for gender equality in Ethiopia traces its roots to young women of the Ethiopian elite educated in Europe and the United States in the 1960s-1970s leading up to the Ethiopian Revolution (Biseswar 2008). The Derg military regime was, in large measure, responding to student-generated pressure for reforms to government policies on women’s rights when it introduced its quasi-Leninist answer to “the woman question” in 1977 (Biseswar 2011). The Derg’s efforts on women’s rights fell by the wayside quickly as it struggled to govern, but the EPRDF introduced its own answer to “the woman question” quickly after assuming power in 1991. Codified as the National Policy on Women in 1993, the EPRDF describes the empowerment of all Ethiopian women as the debt it owes to the thousands of women who fought with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) for freedom from the Derg. The degree to which the EPRDF’s current policy reflects genuine feminist consciousness or a desire for gender equality is hotly contested (Biseswar 2008, Tegegn 2008). However, the feminist movement that began in the 1960s as a result of Ethiopian

exposure to European feminist writings has undergone decades of enculturation and become deeply Ethiopian.

This research proceeds as follows: first, I outline important points of cultural, economic, and political context that define the space in which women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia operate their businesses, and the space in which gender norms and ideologies are being negotiated and redefined. Second, I explain the methodology of this study and the people involved in it. Third, I describe four business challenges women entrepreneurs experience differently than men based on their gender. Fourth, I examine three different ways that international organizations—Global Affairs Canada, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ACDI/VOCA (USAID), and the U.S. Embassy—have approached the issue of how to promote women’s entrepreneurship. I consider which of these strategies has the most potential to positively impact women’s stock of symbolic power. Thereafter, I consider the way in which these programs are aligned with local efforts to build women’s social capital. I conclude with questions for further study.

Chapter 2. Context: Cultural, economic, political

2.1. The status of women & gender relations in

Ethiopia

“Society is the primary problem. Women must stay below: they must not pass above men.” –Alitash*

Despite recent advances in family planning access (Olson & Piller 2013), educational parity (McKinsey Global Institute 2015), and the reduction of female genital mutilation and child marriage, Ethiopian women still lag behind men on many indicators of gender equality. The Human Development Report (2014) ranks Ethiopia 173rd out of 187 countries on its Gender Inequality Index; per capita gross national income (GNI) for women in Ethiopia remains only two-thirds of GNI for men. “The biggest reason that families in the countryside don’t send their children to school is that they are too poor. If they had enough money to send all of their children, of course they would send them all to school,” explained Yewdit*, a leadership consultant and self-described pragmatic feminist, as we met for lunch. “Rights come after survival.” In the Tigrayan-Amhara tradition that pervades Ethiopian government and the city of Addis Ababa, women are allowed to own land, inherit, and divorce (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003; World Bank/WAO 1998). At the same time, however, both the highly hierarchical Amhara-Tigrayan tradition and Ethiopian Orthodox Christian teachings insist that women remain subservient to their husbands and male relatives (Biseswar 2008, 2011; Haileselassie Tadesse 2014; Kebede et al 2014).

In discussing my research with community members, I found no shortage of opinions on successful women entrepreneurs. Educated men and women in my social network were eager to point out prominent women-owned enterprises like MulMul Bakery and Sheger FM (the city's only independent radio station). Working class men I met were more likely to disdain of successful women and attribute their success to male benefactors and affirmative action programs, both of which they derided. I began to wonder whether approval or disapproval of women's entrepreneurship was a joint product of class and gender attitudes, so I suggested the idea to several of my feminist confidantes: They unanimously agreed that this particular expression of misogyny had no clear class basis among men. While there might be relatively more working-class men who resent powerful women, that attitude is far from absent among the educated classes. Each feminist and several entrepreneurs could cite examples of powerful women they knew whose husbands cowed them into turning over their salaries or some of their autonomy to keep their marriage intact. While the 'no-fault' divorce was recently added to the Ethiopian legal code, divorce remains highly undesirable and stigmatized in both Christian and Muslim communities.

The current debate about women's roles and women's power in Ethiopia is also a debate about men's roles and men's power. In many Ethiopian cultures, men profess to respect and value women (Mosedale 2014), especially mothers and grandmothers (Haileselassie Tadesse 2014). But many men embody competing cultural ideologies that alternately revere women's role in social reproduction and denigrate their competence generally. The same Addis Ababa man who honors his mother may beat his wife, or shout vulgar invitations to women on the street. Domestic violence and street harassment are currently central issues of concern in Ethiopian feminist circles;

Ethiopia's singular feminist radio personality, Blen Sahlilu, frequently gives voice to these issues. At the same time, surveys have indicated that most Ethiopian women agree that men are justified in hitting their wives for at least one reason (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003). Historically, married women from wealthy households did not participate in wage labor or other income-generating activities (World Bank/WAO 1998). Men may feel threatened by their wives' success; because the potential magnitude of that success is greatest in Ethiopia's growing private sector, Ethiopian women entrepreneurs attract the most negative public attention. A widely held public belief holds that a woman will quickly divorce her husband (or vice versa) once she finds professional success, a sign that she has failed in her gender performance (Butler 1990) as a wife and mother.

In a survey of 3,000 households from across Ethiopia's nine regions, Kifetew (2006) found that both urban and rural Ethiopian men desire their wives to contribute income to the household. However, the vast majority also believed that wives' contribution to family income should not exceed their husbands'. In contemporary Ethiopia, educated men generally want wives with at least a high school education, with stable, well-paid, '9-to-5' jobs who can attend to their needs at the end of every day, who will not challenge their decisions regarding finances among other issues (Haileselassie Tadesse 2014). "Men are not understanding that you have to maintain their normal life," explained Rahel Heruiye, referencing the way in which wives are expected to ensure their husbands' comfort and satisfaction in the domestic sphere. Rahel left her job as a pharmacist to start an essential oils processing company. Her husband still thinks of her work as a hobby, despite the amount of time it consumes and the prestige her brand has gained: her products are carried exclusively by Addis Ababa's most luxurious hotels and spas.

Rahel's experience is consistent with what a number of women entrepreneurs reported: Their husbands objected to them leaving their stable, well-paid previous jobs in education, the NGO sector, or working for the government to begin risky new ventures with unstable schedules and demanding work volumes. The women in this sample, however, challenge popular negative stereotypes of successful women: only two of the 23 are divorced; of those who have children, the majority do not employ full-time childcare providers; and indifference to the tune of "whatever makes you happy" is the lowest level of support any of them enjoy from their husbands at present.

2.2. Economic development in Ethiopia

Following the downfall of the Derg in 1991, the EPRDF put the country through a process of structural adjustment guided by the World Bank. In particular, the government allowed the currency (the birr) to depreciate substantially; federalized the country into nine ethnically-delineated provinces; liberalized trade relations, allowing for an influx of cheap consumer goods; and denationalized many industries, while retaining national control of telecoms, electricity, water, road construction, and many others. After fifteen years of war, famine, and Communist rule, Ethiopia entered the 1990s with a small private sector that has grown slowly but surely over the past 20 years. Today, Ethiopia is currently the 8th fastest growing economy in Africa (with a real GDP growth rate of 7%), though 90% of the country's population remains engaged in agriculture. Because of this, Ethiopia's economic development strategy is designed as "agricultural development-led industrialization": currently, Ethiopia is implementing its second five-year Growth and

Transformation Plan (GTP) to transform the country into a global center for light manufacturing and a leading producer of sugar, leather goods, and other processed agricultural products.

Ethiopian industrial policy features a mix of import-substituting and export-focused growth strategies, but most of Ethiopia's recent economic growth has been due to the expansion of export-oriented industries (Gebreeyesus 2013). Currently, the Ethiopian Investment Commission is particularly focused on attracting foreign investment in the textile, leather goods, and horticulture sectors (particularly cut flowers) (Abay 2015). The Ethiopian Ministry of Trade also provides incentives for domestic producers in these key value chains—for instance, offering a 2-year tax holiday for leather goods producers who export at least 65% of their finished products. Most of Ethiopia's new factories and growing operations are located in the greater Addis Ababa region; nearly all of them are located in the country's highlands.

In terms of social development, Ethiopia is currently confronting both a youth bulge and a demographic transition: 64.1% of the country's population is under age 25; at the same time, the national total fertility rate has fallen from 8.3 to 4.1 children per woman since 1990. Though not a true multi-party democracy, Ethiopia is relatively stable; the current ruling party has controlled the state since the fall of the Derg communist regime in 1989. It is also a major U.S. strategic ally in East Africa. For all of these reasons, Ethiopia is “ripe” for both development and foreign investment; the international accounting consultancy KPMG recently ranked Ethiopia fifth in its list of the top 10 countries in Africa for foreign investors (KPMG Africa 2014). The country has attracted a large amount of capital for agricultural development over the past 20 years, and is now attracting a growing amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) aimed at

promoting Ethiopian industrial transformation. The primary sources of this FDI are investors in the United States, China, Turkey, and the Arabian Peninsular countries. International aid is also increasingly involved in promoting investment in Ethiopia, as large donors like the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) seek to foster private sector development initiatives that can create employment opportunities at scale in growing urban centers.

While the Ethiopian government is working eagerly to attract foreign investment, much of the development in its light manufacturing sector is expected to come from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Internationally, definitions of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) vary substantially (Kushnir 2010). The Ethiopian government currently defines micro-enterprises in the industrial sector (manufacturing, agroprocessing, etc.) as those with up to five employees and 100,000 birr (5,000 USD) in annual revenues. Micro-enterprises in the service sector are those with less than five employees and up to 50,000 birr (2,500 USD) in revenues. Small industrial enterprises are those with 6 – 30 employees and up to 1.5 million birr (75,000 USD) in revenues, while small service sector enterprises are defined as those with 6 – 30 employees and up to 500,000 birr (25,000 USD) in annual revenues (Engeda 7/21/15). The median enterprise in this study has 10 employees, which would qualify it as a small enterprise. Four women in this study have more than 30 employees in their businesses, but several more with less than 30 employees have revenues in excess of 1.5 million birr; both of these groups of women qualify as owners of medium enterprises. The most common type of formal enterprise in Ethiopia is the Private Limited Company (PLC), which is legally mandated to have at least two shareholders. For both men and women

entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, the most common legal co-owner of a PLC is one's spouse. In this sample, eight women who run PLCs reported co-owning the business with their husbands, but only two of those eight claimed that their husband had an active role in running the business.

The mainstream international development literature on women's entrepreneurship (and business in general) in Ethiopia has several significant shortcomings related to fundamental assumptions and methodology. First, the World Bank's annual "Doing Business in Ethiopia" report describes the private sector regulatory environment in terms of strictly official pathways for accomplishing tasks like tax registration, purchasing land, obtaining electricity, etc. This ignores the informal dimension of how many business owners accomplish these tasks, and the importance of ethnic and kinship networks in the Ethiopian business community (van Staveren and Knorringa 2007). Second, the report assumes "equal information"—that is, all parties public and private should have equal knowledge of the rules that govern their business behavior, and of the opportunities and incentives the state may provide. Equal information is far from a reality in Ethiopia, where two civil servants who hold the same position might give a business owner different instructions as a product of having partial information (and, perhaps, personal agendas) themselves.

Analyses of the Ethiopian business environment that rely on survey data to draw conclusions about gender dynamics are also shaky. While the recent DFATD-commissioned report on Ethiopian SMEs includes several indicators related to gender, its combined use of survey and focus group data could not be expected to find evidence of gender bias or experiences of discrimination. In particular, the survey draws all of its qualitative data from mixed-gender focus groups (DFATD, forthcoming). While women

entrepreneurs may have experienced sexism and discrimination in the course of their work, admitting so among their peers in the local business community could cause substantial damage to their reputations. Discussing sexual harassment is highly taboo, and admitting victimization would violate notions of “Ethiopian pride”: in Amhara-Tigrayan culture, the admission of weakness in the face of a more powerful force is constitutive of weakness generally.

2.3. The Politics of Gender: “The Woman Question”

“The government still only talks the talk about equality. They say, ‘We’re trying.’ No.” - *Alitash

The EPRDF issued its National Policy on Women (known as the “Women’s Policy”) in 1993 to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality following the TPLF’s ouster of the Derg. The policy aspires to create gender equality in Ethiopia through three primary objectives:

1) *Improving women’s civil rights through legal protections*: “Facilitating conditions conducive to the speeding of equality between men and women so that women can participate in political, social and economic life of their country on equal terms with men and ensuring that their right to own property as well as their other human rights are respected and that they are not excluded from the enjoyment of the fruits of their labor or from performing public functions and being decision makers;

2) *Delivery of basic services*: “Facilitating the necessary conditions whereby rural women can have access to basic social services and to ways and means of lightening their work load; and...”

3) *Eliminating gender bias and increasing women’s leadership*: “Eliminating step by step, prejudices as well as customary and other practices that are based on the idea of male supremacy and enabling women to hold public office and to participate in the decision making process at all levels.”

The execution of different provisions of the Women’s Policy is the purview of a variety of government ministries—education, health, etc. However, there is also a specific ministry dedicated to the needs of women and children, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs (MWCYA). This ministry is tasked with providing gender sensitivity trainings to other ministries and government agencies, with advocating for women’s and children’s rights, and with devising affirmative action policies for consideration by the legislature. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry, also have offices dedicated to women’s affairs, and the MWCYA works with these offices to effective policy and program implementation (Tsega 8/8/15).

In 1998, the World Bank and Women’s Affairs Office (the precursor to the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs) produced a joint report detailing the problems with the early implementation with the Women’s Policy. Among the institutional factors inhibiting women’s empowerment, the report found, were a lack of women participating in government decision-making; a lack of linkages with civil society and other non-governmental entities; a lack of gender-disaggregated data for designing appropriate affirmative action policies; and “paternalistic and patriarchal attitudes” within

different branches of the government (World Bank/WAO 1998: 36-39). While decentralization in the post-Derg era has improved many areas of governance in Ethiopia, it has also allowed for the resurgence of misogynistic practices in highly patriarchal communities, particularly in the south of Ethiopia (Biseswar 2011; World Bank/WAO 1998). Today, there are still only 28 women for every 100 men in legislative, managerial, and other senior leadership positions within Ethiopia (McKinsey Global Institute 2015).

The World Bank and Women's Affairs Office concluded that five policy interventions were necessary to better execute the Women's Policy:

- 1) Satisfy the need for consistent public policy
- 2) Mitigate the impact of inequitable customary practices
- 3) Increase access to economic resources
- 4) Improve access to legal remedies and
- 5) Increase the participation of women in development activities. (World Bank/WAO 1998: 3-4)

Supporting women entrepreneurs addresses the third and fifth recommendations. The report also highlighted two key constraints limiting women's participation in development activities and the development planning process: an absence of women's groups, and women's lack of leisure time to commit to civic-minded activities. "If 15-16 hours on the average are spent on domestic and other chores, how can women be expected to participate in development interventions?" (World Bank/WAO 1998: 40).

Feminist critics of the EPRDF's answer to the "woman question" claim specifically that the National Policy on Ethiopian Women does not address women's

strategic gender needs (Molyneux 1984, Moser 1989). According to Biseswar (2011), “The policy remains silent on the key components of women’s emancipation. These include the development of women’s critical consciousness, nurturing their independent agency, promoting their social and political empowerment, gender justice, and taking care of structural reforms to ensure sustainable gains on women’s rights.” Instead, the policy describes a mission of emancipation through service delivery, addressing women’s practical needs in their traditional roles, where they are responsible for both biological and social reproduction (Peterson 2002). Critics are also sceptical of the MWCYA’s gender sensitivity trainings; raising awareness of women’s double oppression in a group setting, they argue, is unlikely to convince men not to beat their wives, or to convince anyone not to pressure their daughter to have children quickly and drop out of the labor force, if she can afford to.

The impact civil society organizations can have on improving the status of women in Ethiopia is governed and restricted by the 2009 Proclamation for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies² (CSP). This law mandates that NGOs concerned with human rights, women’s rights, ethnic minority rights, press freedom, and democracy may receive no more than 10% of their funding from international sources (International Center for Non-Profit Law, 2015). International human rights groups roundly condemned the CSP when it was introduced and passed in 2009 for the restrictions it places on freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and for its potential to be enforced arbitrarily against any civil society organization that might contradict party dogma. The CSP has had negative consequences for women’s rights-

² Also known as the Charities and Societies Proclamation, or CSP.

focused groups in the past: the law's enactment effectively destroyed the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), previously the most outspoken organization promoting women's rights within Ethiopia. Amnesty International reports that the EWLA gave free legal aid to at least 17,000 women in 2008. By 2010, the organization had lost most of its staff, and it could no longer provide free legal counseling (Amnesty International 2012). Director Mahdere Paulos exiled herself from the country under fear of reprisals (Woyingi Blog, 11 Oct. 2010). Human rights advocates and feminists of the Ethiopian diaspora have accused the EPRDF of using the CSP to effectively depoliticize women's rights in Ethiopia. The CSP also clearly articulates the EPRDF's stance on civil rights issues to international development aid organizations, allowing them to tailor their activities to avoid drawing government ire.

Biseswar (2008) has strong criticism for many so-called feminist movements in Africa that do not engage with the political structures that perpetuate women's inequality. She argues from a Marxist perspective that, "it is precisely this political engagement in feminism that makes it different from women's movements, for not all women's movements are feminist and feminism is not embedded in all women's movements" (129). Her critique of the depoliticization of feminism in Africa echoes Ferguson's (1994) critique of the depoliticization of aid generally. The critique that this research project makes only a depoliticized engagement with issues of women's oppression in Ethiopia is fair; it addresses concerns of women's well-being through a normative prism of global capitalism. Many of the women in my research sample, in fact, are export-oriented entrepreneurs, seeking their success through integration into global supply chains. While improvements in economic status may be a part of Ethiopian women's strategic needs and priorities as well as their practical needs and priorities, achieving empowerment

through active participation in economic globalization goes against Mohanty's (2003/1984) claim that Third World Feminism must include anti-capitalist struggle in its practice.

Is it possible, in the Ethiopian context, for feminist outcomes to emerge without feminist consciousness? Is equality possible without transformation? There is, at least, room for progress towards equality within the system of global capitalism. I argue that, at the group level, certain actions that help women SME owners in Addis Ababa achieve their business goals also contribute to the realization of their strategic gender priorities of greater personal autonomy, voice, and influence.

Chapter 3. Study Design

3.1. Methods

As mentioned, this study is primarily based on 40+ interviews conducted with women entrepreneurs and other individuals engaged in private sector development activities in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between July and August 2015. (Three phone interviews were conducted after the conclusion of my stay in Addis.) I also conducted several interviews with self-described feminists to help my understanding of gender relations in Ethiopia, and those aspects of gender relations which are currently being critically examined in feminist and popular discourse. Beginning with my existing professional and personal connections in Addis Ababa, I used a snowball sampling method to identify women SME owners and organizations supporting them within Addis Ababa, as well as Ethiopian feminists, to participate in semi-structured interviews and a modest amount of ethnographic observation. I conducted interviews for this research in

English, Amharic, French, and a mixture thereof, depending on the preferences of each participant (two participants were native-level French speakers). A local gender advisor assisted as a translator for several interviews for participants who felt more comfortable communicating completely in Amharic. Interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to 4 hours, with the median interview lasting approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. On occasion, I was granted the opportunity to view the business premises (shops and workshops) of my participants, and to observe business operations (manufacturing and purchasing). Quotes from the field research that appear in the text appear in English and Amharic with translation (if the interviewee was codeswitching), and strictly in English on all other occasions. That is, if remarks quoted here were given in Amharic or French, they have been translated into English for the major audience of the report. Remarks that may have been translated will remain unmarked for participant privacy reasons.

While I had a set schedule of questions for women entrepreneurs to ensure that I gathered information that would be comparable across interviews, I tried to let each interview evolve naturally after I relayed the details of my study. I included questions on women's motivations for starting their businesses; how their businesses had grown over time; what challenges they faced as business owners; and how they perceived men's and women's practice as business owners to be different. I asked participants what business associations they belonged to and what sort of entrepreneurship promotion programs they had participated in, and about their experiences of these programs. I asked whatever questions (primarily biographical background questions) had not been addressed during the course of our conversations as we concluded.

I conducted interviews with government, Embassy, NGO, and consultancy personnel to gain additional information on available opportunities for women

entrepreneurs seeking to enhance their skills or other aspects of their businesses. Within the Ethiopian government, I interviewed high-level officials within the Ministry of Trade's Department of Women, the Ethiopian Investment Commission, and the Entrepreneurship Development Centre. I spoke with Ethiopia- and U.S.-based staff of ACDI/VOCA concerning the Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network and AMDe program, as well as with a member of the World Bank's program evaluation team. I had the opportunity to speak with the Director of the Center for the Advancement of Women's Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) and to tour its cotton textile-manufacturing training center, and with U.S. Embassy personnel in Addis Ababa concerning the U.S.'s support for the African Women Entrepreneurs' Program (AWEP, formally the Association of Women Entrepreneurs Program in Ethiopia). My discussion of Enat Bank is based on a presentation Enat Bank staff gave to AWEP at its July 2015 breakfast meeting, the discussion between AWEP and Enat Bank that ensued, and discussions of the bank with women SME owners within the interview context.

Members of the core sample (women entrepreneurs) were given the option of remaining anonymous or being identified by name in the study. The majority chose to be identified by name. However, regardless of whether an entrepreneur elected to be identified by name, I have chosen to anonymize any statements made concerning extortion (bribes) or sexual harassment, as well as any statements criticizing the EPRDF, because of the potentially sensitive nature of these comments. The individuals I interviewed and cite as "Ethiopian feminists" will all remain anonymous. Community members whose comments from informal interactions are included here have all been given pseudonyms.

I offered all interview participants the opportunity to receive a copy of this research after its final submission to Simon Fraser University. The majority of participants have elected to receive a copy of the research. Some participants were given the opportunity to review limited sections of the research to ensure factual accuracy and representational fidelity.

3.2. Sample

The 23 women SME owners in Addis Ababa interviewed for this project ranged in age from 25 to 61 years old, with an average age of 39 and a median age of 35. 15 are married, 5 are unmarried, 2 are divorced, and one is a widow. 19 of the 23 women interviewed have children; those with children have an average of 2 children. The average woman's business has 17 employees; however, the median woman's business has 10. In total, this group of 23 women employs over 400 permanent employees; most of those in the manufacturing sector hire seasonal or piecework employees to supplement their permanent staff during rush periods. The average and median enterprise in the sample is 4 years old. Many women were not comfortable providing specific financial information about their businesses (revenues, etc.), and I eventually dropped the question from my set. The vast majority of businesses in the sample are registered as Private Limited Corporations (PLCs), most similar to Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) in the U.S. and Canada. Of the 17 entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector, 8 produce textiles or clothing, 6 are agroprocessors (including 3 coffee roasters), 4 produce leather goods, and 3 produce handicrafts (jewelry/baskets).³ The remaining six entrepreneurs operate businesses in the service sector. 10 women

³ There is considerable overlap between textile, leather, and handicrafts businesses.

reported being born and spending their childhoods outside of the Addis Ababa area (not all women reported a place of birth). Roughly half of the sample has lived outside of Ethiopia for five years or more. Every member of the sample has at least one university degree.

Finally, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of the women in the business community interviewed for this project identified as Christians (mostly Orthodox). While this is a product of the snowball sampling method—I did not specifically recruit participants to my research based on their religion—it is also indicative of two important social realities. First, it points to the Amhara-Tigrayan and (Orthodox) Christian religious dominance in the state and public life for the past two thousand years, and a degree of separateness between the social networks of Muslim and Christian businesspersons. While Addis Ababa is a multicultural city surrounded by the majority-Muslim Oromiya region, public life within the city itself is overwhelmingly Christian-centric: there are ‘Muslim’ parts of town (but no noted ‘Christian’ parts of town). Secondly, it may reflect cultural differences in the way Christian and Muslim women formally occupy roles within enterprises. My interest in “women business owners” specifically excluded women who did not have equity in companies they might manage, as well as women who may have had broad powers as general managers. Mid-way through my fieldwork, I asked a friend if the reason I had found so few Muslim women entrepreneurs was because there were, in fact, very few. She rejected the idea. “If you go to Shuro Meda and you see a store with a Muslim man’s name, his wife probably runs it.

“Muslim women have always been involved in business. Especially in Harar, there are a lot of very strong Muslim women leading businesses. But her husband probably owns it,” she explained.

Barred for centuries from owning land, Muslims in Ethiopia have long dominated as traders, and continue to run the majority of the country’s import-export businesses. By all accounts, women play an integral role in these businesses: however, within the predominantly Christian social networks I was able to access initially, few participants identified Muslim women who qualified, in their minds, for my definition of “women entrepreneurs.”

The feminists I worked with to better understand gender relations and women’s practical and strategic priorities in Ethiopia ranged in age from 20 to 40 years old, live in Addis Ababa, and are active in civil society organizations that promote women’s interests. All of them are university-educated and consider themselves “pragmatic” feminists. As in the United States or Europe, pro-women’s rights perspectives in Ethiopia are diverse and sometimes contradictory. The EPRDF does not use the language of feminism to describe its policies, opting instead for the preferred development terms of “women’s empowerment” and “gender sensitivity”. Self-described “pragmatic” Ethiopian feminists (probably the larger group of self-described feminists in Addis Ababa) distinguish themselves from “radical” feminists (those more likely to use the word “patriarchy” in discussion). Several of them have provided feedback on versions of this analysis.

3.3. Power, Equality, and Social Capital

This study is concerned with symbolic as opposed to physical power, and particularly with the growth of social capital. Following Bourdieu (1986), I take symbolic power to be “a power of constructing reality” (1994: 164) in the continuous interplay between structure and agency. Power is negotiated and reproduced through social relations; individuals and groups draw upon “resources of power”—economic, cultural, and social capital—to pursue their objectives.

In Bourdieu’s theory of power, social capital simply refers to social network connections, which play an important role in class differentiation (Harriss 2001). An individual may hold relatively little economic or cultural capital, but still be able to accomplish their goals by drawing upon members of their social network who may have more power of one form or another. This conceptualization of social capital is substantially different from the idea of social capital that has become a mainstay, catch-all variable to measure the impact of the social upon economic and governance outcomes in a substantial body of political economy literature. Robert Putnam (1993) describes social capital as a sort of generalized trust in society developed through participation in voluntary associations (a loose construction of ‘civil society’), while Bourdieu’s definition attributes social capital to individuals. Since the World Bank heralded Putnam’s social capital as the “missing link” in development in the 1990s, the concept has been heavily criticized, both for its lack of theoretical specificity and for its tendency to minimize the role of politics in sustaining vibrant societies (van Staveren & Knorringa 2007; Harriss 2001).

According to this later theory of social capital, since trust is the basis for

economic transactions and social support, higher levels of social capital should lead to greater economic activity and less overall poverty. It would be easy to think of women's empowerment through participation in business networks only in terms of the more common, Putnam-derived idea of social capital, but doing so would be problematic. Van Staveren & Knorringa note that "social capital appears to be less effective in situations of inequality, control, and exclusion" (2007: 112). As many Ethiopian women do, the entrepreneurs in this sample have been actively involved throughout their lives in many civic organizations, particularly churches, mosques, *mahaber* (patron saints clubs), and *idir* (funeral societies). Participation in such organizations is an important part of women's responsibility for reproducing the social fabric of the community in Ethiopia (Biseswar 2008). Yet these are also organizations in which women's subordination is reproduced (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003), and many women entrepreneurs complain of feeling social pressure to attend meetings for these organizations, which draw their time away from both their businesses and their families. While these organizations may serve as resources for women in times of family crisis (Teshome et al 2012), they are also systems through which women's inequality is reified and adherence to traditional gender norms is monitored.

In the Ethiopian government and throughout the private sector, transparent and competitive mechanisms to ensure that the best jobs and best contracts are awarded to the best applicants are weak when they exist at all. Instead, opportunities and resources flow through informal channels among members of common social networks. A multiethnic society with more than 75 individual ethnic groups, ethnicity remains one of the key lines along which social networks organize themselves (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003). While Addis Ababa is cosmopolitan, and many women in this sample eschew

ethnic labels, social life in Addis remains largely organized around religious and kinship networks (van Staveren and Knorringa 2007). Most business information is passed informally in this way; individuals who seek information through formal channels—for instance, tax policy information—have a high chance of needing to access a more senior official than the one that initially sees them at the tax office in order to access the desired information. One's ability to access that more senior official is mediated by one's social (and, occasionally, financial) capital.

Currently, Ethiopian leadership networks are both informal and patriarchal; women are excluded from participation in the informal meetings through which these networks are constituted by both gender norms (it is not proper for women to go to bars) and history (for a variety of reasons, women have not had access to these networks in the past). As a result, women have relatively low social capital within Ethiopia's business and other leadership networks. As women entrepreneurs reach the high-growth potential stage in their businesses—the small- and medium-enterprise level—they require greater symbolic power to realize their objectives. Following Bourdieu, I take economic, cultural, and social capital to be sources of power (Geciene 2002). There are both women and men—Ethiopian and foreign—who are currently engaged in the transformation of Ethiopian power networks to include more women. Through this process, women entrepreneurs accrue more power as social capital (connections) and cultural capital (information) in their pursuit of economic capital.

There are two primary ways in which women entrepreneurs are gaining greater social capital and thus more power in Addis Ababa: the first is through the growth of women's business networks. Women entrepreneurs have traditionally been excluded from informal business networking occasions and marginalized in formal associations.

By creating and empowering new women’s business associations complete with special relationships to the government and international actors, entities like the U.S. Embassy and ACDI/VOCA are disrupting the traditional structure of business associations within Ethiopia, creating more social capital for their members. The second way women are increasing their network power is through men. Many women in this sample have enlisted male relatives to support their entrepreneurial endeavors. These men have provided financing, technical expertise, access to information—economic, cultural, and social capital—to help women within their kinship networks to ascend into the Addis Ababa business network. In so doing, they have increased the flow of power to these women in their kinship networks, and increased the overall power held by women entrepreneurs.

3.4. Reflexivity

“Boss, how are you? Ask her what her name is. She can speak Amharic.”

“Oh, you can speak Amharic? What is your name?”

“Simé Genet Qebero.”⁴

⁴ My Amharic name Genet was given to me on my first trip to Ethiopia by the teachers at the school where I volunteered. It is a common Christian girls’ name, meaning heaven. I adopted Qebero as my last (father’s) name in honor of my grandfather: our family name is Wolfe, and my grandfather has told me many times of how Ethiopian civil servants addressed him as “Mr. Fox,” or Ato Qebero in Amharic. (Qebero is the Amharic term used to designate the endangered Ethiopian wolf, *canis simensis*.) Qebero carries all of the same connotations as fox in English—sly, clever, mischievous. No local I met in Addis failed to laugh when I introduced myself as Genet Qebero. The name Qebero was probably a joke on my grandfather at the time.

The waiter and the hotel restaurant manager burst out laughing.

“Genet Qebero? Who gave you this name?”

My objective in approaching the issues of gender equality and women’s entrepreneurship in Ethiopia from an anthropological standpoint—using theoretical frameworks and collecting data in the form of observations, interviews, and interactions—is to provide an analysis of these issues that represents them in terms of Ethiopian perspectives. While an in-depth ethnographic study of one or two women-owned enterprises could shed more light on women business owners’ daily experience of gender and entrepreneurship, my methodology here is designed to capture and reflect a spectrum of perspectives on this topic. I specifically chose to interview Ethiopian feminists about gender equality and women’s entrepreneurship in Addis Ababa so as not to privilege Western feminist frameworks in my interpretation of the data.

Yet, no anthropologist or other researcher from without the group they intend to study can achieve full native-level insight into ‘Other’ cultural systems they investigate. I am not from an Ethiopian cultural or ethnic background; I am a well-educated, White, female, Anglophone. But I do have a family connection to Ethiopia that provides the basis for my interest in the country: My grandfather was on contract to Emperor Haile Selassie II from 1970-1972, along with one other American accountant, to try to reform the country’s accounting system. (It was never going to happen, my grandfather tells me.) During that time, he married an Ethiopian Airlines stewardess, the Ethiopian-born daughter of an Addis Ababa University history professor from Turkey. They are since

divorced, but still run a travel agency together in Phoenix. I had traveled to Ethiopia on two separate occasions prior to my fieldwork for this project for one month each time, and speak and write reasonable (if simplistic) Amharic.

Ethiopia is heavily saturated with NGOs and foreign researchers of all stripes arriving at Bole Airport with surveys in hand. I found government officials as well as private individuals very willing to speak with me, perhaps in part due to their familiarity with the practices of the international development industry. But they frequently met me with the question, “Why did you choose to come to Ethiopia?”

I have an answer. And I can deliver my answer in a grammatically weak, but phonetically native-like Amharic. In a context where most foreign researchers are interested in questions that transcend Ethiopia, my personal connection to the country, as well as my language ability, established a sort of legitimacy that, I believe, made many of my research participants more comfortable speaking to me about their realities. As one government official told me, “Most people, even if their grandfather worked here, they wouldn’t return.”

My family history with Ethiopia falls far short of the sort of hybridity (Narayan 1993) that is so desirable for an anthropologist without direct lived experience of the community she is studying. It did, however, facilitate a higher level of access to emic perspectives. In addition, based on accounts of White women in the Addis Ababa business and development sphere, it is likely that I had greater access to participants—particularly to government officials—than a native Ethiopian researcher would have been permitted.

While my Whiteness allowed me to transcend ethnic divisions that inhibit Ethiopian ethnographers (Geleta 2014), the fact that I speak Amharic (and learned it, at least to begin with, deep in Amhara) aligns me with the country's traditional hegemonic group. Thus, the experiences and knowledge that founded any "insider" status I held came laden with the privilege of being aligned with the upper echelon of the country's ethnic hierarchy. I believe this was mostly taken for granted among the women entrepreneurs, NGO workers, and government officials I interviewed—they all exist near the height of the Amhara-Tigrayan-dominated social and economic height of Ethiopian society. On some occasions, though, the properness and authenticity of my *habesha*⁵ credibility was clearly being evaluated, as when I was asked, "Where did you learn Amharic?"

I respond, "Gondar," which is where I began studying the language.

"They speak real Amharic in Gondar," one venerated figure in the NGO community told me, "In Addis Ababa they mix it."

I was White, yet a little bit Amhara; this intersected with my feminine cisgendered identity in an uncomfortable way, at times. In interviews, I made a strong effort to present myself as a foreign student researcher first and above all else. I believe my gender identity facilitated developing a rapport with my female research participants (entrepreneurs and others). At the same time, in the informal interactions that informed my work, I was never entirely certain whether I was being interpreted, and my behavior

⁵ Habesha is an autoethnonym that is commonly translated as 'Ethiopian.' However, many Oromo do not consider themselves habesha, and consider it a strictly Amhara-Tigrayan autoethnonym that also connotes a light skin tone.

policed, by *habesha* woman rules, or by *ferengi* woman rules. Inevitably, different aspects of my behavior were being interpreted through one lens or the other simultaneously; not knowing which framework was dominant, particularly in my interactions with men, sometimes left me uneasy.

My interview participants frequently challenged me on my own personal opinions and experiences in our discussions of development, politics, business, and gender. Many of the women entrepreneurs I spoke with were remarkably forthcoming in discussing sensitive and personal topics related to their experiences. I have attempted to enhance my interpretation and understanding of these experiences with the perspectives and guidance of Ethiopian feminists. Not all of the women entrepreneurs in my sample would identify as feminists. However, because I take gendered power relations to be the core issue of this research, I believe it is crucial to make Ethiopian perspectives on feminism central to its analysis.

Chapter 4. Obligations and Frustrations: Being a Female Entrepreneur

Being a woman negatively impacts an entrepreneur's access to all of the resources of symbolic power: economic, cultural, and social capital. While all business owners in Addis Ababa face similar challenges related to access to and the price of land and inputs, financing, and an uncertain regulatory environment, women entrepreneurs experience certain challenges differently as a result of their gender. In particular, women

SME owners' gender negatively impacts their access to credit, access to information, and experiences of extortion. In addition, while Ethiopian men are primarily burdened with economic reproduction, women who take up the burden of economic reproduction as entrepreneurs are not absolved of their obligations for social and biological reproduction. The women in this sample are not poor, and are thus not “doubly oppressed”—however, they remain thrice burdened. Here, I describe four challenges that women face, and how they use symbolic power to negotiate solutions.

4.1. Challenge: The pull of gendered obligations

“When I’m done with my business, I go home and make dinner for my family.” –
Salem Kassahun, Salem’s Ethiopia

Addis Ababa’s women SME owners are also mothers, wives, and daughters—and no one will let them forget it. A single woman has a grandmother who asks her daily when she will get married; a married woman with no children finds universal encouragement to have a baby. Yordanos Haile had her first child three months after she opened her first business, a travel and events company. One year later, the question is, “When are you having your second baby?”

Mothers are revered in the Amhara-Tigrayan cultural imagination—which is not to say they are exempted from Addis Ababa’s ubiquitous street harassment in reality. While the birth rate among my sample is less than half of the national average of 4.3 children per woman, Ethiopia’s women entrepreneurs do not profess to wish to throw off the burdens of reproduction and motherhood, nor do most Ethiopian feminists. None of the

women I interviewed suggested that they regretted the time they spent caring for their children. Many did, however, openly resent the other ways in which they were expected to reproduce the social structure of their communities, at the expense of their businesses (Haileselassie Tadesse 2014, Biseswar 2011). “Here you can’t have your own time. Lots of people are needing your time,” Rahel Heruiye explained. “Because [of this] you cannot say no.” Apart from caring for children, husbands, and parents, women are expected to visit sick extended family members regularly, participate in *mahaber*, and represent the household at all weddings and funerals—both of which can last several days. Failure to participate in these social rituals represents a failure to embody Ethiopian ideals of femininity, but women entrepreneurs agree that full participation would make running their businesses impossible. Rahel Moges put it best: “You know, you cannot do everything. At some point, you need to choose.”

The woman-as-caretaker ideology crosses over into the business sphere, as well. Many women SME owners in Addis Ababa are involved in social enterprise activities, or aspire to be—but some feel that pressure to be involved in charitable activities falls more heavily on the shoulders of *yeset nigade* than on those of *nigade*. “There’s always a bazaar or an event that the women are encouraged to go to,” Kathy Marshall, owner of Sabahar cotton and silk textiles company, explains. Her business is Fair Trade-certified. “Women entrepreneurs are the focus of these things. But I always wonder, why aren’t men asked to do the social impact, social enterprise stuff?”

Magdala* runs a successful leather goods company that exports most of its product to the United States and Europe. She employs 17 full-time workers (6 men, 11 women), and hires more on a temporary basis during rush periods. Magdala spent part of her adolescence and attended university in the United States; she had the option of

remaining there to begin her career as an entrepreneur, but she returned to Ethiopia to contribute to her country of birth by creating jobs. Beyond job creation, however, social impact is not a part of her business model—why should it have to be? “Most of the existing brands in Ethiopia ask you to buy out of pity,” Magdala suggests. The social impact or Fair Trade story is a well-known way of branding Ethiopian goods on the international market. “I’m trying to get away from that. The product should be good enough for someone to buy without that. I want our company to be the first luxury brand. I want to change the idea people have, to show people a new Ethiopia.”

4.2. Information, networks, *balege*, and *ch’ewa*

“If you really want to see how business is done in Ethiopia, go to the bar at the Sheraton after work.” – Salem Kassahun, Salem’s Ethiopia

Those women with minimal connections to existing sources of power also lack important information about rules and opportunities in the systems that govern their entrepreneurial pursuits. Women entrepreneurs often face institutional forms of discrimination when they go in search of opportunities through formal channels. Because of their gender, and the restrictions placed on women’s ability to socialize with men, women entrepreneurs also find themselves excluded from the informal social networks at the heart of the Addis Ababa business community.

There are formal opportunities for women entrepreneurs to gain advantages for their businesses through the Ministry of Trade and Ethiopian Investment Commission, as well as a wealth of NGO-led initiatives to provide training and assistance to women

entrepreneurs specifically. However, even many wealthy Ethiopians do not have internet access at home except through mobile devices (Addis Ababa just established 3G cellular service in 2014), and there are few ways to find this information apart from word-of-mouth. To compensate for this, NGOs often recruit women directly for their programs. The government, however, has no such initiative for making sure that entrepreneurs know the tax code, much less what opportunities they have to attract foreign investors or receive tax incentives.

The information on business regulations on the Ethiopian government's website is not considered reliable: while some policy changes may be made at the ministry level, significant changes related to import/export and tax regulations must be passed through Ethiopia's national legislative body, rewritten as law, and then disseminated to the ministry officials who implement the policies. Unfortunately, policy changes seldom flow quickly and evenly through the halls of the ministries, resulting in officials enforcing conflicting regulations.

Women, especially novice entrepreneurs, may be subjected to verbal abuse if they go to government offices for information and other resources without already knowing what to ask for and the protocol for asking. "The first time I went to the business registration office, I didn't know anything. And the man was yelling at me: he was so mean," says Misrak*. If a man goes to licensing office for information or with inaccurate documents to submit, he gets the benefit of the doubt—women do not enjoy the same leeway, unless they are foreign citizens. While BDS or entrepreneurship training programs try to address what they see as Ethiopian women entrepreneurs' weak information seeking behaviours, they fail to address the discrimination women face when they do seek information, particularly from lower-level bureaucrats.

“Most of the bureaucrats in the ministries, they don’t love their job,” explains Frealem Shibabaw, founder of the Ethiopian School Meals Initiative, and former founder and director of one of Addis Ababa’s esteemed private schools. “Like becoming a doctor, they did it for the respect. To feel powerful.” Women with larger, more established enterprises and those who also enjoy foreign citizenship have better access to higher-level ministry officials who, they report, are generally helpful and extremely competent. But changing rules and weak formal channels for disseminating information creates hazards for women who lack strong informal information networks. Several women complained that ambiguity in the tax code has previously left them vulnerable to arbitrary punitive measures. “If a tax ministry official doesn’t like your report because of personal reasons ... they can make it very difficult for you,” explains Makeda*, a popular agroprocessor and prepared foods vendor. There is no benefit of the doubt; there is only opportunity for predatory minor bureaucrats.

Within the formal economy in Ethiopia, informal pathways to achieving business ends remain common. Access to information and opportunities through informal channels is not equally distributed; while some of the business dealings conducted in Addis’ bars and back rooms is not strictly above board, the majority of it is legal. Women are particularly disadvantaged in their ability to access informal business opportunities and knowledge because they are generally not a part of existing, overwhelmingly male *nigade* social networks.

The etiquette section of business traveler’s guide to Ethiopia from 2009 contains this innocuous description of business culture in Addis Ababa:

Business is often conducted at the office, over lunch or dinner. Business entertainment may be conducted at relaxed events such as the Azmari Bet (traditional music place), restaurants, or even in personal residences. (CountryWatch 2009)

All of these spaces are open to foreign business travelers of either gender. But not all of these spaces are proper places for Ethiopian women to go, and less of them are proper places for Ethiopian women to spend time with men outside their family. Male business owners share information and form allegiances outside of business hours, particularly while frequenting Addis Ababa's nicer bars. Women business owners do not have the same opportunity to participate in these informal networks—in part because of their domestic responsibilities in the evening, and in part because of cultural norms that keep women out of male-dominated spaces.

For women, going to bars is neither proper nor common. “Sometimes you have a business dinner—but it's rare for the woman. For the man it's everyday. For me, I can go to the bar, but if I don't have an appointment, why would I go there?” asks Rahel Heruiye. Most women agree that networking with male professionals at a bar of any class would be considered *balege*, ‘profane.’ Women, by contrast, are expected to be *ch'ewa*, ‘decent’ or ‘proper’, at all times. *Balege* and *ch'ewa* are twinned cultural constructs primarily used to regulate women's sexuality and obedience within traditional hierarchical social relations (Kebede et al 2014). Women—especially young women—consorting with men at bars would be construed as depraved flirtation.

Women entrepreneurs see this as a disadvantage. “Men can go without an appointment to talk to anyone. They know which officials go where [to which bars],” says Lidia Million, a leather goods manufacturer. While male business owners bond and share insider information in groups after work, women spend the same evening hours cooking and tending to children with female family members and domestic servants. Church-based *mahaber* parties on Sundays and community-based *iqub* and *idir* meetings are no substitute for the informal business networks that men make after work, and women do not make at all.

Without extensive connections in the Addis Ababa business community or in foreign markets, Ethiopian women SME owners may find it difficult to access the markets they have designed their products for. Entry into foreign markets without buyers in those countries is prohibitively expensive for all but Ethiopia’s largest brands, such as Bethlehem Tilahun’s SoleRebels. Export-oriented women entrepreneurs with early stage businesses often take subcontracts from larger companies to produce for export markets, as Lidia does. But large companies in Ethiopia do not award their contracts through a transparent and competitive process, and dependence on subcontracts leaves women entrepreneurs vulnerable to abuse from their buyers.

4.3. Access to finance

“It’s only if you’re already in the market and well established that you can actually get a loan. ... If you don’t have money, you can’t make money.” – Sania Ahmed

When asked to prioritize the challenges they face as entrepreneurs, men and women entrepreneurs across Ethiopia overwhelmingly cite access to finance as their most significant challenge (DFATD, forthcoming). As in most countries, entrepreneurs in Ethiopia reach out to friends and family first to raise the initial capital to begin their businesses. When SME owners want to expand, however, they often approach the banks for loans.

Women in Amhara are allowed to own and inherit property equally with men, but typically transfer the title to their husbands as a sign of respect at the time of marriage. Muslim women in Oromiya (the region that surrounds Addis Ababa) are not traditionally allowed to own and inherit land, except in rare circumstances (World Bank/WAO 1998). As a result, regardless of ethnic heritage, women in Addis Ababa who seek credit to improve their businesses find themselves lacking the collateral required to take out a substantial loan. Too large for microfinance, women SME owners find themselves at a loss. There are currently few other types of collateral accepted for leverage against non-trivial loans in Ethiopia; *mahaber*, *idir*, and *iqub* may provide some small-scale financing, but what entrepreneurs can borrow through these traditional community organizations is generally insufficient for large expenses, such as machinery.

Some women in the sample also reported receiving sexist treatment from loan officers at major commercial banks during the application processes. Of the women in the sample who sought loans to expand their growing businesses, two were confronted with the question, “Where’s your husband?” when they attended meetings without male companions. When married couples are the two owners of record on a PLC, it is

standard practice for them to co-sign for a loan and required for both parties to be present to meet with the loan officer. For meetings, at least, this protocol is only enforced upon women: when men are the primary entrepreneurs, banks are willing to ignore the absence of their wives from the loan consultation process.

Perhaps a more insidious form of gender bias women face when they seek loans is that women and the goods women traditionally produce in the domestic sphere may not be considered credit-worthy. Rahel Moges, owner of EthioGreen Injera, has won multiple competitions for her injera export business plan; has participated in at least half a dozen internationally-sponsored business leadership development programs; and is the current president of the Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program. She holds a Masters degree in Telecommunications from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. In early 2015, she approached one of Ethiopia's large banks about a loan to purchase additional equipment. She was met with resistance: the loan officers insisted she describe the product—the staple bread of Ethiopia—and demanded her education credentials. “They know what this is. They will eat this every day,” Rahel explains, “Our moms made this. We don't need a degree to make injera.” The loan officers may or may not have been angling for *gubo* (bribes); however, their choice to impugn Rahel's credit-worthiness on the suspicion that her education was insufficient reflects a gender-based assumption: women in Ethiopia are typically less well-educated than men. The bank's resistance to providing capital for an injera bakery also reflects the processes by which “women's work” is devalued (Elson & Pearson 1978): despite the level of skill and artistry required to make injera, its nature as a product of the domestic sphere indexes it as a low-skill, low-value good unworthy of investment from the bank. A 2004 Economic Commission for Africa report describes Ethiopian banks as unwilling to

grant commercial loans to female entrepreneurs who possessed more than enough collateral to satisfy the bank's official requirements (in Singh and Belwal 2007: 126).

4.4. Corruption

Insofar as Ethiopia is committed to the pursuit of modernity, she cannot fail to be embarrassed to some extent by the wax-and-gold¹ complex. For nothing could be more at odds with the ethos of modernization, if not with its actuality, than a cult of ambiguity. (Levine 1965:10)

Encountering corruption as an entrepreneur in Ethiopia is commonplace, but engaging in corrupt practices is avoidable. Members of this sample confirmed being solicited for *gubo* ('bribes') at banks, in the government, and in their supply chains. Most of the solicitations, however, are indirect: Women who have encountered bribe requests before recognize that a loan officer or bureaucrat's reluctance to perform a normal function, combined with the statement "I'll do my best," is a threat that they will not complete the function without payment. Two women also reported being extorted for sexual favors in the normal course of managing their businesses.

The particularly Ethiopian way of asking indirectly for bribes is part of a long Ethiopian rhetorical tradition known as *semena-worq*, 'gold and wax', in which intentions are shrouded in ambiguous language. "I'll do my best" is plausibly deniable as a bribe request, since it sounds like a promise of assistance. Gold and wax is the old way,

associated with masculine styles of poetry and diplomacy. Men are perceived as more willing to engage in corrupt practices than women. But women entrepreneurs are part of the “new way” of doing things in Ethiopia, as Yordanos described. Instead of risking long-term extortion or sexual exploitation at some later point, many women vociferously reject requests for *gubo*. Rejecting *gubo* requests remains so uncommon, several women explained, that those who reject it quickly gain a reputation for being unwilling to give bribes—and are unlikely to face bribe requests again, at least within the same institution.

The ‘old way’ of doing business is seen as a fundamentally masculine set of practices relying on informal social networks and informal communication channels. Because women entrepreneurs are themselves a new phenomenon within Ethiopian society, they are associated with the ‘new way’ of doing business, which values formal channels, the rule of law, and transparency above traditional networks. This does not mean, however, that women entrepreneurs never engage in bribery; those women who receive support from male relatives who are well-established within the business community can use them to access the informal knowledge that men are more likely to hold, including which gate-keepers (within a bank or a government ministry) need to be bribed in order to have an application processed or approved. Misrak* recently opened a new restaurant concept in Addis Ababa with financial help from her father, a successful businessman with decades of experience. He ordered one of his own close associates to accompany Misrak on her visits to government offices, in part because he knew “where to put the bribe” to receive Misrak’s permits in a timely manner. (The health inspector came to make trouble for her several months later, looking for his own *gubo*.)

While some women perceive that their gender advantages them by reducing the likelihood that they will be asked for bribes, it also puts them at risk for other forms of extortion. Two women in this sample reported that they had been asked for sexual favors in return for preferential treatment for their enterprise: one woman reported receiving a sexual request from an employee of a large domestic buyer of her product; another reported being solicited by a government official. Men and women entrepreneurs both often seek the superiors of the civil servants who are supposed to process their government permits when they find the civil servants themselves evasive or belligerent; higher-level officials can unlock doors easily, but can also extort higher prices for the favor. “Ministers [ministry officials], if you ask for [help from] them, they want to have sex with you to give you what you want,” reports Makeda. Discussing any form of sexual harassment is widely considered to be taboo; those women willing to discuss harassment in the workplace and in professional spheres believe that it is not uncommon.

4.5. Working the system: Age, money, and men

In the hierarchical social network that is Ethiopian society, “The elaborate set of rules guiding social conduct between family members, and within the community at large, ensures that everyone, from an early age, knows their place in the hierarchy with respect to one another and is expected to show the appropriate degree of deference. Thus, for instance, interaction continually reaffirms how men are superior to women, and elders to those younger” (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003: 33). Ultimately, a woman entrepreneur’s ability effectively to navigate the challenges of the Ethiopian business environment—and particularly its women-only hazards—relates to her age, her stature

and reputation within the business community, and her ability to tap into the still-robust, male-dominated 'old ways' of doing business. Mulu Iori is one of Addis Ababa's original women entrepreneurs, and one of the most successful women in the service industry: she opened the first independent European-style spa in Ethiopia in 1993, and now operates four spas—including the spa inside the new Radisson Blu Hotel in Kazanchis—and co-owns a garment factory with two friends. She is the current Vice-President of AWEF. She is the only woman in the sample who had no reservations about meeting with a man to discuss business over food or drinks without a male relative present. Successful, prominent, married, and over 60 years old, it is unlikely that Mulu would become the subject of nasty rumors and snide comments for meeting with a man in a bar: she is too well respected.

Less powerful women often take steps to reduce their vulnerability to different forms of sexism in business dealings. They can reduce the risk of being extorted, particularly for sexual favors, by bringing a male relative or business associate with them to all meetings with government, bank, and buyer/supplier entities (Kloezeman, 2015). In women-owned enterprises where husband and wife share the responsibilities of running the business, this may also result in husbands doing more of the outward-facing work, while wives manage employees and daily operations—reproducing the male/public vs. female/private dichotomy within the enterprise. Meron Ermias and her husband Selam co-own a screen printing and garment-sewing business: while Selam interacts with buyers, banks, and the government tax authority, Meron supervises the operations—and bankrolls the business's capital improvements with the profits from her success as an artist. The couple will soon be opening a direct retail store in a Meganegna space owned by Meron's father, a successful pest management business owner. Meron's husband

negotiates their business interests within patriarchal institutions, a task that might have been more difficult for Meron on her own; yet, as a result, Meron's contributions to her business are backgrounded by her husband's front stage role (Goffman 1981).

Chapter 5. Reclaiming *nigade*: Strategies for redistributing power

"You know, *nigade* means *businessman*," Sewit explained to me as we met in her office. "Women get overlooked because the mindset is geared towards men." Sewit works as a Gender Advisor and a member of the NGO community; she has seen the training opportunities women entrepreneurs can access first-hand, and has spoken with a number of professional women (entrepreneurs and others) as part of her research. Every feminist I spoke with reiterated this etymological point: Amharic *nigd* 'business' nominalizes to *nigade* 'businessman', and they believe that this semantic marginalization of women is emblematic of the wider process of women's marginalization from formal commerce, and perhaps from the public sphere more generally. The traditional approach to women's entrepreneurship promotion in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, is to provide business development services⁶ (BDS) and management skills trainings, combined with a

⁶ Defined by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as "non-financial services and products offered to entrepreneurs at various stages of their business needs. These services are primarily aimed at skills transfer or business advice" (2015: 52).

financing option. However, even programs designed to provide these services specifically to women generally do not directly address issues related to women's strategic gender priorities, such as reducing the amount of domestic labor they do, participating in household decision-making, and controlling the number of community social functions they are required to attend (Leach et al 2000; Geleta 2014). Feminine *yeset nigade* is the marked form of the noun *nigade*; when entrepreneurship training programs do not specifically address women's obligations for social reproduction and their potential strategic gender priorities, they default to training an entrepreneur who is always already masculine. Here, I examine one BDS program and a linked financing opportunity that were popular and well-known among the women in my sample. I contrast this to three programs based on the idea that increasing bridging social capital (van Staveren and Knorringa 2007; Putnam 1993/2000) will stimulate positive economic outcomes by reducing transaction costs, enabling collective action, and creating learning spillovers. I suggest that entrepreneurship promotion programs that involve an associational or peer support component present a significant opportunity to enhance women's symbolic power. Such programs intervene in the power flows within Ethiopia's business network, creating more social capital among women entrepreneurs and greater opportunities for them to take collective action.

5.1. The limits of promoting empowerment through technical assistance: BDS and the EDC

“Entrepreneurs sleep only four hours per night.” – Etalem Engeda, Director of the Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC)

The Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) in Kazanchis is a government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO) which receives the bulk of its funding and direction from the United Nations Development Programme and Global Affairs Canada (formerly the Canadian Department of Foreign Trade and Development, DFATD; formerly the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA); the centre bears the blue-and-gold star crest of the FDRE on its office door, and is run under the auspices of the Federal Micro & Small Enterprise Agency. In alignment with its funding priorities, the EDC provides business development services (BDS) and entrepreneurship skills trainings to micro- and small-enterprise owners. (Some medium-enterprise owners also avail themselves of the EDC's services from time to time.) The EDC also runs a program targeted at undergraduate business students in Addis Ababa to encourage them to start businesses after graduating.

To date, the EDC has trained over 21,000 entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs. In addition to its standard curriculum, the EDC also provides specialized training programs for youth, rural farmers, and low-literacy women. Business development services and entrepreneurship trainings are common in Addis Ababa; in the past five years, the Canadian, German, Japanese, and American international development agencies, as well as the World Bank, have all offered some form of entrepreneurship development education program, often in cooperation with the Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Industry. As development interventions, training programs that target women traditionally address women's needs within existing norms of the gendered division of labour; while SME training programs have been gender-blind, they have predominantly benefitted men, since women's enterprises were too small to qualify (Leach et al 2000). While the EDC's training programs should, theoretically,

benefit more women by targeting MSEs, their rate of recruitment of women remains low, and their curriculum remains gender-blind.

In Addis Ababa, the EDC's flagship program is a six-day intensive business skills and entrepreneurial mindset training program. The model of entrepreneurship the EDC imparts is based on the United Nations Center for Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs) model, developed by Harvard University psychologist David McClelland and first used in Argentina in 1988 as part of the Empretec ('entreprenevedores' + 'tecnologica') program. The model encourages regular self-reflection, asking entrepreneurs to ask themselves how well they are living up to the ideal entrepreneur constructed by the model. The PECs model asks entrepreneurs to excel in opportunity-seeking, risk taking, persistence, information seeking, and networking, among other things (UNCTAD 2009).

In early 2015, the EDC hired a gender advisor to develop targets and strategies for raising the number of women the EDC serves. Outreach efforts include presentations to organizations like AWEF at their monthly breakfast meetings. The EDC's nascent efforts to recruit women to its programs exemplify the EPRDF's overall performance in supporting women entrepreneurs: financially donor-driven and lacking a coherent theory of gender inequality, despite having well-educated women in some high management positions (the director of the EDC is a woman). Prior to 2015, the EDC made no attempt to do specific outreach to women to participate in its programs, and the proportion of women accessing its services was very low.

As part of the EDC's partnership with Enat Bank, entrepreneurs who develop a business plan as part of the MSE training program can receive commercial loans to

expand their enterprises. Founded in 2012 by a group of eleven women entrepreneurs, Enat Bank is 64% woman-owned and bills itself as a social impact bank focused on advancing women's economic empowerment—particularly through women's entrepreneurship. It has three special financial products designed to achieve this goal: first, it offers a “Collateral Savings Account,” where willing depositors' may have their savings frozen for a predetermined period of time in order to offer that capital to women MSE owners as a loan. Ethiopia's First Lady, Roman Tesfaye, made a very public deposit of 100,000 birr into an Enat Collateral Savings Account to increase public support for the product. Second, Enat Bank offers what it calls “Women Special Loan [sic]”, which uses Collateral Savings Account capital to fund women entrepreneurs, particularly start-ups. Lastly, the Bank provides financial education to its account holders, with the particular aim of increasing women's financial literacy.

I inquired about the EDC's programs to the women in my sample: Were they aware of it? Had they taken its trainings? Most were aware of it, and had learned about it through their participation in women's business associations or through other women business owners. Five of 24 women had participated in the EDC's six-day intensive program, and one completed a ten-day EDC course also based on the PECs. The women who completed EDC's courses all regarded them positively: those with young enterprises (1-2 years operating) emphasized the value of the course's content on organization and planning. Those women who had been in business longer emphasized the value of the reflexive self-improvement techniques described in the course.

Several women were not interested in the EDC's programs; of my sample, they were the women with the strongest connections to North America, having spent at least half of their lives there. But there were other women in the sample who were both aware

of the EDC's program offerings, and interested in them, who had never enrolled. Amelsa Yazew of Little Gabies, a baby blanket manufacturer, captured their overall sentiment towards the EDC's program: "I should really take it. But when do I have the time?" Women, particularly mothers of young children, are not excused from childcare and other domestic duties in the evenings simply because they have neglected their businesses during the day. Without a highly competent management team and a stable business, these women entrepreneurs felt they could not take six full days away from their enterprises and return to find them running smoothly. Widely variable workshop end times also made it difficult for women who did take the training to schedule quick business meetings at the end of the day.

In addition to the difficulties of participating in the training, women who have done so—along with many other women entrepreneurs who have not—have not found Enat Bank to be a reliable partner for their businesses. Perhaps due to the high level of competition in the Ethiopian banking sector, after only a few years in existence, Enat Bank is falling prey to many of the orthodoxies of the banking sector at large, and failing to provide adequate services to female SME owners.

The Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program (AWEP) hosts two external organizations at each of its breakfast meetings. These organizations—the Ethiopian Investment Commission, the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Trade, and the Entrepreneurship Development Centre have all recently attended—are allocated time to make presentations on the opportunities they offer to AWEP's demographic, followed by a question-and-answer period. Enat Bank attended the July meeting. After describing their services, the Bank's representatives were hit with a variety of complaints from

women who were members of the bank, and from women who took their business elsewhere.

In particular, it seems, Enat Bank's pro-women attitude does not translate into preferential interest rates or fee structures for women business owners. While Enat Bank offers loans especially for women, these loans are not, in fact, superior to loans available elsewhere. Export-oriented manufacturers and local tourism operators also agreed that Enat Bank's foreign currency services are severely lacking in comparison with several of the other banks. Accessing and changing foreign currency is a critical, regular need for these women's businesses, just as drawing in foreign currency is a strategic objective of Ethiopia's current GTP. In addition, the women argued, Enat's customer service has declined precipitously, and wait times for simple transactions have become inordinately long. While AWEP members might like to support Enat Bank, the bank's pro-women attitude cannot substitute for competitive products and services. This is particularly disadvantageous to small entrepreneurs who are directed to Enat Bank by the EDC for a loan: they may find themselves choosing between poor financial services, or receiving no loan at all.

Despite her connections to the board of Enat Bank, Zala* complains that the bank has delayed her loan application for several months, sometimes asking for additional documents, sometimes giving vague reasons for postponing the processing of her loan. At other banks, she might suspect this sort of foot-dragging to be an indirect request for a bribe. As a new bank with a social mission, Enat Bank has some separation from the old guard of the banking sector and its reputation for charging under-the-table fees for processing loans. But, since Enat Bank has recently developed a reputation for poor service quality, Zala finds it hard to distinguish whether the problem

she faces is the result of nefarious intent, or simply poor service. Regardless, emphasizing “sisterhood” and Enat’s social mission cannot compensate for poor service.

Entrepreneurship trainings assume that through pluck, persistence, and personal initiative, the entrepreneur can overcome any obstacles to wealth and success. This overlooks structural and institutional factors that inhibit individuals’ power to realize their goals. Following Foucault, some critics see this as a form of governmentality, through which the subject is “responsibilized” for their success or failure. As Molyneux (2011) describes, in this process, “The reconstitution of subjectivity thus entails a shift from passive recipient of a public service to that of active consumer and participant in their provision” (2001: 178). The difficult nature of obtaining information about business regulations in Ethiopia makes it such that any entrepreneur could hardly manage to operate a formal enterprise as a “passive recipient” of services and information. None of the women who took the EDC’s training had qualms about the PECs principles; most felt the specific behaviours discussed in the trainings would be beneficial to their business success. There may be, though, a risk in suggesting that pluck and persistence alone can put women entrepreneurs on an equal footing with men.

5.2. Network-based alternatives: Promoting equality and economic growth through business networks

“When we trust each other, we can do more.” –Fikirte Addis, Yefikir

NGO and Embassy-led support is leading to a rise in women’s business networks across Addis Ababa, particularly for women entrepreneurs eager to access export markets. While these programs are focused on specific economic outcomes, they

are also having a significant impact on women's social capital and network power. Here, I explore the role two networks, WALN and AWEPP, are playing in the lives of women SME owners in Addis Ababa. The USAID-sponsored AMDe program combines BDS training with association membership and mentoring for women agricultural entrepreneurs, and has generated a spin-off business association, the Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN), for its alumni. The Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program (AWEPP), which began with U.S. Embassy support, is generally regarded as one of the most active and effective business associations in Addis Ababa. These associations are transforming the way women interact and access information, providing them with an alternative to male-dominated informal business networking spaces. Through associations, women increase their social capital; through information sharing, women increase their cultural capital, as well. In this way these new opportunities for women to network and collaborate are changing the nature of business in Ethiopia, and giving them a more central role in it.

5.2.1. The Agricultural Markets Development Program (AMDe) & Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN)

AMDe is a large, five-year agricultural development project funded by USAID and implemented by ACDI/VOCA in Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. In addition to training women entrepreneurs in business skills and helping them develop business plans, the gender component of AMDe brings women together in a collaborative environment to share their business problems and experiences, increasing women's social capital and

network power. The Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network program has been formalized as an independent business network, permanently changing the way women in this sector relate to one another and to other parts of the business network in Ethiopia.

The overall goal of the AMDe project is to increase agricultural productivity in seven key value chains: chickpeas, coffee, honey, maize, sesame, wheat, and livestock/dairy. The project works primarily with the top half of the value chain: cooperatives, processors, and import-exporters. While women make up over 60% of Ethiopia's agricultural labour force, women are extremely under-represented above the production level of most value chains, with the exception of *baltena* processing (traditional dried foods and spice production). To reach its promised 20% female beneficiaries project target for USAID, ACDI/VOCA launched a sub-program in 2014 to build the capacity of women involved in agroprocessing, dubbed the Women's Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN).

Women in each region met three days a month to go over tailored BDS information related to agroprocessing, but spent most of the time working on business problems that one or other member of the cohort brought to class. All of the participants interviewed highlighted this element of the class: Women entrepreneurs often have no peers they feel comfortable sharing their questions and business problems with. WALN created a forum for women to address them cooperatively. "You can discuss with people and you can solve things," explained Rahel Heruiye of Damscene Essential Oils, who participated in AMDe trainings as a sesame processor. What began as a training program with an innovative mentorship component quickly became a formal business network: participants in the initial round of training in early 2014 requested that ACDI/VOCA help the establish an association, registered under the Ministry of Trade, to

allow them to continue their conversations about solving business challenges as women agroprocessors.

This approach not only increases the connection density and social capital among Ethiopia's women agroprocessors, it also fundamentally changes the nature of the way women entrepreneurs interact and address their business problems. Women agricultural entrepreneurs rarely interact, except at trade shows, where those interactions can be tense and intensely competitive (Kloezeman 2015). Prior to AMDe, the women in this sample had neither the occasion nor the habit of discussing the business challenges they faced with other women entrepreneurs. The fact that the women involved in the initial round of WALN trainings requested the formalization of WALN is a testament to the potential power these women saw in having an association of their own.

In addition to receiving capacity building information and industry-specific BDS, WALN participants were each expected to mentor three other women agroprocessors, what ACIDI/VOCA termed "cascading reciprocal learning mentorship." The outcomes of this extended mentorship feature will be evaluated in a forthcoming World Bank Gender Innovation Lab analysis of WALN. Whether or not this particular method will be effective in practice remains to be seen; no women in this sample were mentees of WALN participants, but some mentors expressed dissatisfaction with their mentees.

In theory, this program methodology has the potential to increase power in the women's business network, creating stronger information channels between women and increasing involvement in associations, boosting their cultural and social capital and creating the potential for collective action.

5.2.2. The Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program

The Alliance of Women Entrepreneurs Program (AWEP) is an initiative launched by then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2013. U.S. Embassies in 13 sub-Saharan African countries helped small groups of up-and-coming women entrepreneurs to register domestic chapters of the alliance, with the objective of fostering women's business leadership within and across African states. Each chapter is democratically volunteer-run and sustains itself through member dues. The AWEP chapter in Addis Ababa is primarily composed of export-oriented women entrepreneurs interested in selling their goods in the United States under the duty exemptions provided by the U.S.'s African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

While many members of AWEP also belong to the older Ethiopian Women's Export Association, AWEP has gained a reputation for seriousness and active membership during its short lifespan. Its members meet monthly over breakfast to share information about upcoming business opportunities and hear presentations from relevant organizations on important business topics: changes to tax regulations, financial services, or affirmative action initiatives. Though the U.S. Embassy provides no direct financial or program support to AWEP, the Embassy often recruits AWEP members to participate in bazaars at the embassy or tours when Congressional delegations visit Addis Ababa. Roughly 40 members attend the meetings each month. Current President Rahel Moges and Vice-President Mulu lori also publish a weekly email newsletter to keep track of all upcoming opportunities and deadlines that might affect the organization's members. As a centralized platform for receiving and discussing business

information, AWEF helps women entrepreneurs close the knowledge gap between men and women, the gap perpetuated by women's exclusion from *nigade* social networks.

AWEF Ethiopia hosted the continent-wide AWEF Summit in 2014, drawing women entrepreneurs from across Africa to Addis Ababa for presentations by U.S. business leaders and government officials. In 2015, the U.S. Embassy invited AWEF members to the State Department's Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Kenya, which President Obama also attended. The U.S. Embassy's support of AWEF has allowed the program's members to reach beyond the Ethiopian business network, directly to actors in the international marketplace. Connecting directly with international buyers allows women to avoid exploitation and opaque selection practices from domestic buyers; international connections are an important form of social capital, as they can be translated rapidly into economic capital and preferential treatment through government programs designed to encourage export production. By enabling women entrepreneurs to connect directly to the international market through AWEF, the U.S. State Department has made a powerful move to direct the flow of power from international capital into Ethiopia specifically to women entrepreneurs.

Chapter 6. Networks, women, and men

The value of network-based approaches to promoting women's entrepreneurship is clear from the other resources women themselves are using to improve their business outcomes and power as entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs, who may have met each other in network-based programs like AWEF, WALN, or the Center for the Advancement of Women's Economic Empowerment (CAWEE), are forming their own industry associations to deal with supply chain constraints, copyright issues, and regulatory

confusion. At the individual level, women are also increasingly finding support from their male relatives, in the form of connections, information, and capital, to pursue their business objectives. In both of these ways, women are fundamentally altering the nature of the Ethiopian business network—and taking a more central power position for themselves.

Professional associations provide women entrepreneurs with a *chewa* space between public and private where they can meet, share information, and make deals. Little Gabies, for example, has partnered with Meron Seid of Exotica Leather to produce high-quality sheep leather baby shoes that will be marketed under the Little Gabies label in the future. In addition to networking, women can and have used these associations to collectively lobby the government for regulatory reforms to problems within individual sectors.

The Ethiopian Women’s Fashion Designers Association (EWFDA) is a key example. Recently founded by members of AWEF, including Fikirte Addis and Aynalem Ayele, the EFWDA hopes to address the issue of unauthorized design reproduction in the fashion design world through two key means: first, the organization’s founders hope to create a community of designers who respect one another’s intellectual property; and, second, the organization intends to advocate for better enforcement of existing intellectual property laws, and potentially for reforms to better protect them. The creation of this trade-specific association represents a significant cultural shift in the way women entrepreneurs relate to one another: instead of shouting each other down on the floor of a trade show, the members of the EWFDA have created an organization based on respect and cooperation to achieve common ends. Fikirte Addis of Yefikir is one of the founding members of the group. She has seen her designs reproduced elsewhere, and

been asked to reproduce the designs of others. Sometimes potential clients come in and request a sketch for a custom dress—but they leave, sketch in hand, with the intent of taking it to another designer who will produce it more cheaply.

One time, the reverse was the case: “A ferengi woman came to me once with a sketch, and she told me, ‘I have this design and I think it is from Mariam*, but I can’t find her. Will you make it for me?’

“And I looked at the design and I said, ‘Yes, I think this is Mariam’s* design. I know where she is. Let me take you there.’

“And the other designer was so surprised when I brought this woman to her with her design, she was thanking me and thanking me.”

This represents a significant shift in the culture of women entrepreneurs in Addis: depending on whom you ask, either thinly veiled contempt or outright animosity best describes the tension between direct competitors. While a man might be a close drinking buddy with one of his major competitors in Addis Ababa, women are seen as willing to fight and undercut one another for competitive advantage. Women’s business associations, and particularly industry-specific associations, may transform that dynamic, as women come to see the value in alliances and socially-enforced standards for competitive behaviour.

During the course of my fieldwork, I found that international NGOs and the Ethiopian government were not the only ones involved in reengineering the gender power composition of the private sector in Addis Ababa: for many women, the support of male relatives has been as crucial for their business success—if not more so—than any

external loan, training program, or business network. Not only can men support women entrepreneurs emotionally and through domestic work, but they can also provide information and access to male-dominated business networks.

My driver, Samuel*, was not shy in his disdain for women entrepreneurs, though he was eager enough to meet one of my participants who serves as a board member at a major commercial bank; the car he drove was owned by a woman, and he made clear his resentment of this fact. “Behind every one of these women, there is a powerful man,” he said profoundly, over coffee. His statement was intended as a criticism of successful women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, but the underlying fact need not be interpreted negatively. The majority of women in this sample do, in fact, have well-educated, wealthy men whom they count as key to their success in the business world. For many of them, a husband or a father provided the seed capital for their enterprise, and that person may continue to provide advice or other forms of support. Several husbands even provide childcare, which is essential to their wives’ ability to operate their businesses and represents a more equitable division of domestic labour within their households. (It bears noting, however, that—while every family has its own gender dynamics—when husbands provide childcare, it is still often considered a “favour” to their wives.)

In terms of understanding women’s power within the business network, however, it is those men who provide women entrepreneurs with capital, expertise, and access who are restructuring the power dynamics of the overall network. They serve as a crucial source of social and other forms of capital for women entrepreneurs. In the past, these men might have provided this sort of assistance exclusively to male relatives or close friends. They are now directing that power to women as well; they are connecting

previously disparate networks and actors within networks, establishing new relations of power (Castells 2011: 786). This fact suggest that there is at least a subset of men in the private sector in Ethiopia today who see the women they know as capable entrepreneurs, and are willing to facilitate the growth of their enterprises and their influence.

Several of the women in this sample cited their husbands as their biggest supporters, and as the individuals who urged them to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations regardless of the risk. Fashion designer Fikirte Addis emphasizes her husband Addis' contribution to her success. Addis runs a successful business selling moringa, and encouraged Fikirte to leave her career as a psychologist in the non-profit sphere to pursue her passion for modern *ager libs* ('country clothes', traditional cotton fashions). Addis has helped Fikirte in both domestic and professional domains, providing childcare to their three children as well as offering business advice. Contrary to dominant cultural attitudes, he is not threatened by his wife's success: Fikirte recounts, "One time some people asked my husband, 'Do you think it's good she's well educated?' And he told them *min chigger alle* [what's the problem]? She is going to provide for me and feed me."

The experience of women in this sample illustrates that men, too, are increasingly becoming an important source of social capital for women, and helping them to increase their network power. As men continue to increase women entrepreneur's connections to people and information in the business world, women's overall power will rise, contributing to the growth of a new class of women leaders in Ethiopia.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

There is no question of whether women entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa are contributing to Ethiopian economic development: they are. Together, the 23 women in this sample have created over 400 permanent jobs, most of them in the manufacturing sector. They are bringing foreign currency into Ethiopia through both exports and service activities, and helping Ethiopia move up the value chain from a commodities producer to a light manufacturing power. Government incentives and NGO support seek to foster a new class of women entrepreneurs: responsabilized citizens who independently seek information and economic opportunities within the designs of the state's economic development plan. The institutions where women are to seek this information and these opportunities, however, remain deeply patriarchal, reflecting the "old way" of doing business that most women entrepreneurs are not party to. The question remains: in what sense is fostering women's entrepreneurship fostering gender equality in Ethiopia?

The answer lies in social capital and the power of networks in Ethiopian society. Power in the Ethiopian business community flows through informal social networks in masculine spaces—spaces most women are proscribed from entering, for fear of the label *balege*. Women entrepreneurs are, however, members of the Ethiopian business network in the broader sense—they represent a marginalized part of the whole. But, as such, they can exercise *counterpower*, "fighting to change the programs of specific networks and disrupt[ing] ... dominant interests and replac[ing] them with alternative[s]" (Castells 2011: 773). Women exercise this counterpower when they draw upon their increasing social capital to grow their enterprises and resist institutional forms of

discrimination, regendering *nigade*. Expanding women's social capital through entrepreneurship promotion is a promising strategy for ultimately addressing gender discrimination within Ethiopian institutions, public or private. While training individual women business owners in management techniques and providing them with financing opportunities can help them accrue greater financial capital, promoting a culture of cooperation and vibrant associations among women entrepreneurs creates an opportunity for them to act collectively.

Attempts by the U.S. Embassy and domestic actors to promote women's business leadership in Ethiopia are disrupting traditional male dominance in the private sector by facilitating the growth of women's symbolic power through social capital. Introducing new, women-only structures into the existing business network may indeed cause a fundamental shift in the balance of power among the overall network's members. Connecting women entrepreneurs to one another builds their social capital, helping them move beyond domestic isolation and the inaccessibility of the bar. It also puts them in a position to lobby for more rights, better regulations, and clearer information. Organizations like AWEF, WALN, and their sponsors are changing business and leadership networks within Ethiopia by disrupting its underlying patriarchy.

Women entrepreneurs' male relatives are also making an important contribution to the advancement of women, in informal ways. By financing them, helping them access information, and connecting them to other parts of the business network in Ethiopia, these men are helping the women they love achieve both their business goals and increase their social capital. This, in turn, helps these women achieve their strategic priorities of increased power and influence in Ethiopia's leadership class. Men's willingness to direct power to women with entrepreneurial ambitions both increases

women's power and represents an important shift in men's attitudes towards women's roles in society.

The depoliticization of gender inequality, Third World Feminists would argue, ignores the issue's fundamental nature as a power struggle. This analysis demonstrates, however, that there are depoliticized and positively capitalistic ways of addressing women's strategic priority for more power in society, at least in the business arena. Promoting trade associations and women's business groups may not be so apolitical after all; however, what ripples women's leadership and the growth of women's business associations in Ethiopia will have on the overall state of gender relations remains to be seen. Changing ideologies come more slowly than profits, and are harder to measure.

A story Sewit shared with me illustrates just how slowly ideologies change. It was a busy day at the Bank, and Sewit was waiting near the back next to an older man when he observed this to her:

Him: "A lot of women here today."

Sewit: "What do you mean?"

Him: "There are a lot more women here than usual" (implying the number of tellers at the bank) ...

Sewit: "Well that's good right?"

Him: "Of course, it is a woman's job to serve the society"

Sewit: "What does that mean?"

Him: " Women are here to serve us. It has to do with child care and such."

Sewit: "Shouldn't men take responsibility in serving society?"

Him: "Of course but it will take time. Sometime in the future."

Sewit: "When is the future? Is tomorrow the future?"

Him: BLANK LOOK.⁷

While working as a bank teller is not a "traditional" role for women in Ethiopian society, the man Sewit encountered was able to stretch his concept of traditional gender roles to interpret women bank tellers in terms of women's normative role as caretakers. In Addis Ababa, women take deposits and men shine shoes—both of these are service work. Perhaps until women have permeated the heights of political office and economic influence will "women's work" continue to be defined as low-skill or caretaking (Elson & Pearson 1978), and men's work exempted from the narrative of "serving society". As women entrepreneurs increase their social capital, they find new opportunities to increase their economic capital—their wealth—and become increasingly indispensable to the country's economic goals. They also find new opportunities to press for their rights, respect, and fair treatment in front of Ethiopian institutions. Perhaps women entrepreneurs' achievement of these heights of power will also teach a new generation of young men and women to imagine women differently than previous generations have: as equally capable to men.

⁷ As transcribed from memory by Sewit. I corrected spelling and capitalization, and changed "me" to "Sewit" in the speaker titles for the purposes of this report.

Chapter 8. Questions for the future

The natural next question that arises from this research is: How do improvements in women's power at the elite level impact the opportunities that non-elite Ethiopian girls experience? In 1986, there were virtually no women and girls participating in athletics in Ethiopia. Since Derartu Tulu's Olympic Marathon win that year, tens of thousands of girls have taken up running in hopes of reaching the same fortunes as Derartu and her nieces, current World Record holders Tirunesh and Genzebe Dibaba. A broader study on female role models and girls' aspirations could begin to address this question. A historical study might address when and how women leaders and women's rights organizations, such as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, have been successful at spurring substantive reforms to legal codes and institutional practices in the past. Women have played a substantial role in the development of the modern Ethiopian state, but the extent of their contributions is poorly documented.

The women who advised me in this research believed that misogynistic attitudes, particularly resentment of professionally successful women, were not the exclusive purview of any class or other group-type of men. I would be interested to see a survey- and interview-based study that measured men's attitudes towards women's work, professional success, and responsibilities to her husband. The obvious methodological challenge of such a study would be ensuring participants did not bias their answers to reflect the social desirability of egalitarian attitudes, as promoted in official state media. Furthermore, a study of how women entrepreneurs in different sectors and different enterprise sizes engage with men (relatives or not) for business advice and access to

resources could better illuminate patterns in how men are collaborating in the promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

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