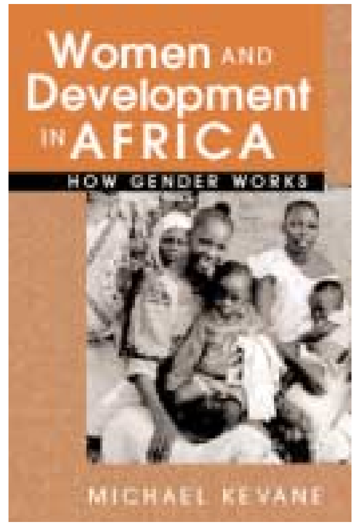
EXCERPTED FROM

Women and Development in Africa: How Gender Works



Michael Kevane

ISBNs: 1-58826-213-8 hc   1-58826-238-3 pb

LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS
1800 30th Street, Ste. 314
Boulder, CO 80301
USA
telephone 303.444.6684
fax 303.444.0824

1

Introduction

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. . . . How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa!
>
> —*Tsitsi Dangarembga,* Nervous Conditions

This book offers an introduction to the analysis of gender in the economies of sub-Saharan Africa. Gender refers to the constellation of rules and identities that prescribe and proscribe behavior for persons, in their social roles as men and women. These rules and identities may be deliberate or unintended, explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious. All societies of the world are gendered. The focus here will be on Africa south of the Sahara Desert, which means that the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern–oriented countries of Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco are excluded. Henceforth, sub-Saharan Africa shall be shortened to just plain Africa, in accordance with common usage in the social sciences.

Gender requires analysis because a common outcome of the gendering of social activity is an unequal and inefficient distribution, between men and women, of the capabilities for realizing well-being. Many—if not most—people would agree that women and girls are disadvantaged in life relative to men and boys, even though national statistics sometimes do a poor job of capturing the relevant inequalities (Quisumbing, Haddad, and Pena 2001). The pervasiveness of female disadvantage is one of the most interesting and least understood features of economic life.

Certainly there are people, sometimes very influential and intelligent people, who believe that comparing the well-being of boys and girls, or men and women, is like comparing papayas and lemons. One is sweet and the other sour, and the difference does not imply unequal welfare. Men and boys have their lives to lead and girls and women theirs. Nevertheless, girls and women in Africa face unequal chances for education, less inheritance and ownership of assets, discrimination in employment and occupations, violence at home and in public spaces, and limited political representation. These add up to unambiguously diminished welfare and capacity to fulfill life aspirations.

Gender matters for women, but it also matters for men. Much of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has experienced long-term stagnation or declines in income and general standards of living. Many people still journey from sorrowful, hungry, and frustrating life to early, painful, and diseased death. Perhaps reversing this situation depends on changing structures of gender. The skeptic might immediately want to put down this book. Gender and economic growth? The two have little to do with each other. But consider a few lines of argument. One goes as follows: African economies are poor because of high levels of corruption; men are more corruptible than women; men dominate African governments; therefore the solution is to encourage and campaign for more representation of women in African governments. For those who think this argument a trifle glib, consider this passage from a recent book authored by the World Bank: "Greater women's rights and more equal participation in public life by women and men are associated with cleaner business and government and better governance. Where the influence of women in public life is greater, the level of corruption is lower . . . women can be an effective force for rule of law and good governance" (2001, 12–13).

Take another syllogism: relative to men, women prefer that social spending be higher and more oriented toward the well-being of children; more social spending on local infrastructure, schooling, and antipoverty programs is good for economic growth; thus, empowering women in the political process leads to larger allocations toward growth-enhancing government expenditures. Too obvious? Except for the growth-enhancing part of the story, this is a theory of "big government" in the United States. Lott and Kenny (1999, 1163), for example, find that the period of extension of the franchise to women in the United States "coincided with immediate increases in state government expenditures and revenue and more liberal voting patterns for federal representatives, and these effects continued growing over time as more women took advantage of the franchise." Edlund and Pande (2001) find evidence that recently divorced women, desirous of higher levels of social spending, have increasingly voted for the Democratic Party in the United States. In the context of developing countries, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) find that when the government of West Bengal required that village leadership positions be reserved for women, village councils indeed invested in different kinds of public goods.

A related observation, made frequently in African studies, notes that the market-friendly policies supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have reduced growth because they failed to give consideration to gender inequalities (Gladwin and McMillan 1989; Safilios-Rothschild 1985; Staudt 1987). These policies were supposed to lighten the burden of government regulation of economic activities and encourage farmers and entrepreneurs to work longer and harder, invest more, and shift toward more socially desirable activities (rather than bureaucratically desirable activities). But optimistic expectations of high responsiveness and innovation proved unwarranted. Perhaps African women were simply too downtrodden to take much advantage of new opportunities. Where they did begin to exploit the new opportunities, the surplus generated was wasted in costly political, legal, and cultural struggles with men over rights to control the new surplus.

Another link made between gender and growth emphasizes the importance of fertility. In this view, a major problem in developing countries is that parents want children for old-age security: because child mortality rates are so high, parents try to have many children. The parents do not take into account that their extra children may generate burdens on society as a whole. (Crowded classrooms and health clinics come to mind.) Empowering women seems to be associated with lower fertility rates. If lower fertility rates generate more rapid economic growth, then the syllogism is complete.

The "Economic Method"

Exploring gender issues is an opportunity to master many analytical and empirical tools used in the social sciences. The tools applied in this book are used in all of the social sciences but are most closely associated with economics. Rather presumptuously, some economists call this particular set of analytical tools the "economic method." This method involves model building and verification. The first step is a narrow, careful, and often mathematical exposition of theories, in the form of models of behavior. These theories typically start with assumptions about individual rather than group behavior. This "methodological individualism" is then coupled with logic to make inferences about the interactions among people. Assumptions, logic, and inference constitute a model.

Logic is used to distinguish between causes and effects. Logical statements are often cast as syllogisms. An example of syllogistic reasoning that is common in economics goes as follows: People have a propensity to "truck and barter." People also have different tastes and abilities. Therefore, any equal distribution of resources across society will quickly result in an unequal distribution. Stated another way, people are different, and because people like to trade, any initial equal distribution of resources will lead to situations where people can gain from trade. But trading means the original, equal distribution becomes unequal. The logic is impeccable. It is the often unstated implication of this syllogism that is troublesome: the implication that redistribution of resources is futile, since inequality will inevitably return. But does the logic say that redistribution is futile? Does it say that the same inequality will reappear? No. It says that some kind of inequality will likely reappear, but it is silent on the nature of that inequality. It is important to understand that not every implication that an author insinuates does indeed follow from the argument. Students in the social sciences must be alert to model overbite.

A good model tries to explain and predict the essence of some observed behavior. The economic method then applies statistical techniques to data in order to verify or refute models. The appendix to this book contains a more thorough introduction to models and a discussion of the supply and demand model and the Nash equilibrium approach to modeling strategic situations. There is also discussion in the appendix about regression analysis, the specific statistical technique used in this book. The reader will find a nontechnical and intuitive explanation of regressions and hints about how to interpret regression results. There are many fine introductory textbooks on the subject, and the more mathematically inclined are urged to seek them out (Bacon 1988; Pindyck and Rubinfeld 1998).

It is worth reiterating that the tools used in this book do not belong to economics. John Nash, Nobel laureate and subject of the film *A Beautiful Mind,* whose work has become very important in the analysis of gender in the household, was a mathematician, not an economist. The approaches that he and others have developed are used in many disciplines (Wilk 1996). Hopefully, seeing the tools in action here, in an unfamiliar and compelling setting, may help students apply them to more familiar settings. No special training is required to understand the main ideas of these tools. That is why they are so powerful.

Organization of the Book

The approach adopted in this book emphasizes the interactions between the choices that individuals make and the social environment that structures those choices. Men and women make differing choices, choices that constitute part of the gendering of economic activity. But the motivation for those choices is in part the differing opportunities that men and women experience. The structure of an economy—rights over property and persons, organization of market transfers of property and persons, and rules regarding nonmarket transfers of rights—is itself gendered.

If Africans were rich, the analysis of the economic dimensions of gender would be less urgent. Unfortunately, most African countries are getting poorer. The next chapter offers a broad overview of the problem of declining economic performance in Africa. That sets the context for Chapter 3, on the gendered choices and structures in the economies of sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapters 4–6 concentrate on three examples of economic structures: land tenure, labor control, and marriage markets. The system of land tenure (Chapter 4) is the most basic structure of an agrarian economy. Tenure rules determine the allocation of rights to use and transfer land. Most African societies give women far fewer land-use rights than are given to men. Labor control is discussed in Chapter 5, which provides evidence on the gendering of labor markets, principally in the form of norms that enforce occupational segregation by gender. Many African societies classify certain activities as "male" and others as "female," and rare is the man or woman who will cross those occupational boundaries. Women may also have limited rights to choose how much time to spend in permissible occupations; they may be subordinate to the instructions of their husbands or fathers. Chapter 6 investigates marriage markets, which in many African societies are major economic structures determining the lives of women.

Subsequent chapters look at important choices that men and women make in the context of the structures that they find themselves in as they enter adulthood. Many choices are made in the context of households, discussed in Chapter 7. At the same time, the structures of households are constituted by the choices that the people within them make. One important household choice concerns investments in children (Chapters 8 and 9). If those investment choices are themselves gendered, then right away there is a feedback mechanism between structure and choice. Parents make different investments in girls than they do in boys, which affects the skills, outlooks, and rights that girls take with them into adulthood. Because of this, young women will make choices that are different from those of young men. The social patterns that emerge from these choices become viewed as part of the economic structure of a given society, which in turn shapes the choices of the next generation of parents.

There is a pithy saying that economics is all about how people make choices, while sociology is all about how people don't actually have any choices to make. There is no need to reduce the social sciences to such gross stereotypes, but the saying does capture the essence of how to think about the relationship between structure and agency (Giddens 1984).

Social scientists used to think of economic structures as being "sticky" and persisting through time, experiencing rapid change only as the result of deliberate political action. A more recent line of thinking, however, emphasizes the "tipping point" property of many economic structures (Gladwell

2000). If just enough people change their behavior, then through their spontaneous choices a new economic structure comes to quickly replace the old. Examples of this kind of spontaneous structural change are discussed at various points in the book. Chapters 10 and 11, however, look at the politics and practice of deliberate structural change. Chapter 10 examines how nongovernmental organizations are transforming credit markets through microfinance programs targeted toward women. The most intentional and political change of all, the fundamental, constitutional change that is being brought about by adherence to the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, is discussed in Chapter 11.

Ordering Information

Examination Copies
For books marked with a [lion symbol], examination copies are available for $7.50. *Shipping is included in the price of exam copies.*

Please limit your request to three books, submit the order on department letterhead, and include the name and number of the course, its anticipated enrollment, when it will be offered, and the book you are currently using.

Desk Copies
We provide desk copies on request to faculty who have adopted an LRP title as a *required* text in a course, providing the bookstore orders 10 or more copies from LRP. Please include the instructor's name and course enrollment in the request.

Wholesale and Retail Returns
Books may be returned for full credit within 12 months of invoice date if they are in clean, saleable condition and a copy of the invoice or the invoice number is included with the return.

All returns must be shipped to our warehouse:
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
c/o Books International
22883 Quicksilver Drive
Dulles, VA 20166

Questions
Please contact the LRP Customer Service Department at cservice@rienner.com or at (303) 444-6684 with questions or concerns about your order.

Prices subject to change without notice. Please allow three weeks for delivery of books in stock.

To place an order in Europe

Please send orders to:
Lynne Rienner Publishers
3 Henrietta Street • Covent Garden
London WC2E 8LU • UK

Freephone (UK residents only): **0800-526-830**
Call: **(44) 207-240-0856**
Fax: **(44) 207-379-0609**
E-mail: **orders@edspubs.co.uk**

Payments must be in £s sterling and checks made payable to **EDS Publications Ltd.** Visa, Mastercard and American Express are also accepted. Due to currency fluctuations £ prices are subject to change without notice.

Please add shipping as follows:

	One Book	Each Add'l Book
UK	£2.00	£1.00
Europe	£4.00	£1.00

For information on academic inspection copies, contact Imogen Adams at the LRP London address above.

Speed your order:
Call: **(303) 444-6684**
Fax: **(303) 444-0824**
Visit: **www.rienner.com**

LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS
1800 30th Street, Suite 314 • Boulder, CO 80301-1026 • U.S.A.

Order Form

1.

Ship to *(please print legibly):*
Name: ______________________
Address: ______________________
____
____
City/State/Zip Code: ______________________
(*Please include your 4-digit zip code extension.*)
Country: ______________ Telephone: ______________
Fax: ______________ E-mail: ______________

2.

Method of Payment *(orders from individuals must be prepaid):*

❑ Check enclosed (*U.S. $, drawn on a U.S. bank, payable to Lynne Rienner Publishers*)

❑ Charge my credit card: ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard

Card No. ______________________ Exp. __________

Signature ______________________

❑ Purchase Order enclosed (*please attach to this order form*)

3.

I wish to order the following items:

ISBN (last 6 digits)	*Qty*	*Author & Title*	*Price Each*	*Total Price*

Subtotal __________
Colorado residents add 3% sales tax
Shipping __________
TOTAL __________

Postage Rate Chart

	One Book	Each Add'l Book
U.S., Canada, and Mexico	$3.75	$1.00
Europe: see box at left.		
All Other Areas:		
❑ **Surface** —	$5.00	$2.00
❑ **Airmail** —	$12.00	$5.00

Remember, postage is included in the price of exam copies

web - I

7/02