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How does "doing gender" affect inter-firm relationship development within the agricultural sector in Uganda?

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Executive Summary

This study attempts to theorize the effects of 'doing-gender' on inter-firm relationship development. Doing gender, an act that constitutes differences between women and men that are not based on any biological categorization, cannot be avoided given that it is present in any social situation. Therefore, it has had an incredible impact on inter-firm relationship development. Based on the results of a three-weeks qualitative data collection period in the agricultural value chain in Uganda, this paper argues that in the context of the informal, developing economy, the majority of inter-firm relationship development occurs between non-family members of the same sexes, and that these relationships are hardly ever between women. In this particular context, this paper contends that inter-firm relationship development only takes place based on socialization processes instead of both socialization and rationalization processes. Inter-firm relationships, however, could enable economic growth. Consequently, women's economic position is subordinate to men's economic position. Yet, the data revealed that in case of increased income and women's economic power, the effects of doing gender that hinder women from obtaining the requirements to develop inter-firm relationships, trust and mobility, could be reduced. Based on these findings, a model is developed that shows the process of inter-firm relationship development affected by doing gender.

Keywords: 'doing gender', gender studies, developing countries, agriculture, women, Uganda

Introduction

The global agricultural sector is large, providing many people employment and contributing substantially to economic growth. In fact, in 2014 the sector accounted for one-third of the world's GDP (Worldbank, 2016). Especially in Sub-Saharan Africa this contribution is enormous, providing approximately 75% of the employment. In Uganda, for example, the agricultural sector contributes to 40% of the GDP, 85% to export incomes and it provides 80% of the total employment. Interestingly, in the Western economy, the agricultural sector is seen as a men-dominated sector, but in developing countries women represent the majority of the workforce. In Uganda, for example, women's contribution to the agricultural sector is substantially more than that of men. In the rice district Bugiri, for instance, women spend approximately 75% of their time in the rice production as opposed to 54% of men's time (AgriQuest, 2017; Amanda, 2006).

Women in developing countries not only perform the majority of the work within the agricultural sector, but also perform the majority of the household activities, such as taking care of the children. Taken all these activities together, it places a burden on women, and thereby hinders economic growth. That is, the substantial workload for women results into time constrains that forces women to make tradeoffs to perform certain agricultural activities resulting into difficulties for women to expand their businesses (Amanda, 2006). Here, in the context of developing countries, businesses refer to economic actors performing activities for economic purposes such as producing and selling produce in local markets and other forms of informal economic exchanges. In addition, businesses and firms are used interchangeably in this research. Given that women in developing countries perform the majority of the work within the agricultural sector and given that this sector is the most important sector contributing to the economic welfare, time constraints for women substantially impede economic growth.

Time constraints, however, are not the only burden that affects women's prosperity, and subsequently economic growth. In fact, such difficulties as time constraints that solely impact women arise from the umbrella concept gender. Gender refers to the differences between women and men that are not biologically arranged. Such 'gender differences' leave their mark on any social situation in which both sexes are present (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). In the case of the agricultural sector in developing countries, women are expected to perform the majority of the workload. However, this division of labor is socially constructed, and not decided upon by nature. Biology does not make this particular distinction between the sexes.

In this context, therefore, it is important to distinguish gender from sex. Gender does not refer to the biological categorization sex. Gender describes the social or cultural categories by which relationships between the sexes are conceived (Scott, 2010; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This act of 'creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not naturel, essential, or biological' is described in the literature as doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137) or other equivalent definitions such as practicing gender (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006).

Nentwich & Kelan (2014) claim that doing gender is always present in social situations, and refer to this by the concept omnirelevance. This paper is based on this assumption as well, because one cannot avoid the presence of gender. One could imagine, therefore, that doing gender has had an incredible impact on doing business, since businesses are performed in social situations. In particular, doing gender has especially affected women negatively as compared to men. That is, women were often disadvantaged because doing gender resulted into differences that caused that women were paid less, were not allowed to perform certain professions or other constraints (Martin, 2003; Powell & Ansic, 1996).

Although in the present time these differences are acknowledged, and efforts have been made to reduce them, these differences are not completely diminished (Arnett, 2014). In fact, doing gender is not always done consciously, therefore it very difficult to diminish its effects. Moreover, due to the social aspect of the concept doing gender, it has a significant effect on relationship development between men and women. Certain relationships, however, could be crucial to economic prosperity. In particular relationships between economic actors and their informal businesses, i.e. inter-firm relationships, such as a relationship between a local producer and a local market vendor, because these relationships can provide economic advantages such as increased value chain productivity, which in turn could improve someone's economic position (Dyer *et al*, 1998; Gnyawali & Madhaven, 2001).

Much of the literature regarding gender, however, looks mostly at relationship

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development between economic actors *within* firms and how it is affected by doing gender (Berger, Benschop, van den Brink, 2015; Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2014; Martin, 2006). Instead, in this paper, the focus is on relationship development between economic actors of *different* firms and how it is affected by doing gender.

In particular, this paper focuses on relationship development between economic actors in the developing, informal economy – i.e. the economy in which activities are performed in an urban way characterized by small scale, family owned enterprises with low entry barriers (Portes & Haller, 2010). This research context has been largely neglected in the current academic literature (Berger, Benschop, van den Brink, 2015; Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2014; Martin, 2006), since most research has been focused on the Western, formal economy instead. Furthermore, the impact of doing gender in Western countries is not as apparent anymore. Women's economic position, for example, has been improved substantially. In the informal economy in developing countries, however, this is not the case (Fisher, 2012). Women are more disadvantaged, which substantially hinders economic growth (Amanda, 2006). Thus, this subject has besides an academic relevance, also an evident practical relevance by obtaining knowledge to improve women's economic position.

Furthermore, even though research about gender in the context of agriculture has increased in the past years, there is still a need for continued and thorough research (Peterman *et al*, 2011). For this reason, the agricultural sector in developing countries is seen as an adequate unit of analysis. Moreover, Nentwich & Kelan (2014) urge for more local definitions of doing gender, since being a woman or man can be of different importance, or none at all, in different contexts. According to them and in accordance with other research (Martin, 2003), the context specificity of doing gender has been neglected in the past literature. Therefore, Uganda is seen as an adequate unit of analysis to study this context specificity, because women dominate the agricultural sector even though men dominate this sector in Western economies.

Taking a practical perspective, the gender differences that doing gender creates are causing gender inequality, which is an important constraint to economic growth within the agricultural sector. Women experience barriers to create relationships such as being excluded, withholding them to progress their careers (van den Brink & Benschop, 2014; Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). Moreover, the lowest productivity is measured at plots in Uganda that are female-owned (Peterman *et al*, 2011), which could be a consequence of doing gender. Productivity, as previously described, could be increased through inter-firm relationships, and could be critical to someone economic position. Thus, in order to resolve this issue, it important to expose what might possibly cause it.

By taking doing gender as an analytical lens, it exposes the effects of doing gender on relationship development, and therefore these negative effects can be challenged to improve the working conditions of women and help realize economic growth (Martin, 2006; Amanda, 2006). Moreover, taking a theoretical perspective, by applying doing gender as an analytical lens this paper provides a different perspective to further our

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understanding of relationship development within the agricultural sector value chain (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011).

By applying doing gender as an analytical lens on inter-firm relationship development within the agricultural sector, this paper contributes to the literature of gender. Moreover, this paper addresses the gap regarding relationship development between economic actors of different organizations and the context specificity by applying this analytical lens in Uganda. Therefore, the following **research question** was developed '*How does doing gender affect inter-firm relationship development within the agricultural value chain in Uganda?'*

The research question is addressed by the use of qualitative research. Qualitative research was required to study *how* inter-firm relationship development occurs, because it gives the opportunity to understand the context in which the process occurs (Myers, 2013). The research is conducted by performing semi-structured interviews and observations. By doing this, there is room to anticipate on emerging situations.

In the following sections, firstly, the current academic literature concerning doing gender and relationship development is reviewed. Secondly, the methodology used to gather and analyze data is presented. Thirdly, the findings are presented, followed by a discussion about the findings in the final section.

Theoretical Background

By answering the research question, the aim of this study is to contribute to the existing academic literature on gender and inter-firm relationship development. In this section, therefore, the theoretical background of the constructs doing gender and inter-firm relationship is reviewed to provide a holistic overview of the present knowledge regarding this topic. Firstly, the construct doing gender is reviewed. Secondly, the construct inter-firm relationship is discussed. Lastly, an overview of how the constructs relate to each other and to this research is provided.

Doing Gender

Many scholars have provided us with the groundwork concerning the distinction between the constructs gender and sex. These scholars agree with each other that it is important to distinguish gender from sex, because gender does not refer to the biological categorization sex. Gender refers to the behavioral aspects performed by individuals unlike the given biological differences. That is, gender describes the social or cultural categories by which relationships between the sexes are conceived (Scott, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014).

Thus, sex is given by nature, whereas gender is socially constructed. The process in which gender is constructed is performed individually, however, it is performed within the physical present of others. Hence, gender is a result of legitimating oneself in particular social arrangements, which provides us with a reason why individuals construct gender. Through gender, individuals comply with

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the social norms that are expected by others within that particular social arrangement. These social constructed arrangements are often seen as 'to be natural and rooted in biology' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 128), even though this is not the case. Instead, the social arrangements are a response to the differences created by gender, and reinforce individual's behaviors that comply with these socially constructed arrangements (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

This particular act of 'creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological' is described in the literature as doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137) or other equivalent definitions such as practicing gender (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006). An example of creating such differences could be that women are supposed to stay home taking care of the children, whereas men are supposed to earn a living. Thus, as opposed to sex, gender does not exist prior to a particular situation, but is created in the situation (Nentwich& Kelan, 2014), and further exploited during these social interactions.

The cause of creating gender differences can be dedicated to the phenomena homosociality and homophily (Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). Both concepts implicate that people have the preference for the 'same'. In the case of gender differences, this entails that men have a preference for men and women for women. On the other hand, however, it is argued that the underlying cause of creating gender differences is an individual's cultural heritage (Scott, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). For example, it might be culturally decided upon that men earn a living, and women take care of the children, which is not necessarily a result of homosociality or homophily.

Then again, one could also argue that both homosociality and homophily are the result of one's cultural heritage. For example, it might be that someone has the preference for the same sex in particular social situations as a result of one's cultural background. For this reason, it is assumed that both the cultural heritage and the preference for interacting with the same gender of an individual in particular situations initiate doing gender. Irrespective of what the underlying cause of this preference for a particular gender is – may it be cultural or whatsoever.

Zooming in from the origin to the process of doing gender, the literature either describes the process of doing gender as a process that takes place without careful consideration of the agent doing gender or as a deliberate action of the agent doing gender. That is, the agents that do gender are not reflexive about their behavior – i.e. non-reflexivity (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006; Holgersson, 2013). Non-reflexivity thus entails that the agent does gender without consciously realizing that he or she makes this distinction. Imagine, for example, someone is in a hospital searching for a nurse. Everyone who is part of the hospital staff, however, is wearing the same cloths. In many cultures, one would probably approach a female staff member since this profession is often seen as a feminine one. This act of looking for a female staff member is often done without realizing it – i.e. the agent is not reflexive about this behavior.

However, the same line of research acknowledges that this is not always the

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case. Individuals perform doing gender intentionally and reflexively as well. Reflexivity thus entails that the agents who perform gender are consciously making the distinction between the sexes. A manager could, for example, deliberately decide to put women and men in separated project groups. He or she might believe that this is what is expected, therefore intentionally decide to make this distinction, and be content with it afterwards – i.e. the agent is reflexive about this behavior.

Martin (2003) refers to the phenomena reflexivity and non-reflexivity by means of the concept agency, which she defines as an 'action or state of being in action (p.355).' She describes that agency is not always done consciously, irrespective of one's behavior. Gender as such has had an incredible impact on doing business. This issue has been especially important for women, because women are often disadvantaged compared to men. For example, women were not allowed to carry out certain professions, were paid less than men and other similar discrimination barriers limited women's career progression (Martin, 2003; Powell & Ansic, 1996).

For centuries, women's economic position has been subordinate to men. In Western countries, however, women's economic position has been improved. In the Netherlands, for example, women are not expected to solely take care of the children anymore, resulting into increased participation of women in the labor market, and women are allowed to carry out the same professions as men (CBS, 2015). In developing countries, on the other hand, such gender discrimination appears to be more of an issue. Despite the effort of many gender activists, women's economic position is still substantially subordinate to men's economic position. Women are not allowed to carry out certain professions, are paid less than men and are often not economically independent (Arnett, 2014).

In business situations, research indicates that the differences caused by doing gender only disappear after an average of 21 years of work experience (Franke, 1997). Other research, however, refers to the concept of omnirelevance, which entails that gender is relevant in every social situation and thereby never disappears (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). The latter is seen as a more appropriate definition of the concept doing gender, since the former assumes that a particular situation is fixed, which in reality is often not the case. Thus, this paper is based on the assumption that doing gender is 'an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130).

Based on this assumption, women in developing countries are often economically disadvantaged compared to men as a result of doing gender. Given that it is an ongoing activity in everyday interaction, it is assumed that women experience many social consequences that maintain their subordinate economic position.

Inter-Firm Relationships

Thus, doing gender cannot be avoided, and there are various social consequences of doing gender. In the business environment, examples of these social consequences are the allocation of power and resources in interpersonal relationships (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Certain relationships, however, can be crucial for successfully doing business due

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to the embeddedness of firms within their competitive environment, and thereby inhibit women's economic growth.

Especially inter-firm relationships can be crucial to economic growth, because these relationships can offer several advantages that are critical to competitive success, such as increased productivity in the value chain and enhanced competitive behavior (Dyer *et al*, 1998; Gnyawali & Madhaven, 2001).

In the Western, formal economy, however, it is assumed that doing gender does not have such an impact anymore on inter-firm relationships as compared to the informal economy in developing countries, since doing gender is not as apparent anymore. As previously described, women's economic position has increased substantially. It is therefore interesting to study the impact of doing gender on inter-firm relationships in the developing countries.

Inter-firm relationships are thus defined here in the context of the informal economy. Moreover, it is important to elucidate that in this paper 'firm' refers to any individual that participates in the informal economy. Inter-firm relationships are thus relationships that these actors have amongst each other from an economic perspective. An example of an inter-firm relationship could be the relationship that exists between a farmer who sells his or her products and a local market vendor.

These economic actors, however, do not participate solely in the informal economy. As in the formal economy, these actors are embedded in a network where several actors participate. From this embeddedness perspective, the flow of resources of actors within a supply chain is affected by the relationships actors have amongst each other (Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). Moreover, Dyer & Singh (1998) claim that certain resources can offer actors a competitive advantage, and that these '[...] critical resources may extend beyond firm boundaries.' (p. 660) Implying that inter-firm relationships could provide critical resources.

In an environment where various participants influence the flow of resources, it is an actor's ability to establish strategic relationships that determines if one could benefit from these external, critical resources that offer an economic advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Johannission *et al*, 2002). Therefore, these inter-firm relationships have been an important subject of debate amongst many scholars concerning the Western, formal economy. This research extends this discussion by looking at inter-firm relationships within the informal economy in developing countries.

Within the present debate, Cousins & Menguc (2006) on the one hand claim that the process of socialization is what constitutes inter-firm relations. The authors claim that inter-firm relations are not based on rational behavior that is in line with what one would expect in a world of perfect competition. Instead, socialization, an organizational behavior that will reduce the risk of opportunistic behavior, because actors become familiar with each other, thereby improve their communication and knowledge exchange, is what constitutes and enhances inter-firm relationships.

On the other hand, Granovetter (1985) argues that these inter-firm relationships are the result of a combination of economic actors' desire to live up to expectations of others, thus an act out of accountability, *and* the act of economic actors in accordance within a world of perfect competition. Johannission *et al* (2002) share this view claiming that economic actors combine their 'calculative and social concerns' (p. 309) by building relationship networks.

This paper is based on the latter point of view, since it is reasonably to believe that inter-firm relations are not only build from a purely socialization perspective, but also combined with actors acting out of economic incentives, thus a rational perspective. It is assumed here, however, that socialization dominates rational economic behavior, since it concerns human behavior.

Doing Gender & Inter-Firm Relationships

Based on the perspective that inter-firm relationships are a result of both socialization and rational processes of economic actors, we assume that these inter-firm relationships should be affected by doing gender. Hence, the relatedness between the constructs we aim to address in this study.

The existing research concerning this topic, as reviewed above, is mostly performed within Western, formal economies. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the existing academic literature by studying this subject within the informal economy of Uganda. In particular, this paper focuses on the agricultural sector of the Ugandan economy, because there is still an urge for more thorough research in this particular context (Peterman *et* al, 2011). Uganda is seen as a qualified research context as well, because gender differences are highly embedded within their culture (Amanda, 2006). The Ugandan agricultural sector is thus a research environment that provides an adequate context to study both constructs simultaneously while contributing to the urge for more research concerning gender in the agricultural sector.

Since gender differences are constructed during social interactions, we assume that it has an important impact on the *development* of interpersonal relationships between men and women. As economic actors' ability to establish inter-firm relationships determine whether or not one could benefit from certain external resources to obtain economic advantages, it is important to study how economic actors develop these relationships and if being a woman or man influences the development.

Moreover, the existing literature that addresses doing gender and relationship development often has overlooked relationship development between economic actors of *different* firms. That is, the present literature addresses the relationships between economic actors *within* firms, such as relationships between an owner and an employee (Berger, Benschop, van den Brink, 2015; Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2014; Martin, 2006), thereby neglects how doing gender affects an economic actor's ability to obtain economic advantages through inter-firm relationships, thus relationships *between* firms, that enhance one's economic position.

In addition, the research contexts studied thus far are highly formally constructed. This entails that social arrangements between actors are often formalized, which is often not the case in the informal economy. Instead, in the informal

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economy, relationships could be randomly established without any recurrence. Relationship development is therefore more sensitive to doing gender. That is, an individual's behavior at the moment of relationship development determines the progress of the relationship development, and not any prescribed contractual arrangement, therefore the impact of doing gender is assumed to be more substantial in the informal economy.

By taking doing gender as an analytical lens, it exposes the effects of doing gender on relationships development, and therefore the negative effects of doing gender, often causing difficulties for women to establish relationships, can be challenged to improve the working conditions of women and help realize economic growth (Martin, 2006; Amanda, 2006).

By studying this subject in-depth in the Ugandan context it will provides us with a better understanding of how gender affects relationship development, allowing both scholars and practitioners to further research and formulate practices that should increase value chain productivity.

Research Methods

In this chapter, the research context, the research design, the data collection and the data analysis are discussed.

Research Context

The research started in April 2017 in collaboration with AgriQuest. AgriQuest is an applied research project that aims to establish a better business climate in the agricultural sector of Uganda. The main objectives of the research project are to facilitate value chain players to design quality mechanisms and codes of conducts, to train value chain players in local and international agricultural policies and standards, to support farmers selling and buying ethically, to skill farmers in documenting and reporting, to facilitate farmers to dialogue and to develop a mobile app and website.

Apart from the applied research project performed by AgriQuest, this particular research was focused on a more theoretical understanding of the agricultural value chain in Uganda. In particular, this research focused on how gender affects inter-firm relationship development within the agricultural sector.

The focus on the agricultural sector partially reveals the research context in which this study was performed, hence the agricultural sector of Uganda. Uganda is a developing country that mostly depends on their agricultural sector, which is largely informal. Informal economy refers to the economy in which activities are performed in an urban way 'characterized by 1) low entry barriers in terms of skill, capital, and organization; 2) family ownership of enterprises; 3) small scale of operation; 4) labor-intensive production with outdated technology; and 5) unregulated and competitive markets.' (Portes & Haller, 2010, p. 404)

The agricultural sector of Uganda is seen as a qualified research context, because most research about doing gender has merely been performed in Western countries (Berger, Benschop, van den Brink, 2015; Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2014; Martin, 2006). Moreover, within developing countries, such as Uganda, women dominate the agricultural sector. Since most of these countries depend on their agricultural sector, it is

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interesting to study whether doing gender has an effect on the development of this sector and perhaps even more interesting *how* doing gender affects this sector.

During the data collection period, 3 April 2017 – 20 April 2017, the research's local partner, AgriQuest, was focused on four different value chains, which were rice, cassava, potato, and dairy. However, due to the limited period of time available, the general context had been limited to two different value chains. AgriQuest decided to focus this research on the value chains rice and cassava, and identified the regions in Uganda that were particularly useful for studying these value chains.

The data collection was performed together with the AgriQuest team and four other students of the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. Although AgriQuest and the VU students worked together, each individual was working to gain relevant data to his or her own part of the research. For this research, the researcher used a variety of data to analyze the agricultural situation with regards to inter-firm relationship development. This is explained in the following paragraph.

Research design

The data was collected by the use of qualitative research methods that entailed 7 interviews, 3 focus groups, 13 group conversations, 1 factory visit, and supported by observational/field notes and photographs. Qualitative research was seen as the most appropriate research design, firstly because the main research question requires a qualitative design. That is, the research should answer a *how*-question, which in general requires a qualitative research design (Myers, 2013). To clarify, how-questions are often questions that desire to explain how a certain event evolves over time. The understanding of such a progress often requires a narrative in which the order and sequence of events are captured (Van der Ven, 2007). This is exactly what is required to study *how* inter-firm relationship development occurs. Secondly, and lastly, the researcher needed to gain deeper insights in the attitudes, opinions, behaviors and processes of the development of inter-firm relationships to capture a coherent picture of the process, which required qualitative research as well (Rowley, 2012). In fact, one of the main benefits of qualitative research opposed to quantitative research is that it gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the context in which an issue occurs. An understanding of the context is necessary to explain why people did what they did, which can be best understood by having conversations with people (Myers, 2013).

Within this line of inquiry interviews are most often used. Conducting interviews was seen as the most appropriate research method for this research as well. In this particular research, questionnaires, which are often used in quantitative research, are not only less valuable because numerical data is less relevant than narrative data - due to the necessity of understanding the context as previously described - but also because the research environment did not always allow for questionnaires to be conducted. The researcher was travelling through the country, where it is a cultural habit not to make appointments in advance. Therefore, the researcher needed to be open to and anticipate on emerging situations, and this meant that the equipment necessary to conduct a questionnaire often was not accessible.

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Moreover, due to the cultural heritage of the Ugandan people most of the citizens were not willing to take the time to answer a questionnaire. Ugandan people are more willing to take time to answer questions if these question were proposed personally, which is the case while performing interviews. Finally, the aim of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes, opinions, behaviors and processes of the issue, and therefore, as previously explained, interviews are the most appropriate method (Rowley, 2012).

The structure of the interviews required not to be fixed, because as the researcher, the interviews needed to be flexible enough to anticipate on emerging situations. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were needed (Rowley, 2012). The interview questions where developed in such to capture the difficulties that economic actors encounter during their work to find out whether these difficulties are caused by doing gender. More specifically, the aim of the questions was to find out if these difficulties have influence on inter-firm relationship development.

In addition to interviews, observational notes and photographs were taken in order to be able to enhance the researcher's understanding of the process. This data was particularly useful while analyzing the data, because both observational notes and photographs supplemented the recorded interviews resulting into a comprehensive and integral understanding of the answers provided by the interviewees. For example, during the majority of the interviews, the women were sitting on the ground whereas the men were sitting on chairs. Some answers to certain questions gave the illusion that doing gender had no influence on the issue discussed. However, as implicitly implied through the interview setting where the women had to sit on the ground, whereas the men were allowed to sit on the chairs, doing gender had a substantial impact. However, the interviewees where not aware of this impact, which is an adequate example of the non-reflexivity element of doing gender referred to in the literature review. The supporting observational notes and photographs enabled the researcher to fully grab this particular act of doing gender. The aim therefore while making observational notes was to write down everything that seemed relevant concerning doing gender. Therefore, the researcher explicitly made a distinction between the behavior of men and women during the observation.

Data collection

Bugiri – Rice District. The first face-to-face, focus group and group interviews were conducted in the district Bugiri, which is known for its rice production. The interviews were being held amongst governmental entities, farmers and farmer groups, input dealers, buyers and millers. Interviews were conducted in English and in different Ugandan languages, while supported by a local support staff, who was the district guide working for the NGO African 2000. The district guide arranged the interviews and was the one responsible for translating most of the interviews from the local language to English and vice versa during the interviews. The author of this study visited together with the AgriQuest team, the VU students and the district guide most of the interviews, which were held in the subcounties Bugiri town, Buwunga, Kapyanga, Bulesa, Nabukalu, and

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Nankoma. Five of the 11 interviews were supported by Leonie Siepman, former VU student who graduated during previous research in collaboration with AgriQuest. Leonie supported the team by documenting the interviews through photographs. Six interviews were performed in separated teams in which one or two VU students and at least one AgriQuest member were present. In one of these groups, the cameraman and his assistant were present as well. The author of this study recorded the interviews – apart from the 4 she was not present at - wrote down field and observational notes and took supporting photographs of these observations and interviews.

Oyam – Cassava District. The subsequent 8 interviews and 1 factory visit were conducted in the district Oyam, which is known for its cassava production. The interviews were being held amongst a governmental entity, an input dealer, farmer groups and one of the researchers of AgriQuest. Interviews were conducted in English and in different Ugandan languages, while supported by another local support staff, who was the district guide working for the NGO African 2000. The district guide arranged most of the interviews and was responsible for translating most of the interviews from the local language to English and vice versa during the interviews. However, during one of the interviews, the respondent referred to a farmer who was very influential in the district. The contact details of this particular farmer were provided and an additional interview was arranged with this farmer. The author of this study visited together with the AgriQuest team, the VU students, the cameraman and his assistant and the district guide every interview apart from the interview that was conducted with one of the researchers of AgriQuest. The members that were present during the interview that was conducted with one of the researchers of AgriQuest were the researcher herself and the interviewee. The researcher recorded the interviews, wrote down field and observational notes and took supporting photographs of these observations and interviews.

Kampala – Capital City. The final interview was conducted in the capital city Kampala. The interview was being held with a successful female director of an organization that deals with medical waste. The interview was conducted in English. The author of this study recorded this interview and wrote down notes.

Farmers in Bugiri District – Typical Interview Setting

Data analysis

The qualitative data analysis was performed iteratively and inductively, and encompassed three stages: transcribing of interviews, coding interviews and coding of observational and field notes.

Transcribing of interviews. The data analysis begun with transcribing each interview. The transcribing process was not only done by the author of this research, but also by the student-researchers who performed their research simultaneously with the author of this research. The interviews were transcribed by the use of the recorded files, and were transcribed literally.

Coding Interviews. The interviews were coded by the use of Atlas.ti through open coding. The data was analyzed by the use of the Gioia method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). The analysis was performed through an inductive concept development approach, which ensures that the richness of the data is retained. The first phase of coding was going through each interview, and labeling relevant parts. Afterwards, the analysis continued by developing first-order concepts from the selected parts of the data, in which the content remained closely to the original data – i.e. informant-centric terms. As a result of staying close to the original data the interrater reliability – which means that others are likely to perceive and label the data similarly (Boyatzis, 1998) – is higher. This resulted in different concepts that were further developed into second-order themes in which a shift from informant-centric terms to researcher-centric terms occurred. Finally, these concepts where aggregated into aggregated dimensions, which are the most abstract concepts. The first-order concepts, the second-order themes and the aggregated dimensions were the basis for the data structure.

Coding of observational and field notes. The observational and field notes were analyzed differently from how the interviews were analyzed. The notes were analyzed after the coding of the interviews was finished. By doing so, the researcher strengthened the validity of the developed codes taken that the observational and field notes served either by reaffirming the value of the codes or by revealing misinterpretation. In the latter case, the codes were adjusted accordingly.

Findings

In this section, a detailed description of the themes that emerged while analyzing the data is presented supported by illustrative photographs.

Theme 1: Inter-firm relationship development

Inter-firm relationship development refers to the process of developing relationships between actors of different organizations for business purposes, and elaborated on here by means of three components: types of business relationships, business relationships characteristics, and finally the requirements to develop *inter-firm* relationships. The first two components refer to inter –and intra-firm relationship development, because it appeared that both are substantially interrelated resulting into the necessity to elaborate on both types for a coherent picture of the process. The final component solely refers to the concept inter-firm relationship development.

Types of business relationships

The data shows that business relationships can be defined as any kind of temporal or recursive collaboration between economic actors for business purposes resulting into three main types of business relationships that can be allocated into two categories, either inter-firm or intra-firm relationships.

Inter-firm relationships. Inter-firm relationships are relationships among actors, either individuals or united actors acting as one economic actor, with the same profession, and relationships between actors of different professions.

Relationships among actors with the same profession depend on the profession performed by the economic actor. The active economic actors encountered during the research were farmers, input dealers, traders, and millers. Active economic actors refer to the actors who perform value chain activities, such as farming. An example of within the same profession relationships could therefore be a relationship between input dealers. As an input dealer from Idhatujje Agencies Ltd mentioned '*we collaborate with all registered agri input companies.'*

Relationships between actors of different professions could be between farmers and input dealers. Furthermore, these relationships go beyond the active economic actors. Actors such as governmental entities and NGO, i.e. the non-active actors, actors who support value chain activities in any way, develop relationships as well with the active actors.

Intra-firm relationships. Intra-firm relationships are relationships among actors within the same organization. The majority of the intra-firm relationships entailed household relationships, which are relationships between relatives. Intra-firm relationships could also be among actors who are not related to each other. However, the data made plain that the majority of the businesses are family owned; thus the majority of the intra-firm relationships are between relatives. In fact, each family member could have intra-firm relationships.

'*Now farming, being a household affair, it means that everybody [every family member] is involved at some stage or another.*' (Catherine Tindiwensi)

Other interviewees confirmed this finding, such as the cousin of an input dealer, Kica Sharon. She herself is a farmer, and described that she collaborates with her uncle. This was supported given that she was working in her uncle's shop at the moment of the interview.

Kica Sharon in her uncle's shop

Business relationships characteristics

From the data four particular characteristics of business relationships emerged. These characteristics are a) intra-firm relationships mostly develop between women, b) inter-firm relationships mostly develop between men, c) benefits of business relationships and d) the business relationship development process is largely informal.

Intra – and inter-firm relationship gender segregation. In the case that both women and men are present within an organization, intra-firm relations are inevitably between women and men, and not solely between women. However, the distinction emerged to illustrate that the data indicates that women mostly collaborate together within an organization because 1) women do most of the work up until sales, and 2) women are not likely to develop inter-firm relations.

1) Women do most of the work up until sales

Since women do most of the work up until sales, relevant intra-firm relationships – i.e. relationships that for the greater part contribute to the performance of an organization - are the relationships between women. Men generally contribute at the end of the production phase by taking the products to the market, but do not contribute to activities before that stage.

'*But at the end of the day, they [the women] end up being the biggest contributors to farming. Females are by far the biggest contributors to farming. Most of the farming you are seeing is being carried out by women, more than 60% of the work I think. And the male will only be about 40%*.' (Nelson, District leader)

Indicating that women do most of the work, which results into such a substantial amount of work that impedes women from having opportunities to develop relationships apart from the actors with whom the women directly work. That is, women directly work with their relatives within the family, therefore end up developing intra-firm relationships. Moreover, the workload referred to in the previous example correlates with other activities that women are supposed to perform, such as taking care of the children and searching for firewood. Taken all these activities together, women find themselves troubled developing inter-firm relationships.

2) Women are not likely to develop inter-firm relations

Men's contribution often begins at the moment of selling the products. At this particular moment, other actors apart from relatives come in. This implies that the men are only able to develop inter-firm relationships, since the men only meet other actors apart from family members. Catherine Tindiwensi confirmed and reinforced this finding by enlighten it from a different angle. She mentioned '*So if you look at farmer organizations as a farm, then they [the women] have like intra-firm relations, intra, within their group. They are stronger at intra-farm relations, or intra-firm relations. Women tend to be closer to home [….].*' Implying that as a result of women staying close to home, women do not develop inter-firm relationships, but instead develop intra-firm relationships.

Besides farmers, the data shows that women are not likely to develop inter-firm relationships in other parts of the value chain as well. In these other areas, women perform many activities as well, but are not allowed to be in contact with other men – which is often also the case at farm level. Men tend to believe that women will cheat, thus prevent their wives from working with other men. In addition, in these areas, the majority of the actors are men, because many of these professions are perceived to be male professions. Thus, due to a lack of female participants men mostly develop inter-firm relationships. However, even if women pursue a generally perceived male profession, the husband prevents them from working with other men.

Business relationships' economic benefits

The second business relationship characteristic that emerged are the

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economic benefits that the interviewees frequently described as to what business relationships offer. The economic benefits are summarized in three main benefits illustrated in table 1 (see appendix).

Informal business relationship development

The findings indicate that the process of developing business relationships is largely informal, which is the third business relationship characteristic that emerged. The process is described as informal since the data did not reveal any structured, formalized manners to establish relationships. Instead, most interviewees claimed to establish relationships in unstructured manners. For example, relationships develop simple through exchanging contact details in the case someone has a certain crop.

'So how the relations develop, they are informal, but what happens is that the Kampala traders first come, and when they come they first exchange contacts, so once the seasons comes, either these ones call them say I have buns of rice or the other way around. You have rice, then the relationship could go from then.'

Inter-firm relationship development requirements

The data revealed two main inter-firm relationship development requirements, mobility and trust.

Mobility. Relationships between different firms require that both actors physically meet each other. In Uganda, inter-firm relationships are established in physical situations, and not through any virtual meeting points since most actors do not have the resources to establish relationships virtually. Thus, for different actors to meet, a physical meeting point is required. Mobility is therefore a requirement to establish relationships, because at least one actor needs to be able to physically go to a certain point where other actors are present.

Trust. Trust is the second requirement that emerged to be essential to inter-firm relationship development. Suppliers, for example, establish relationships with farmers by creating an environment in which trust is important. Kalulee Ivan described this process as follows: '*What we do is, first we create an environment between us and the customer. So we make sure that the product we have at least is genuine. So when the customer knows your product is genuine or it works, he does what? He comes back and tells others and brings them towards you. So this is how you create a relationship.'* Likewise, it appeared that farmers preferably sell their products to someone the farmers themselves trust. As the agricultural officer in Oyam mentioned '*One thing is that a seller has liberty, has freedom to choose who he wants to sell to. And therefore, he sells to the person he trusts most. He sells to the person who thinks will give him better money. He sells to somebody who he thinks is transparent. So overall there is transparency between a seller and a buyer.'*

The data shows that the requirements are especially relevant for inter-firm relationship development, because family-related relationships not necessarily require mobility given that family members often live together. In addition, men and women often do not trust each other preventing relationship development between them apart from between family members.

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'*And remember when they [the women] go out, they, when you go out the network you are likely to interact with more men than women, and that could also bring suspicion amongst the spouses.'*

An example provided by Catherine Tindiwensi to illustrate that women could not work with male non-relatives, thereby forcing the women to refrain from developing relationships beyond the family context.

<u>Theme 2: Doing gender</u>

Doing gender refers to the act in which people create 'differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological.' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137). Two interesting features of doing gender emerged from the data, a) gender separation while establishing business relationships, and b) the gender inequality change context.

Gender Separation

The data revealed that men and women are separated while obtaining inter –and intra-firm relationships. As previously described, women and men develop different business relationships, inter -or intra-firm relationships. This occurrence appeared to be a result of the cultural/societal expectations about the role women and men are supposed to have within the society. For example, Catherine Tindiwensi described the expectations regarding mobility as follows: '*But also like I mentioned the social, cultural values and expectations of women regarding mobility. Generally a good wife should be like home-based, not too mobile, not too aggressive, those are just societal expectations, but which reflect and impact on how women transact their businesses and network.'* The cultural expectation that women are supposed to stay at home, and men are supposed to travel resulted into this gender separation.

Women are Subordinate to Men by Sitting on the Ground

Woman working on land while taking care of child

Gender inequality's effect change context

The effects that gender inequality has on the agricultural sector in Uganda is substantial, however, it appeared to be slightly reduced in certain situations. Derived from the data, the context in which this change occurs is characterized by two elements, 1) increased power for women and 2) increased income.

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1) Increased power for women

For example, gender inequality causes that women do not have the same power as men. That is, men have the decision-making power and women are subordinate to men. However, in situations where women had more economical power, the women appeared less subordinate to the men as in other situations. In fact, women had the final say in such situations. Women increased their power by working in groups resulting in various economic advantages. For example, one farmers' group, Adyegi Women Health Network, started a group because '*[…] they've [the women] been facing challenge of education or money, income. So they started this group in order to facilitate them in savings and borrowing money in case of any needs immediately so they get from within the group.'* This particular group, dominated by women, enabled economic power for women reducing the effect of gender inequality in such that the women appeared to have the decision-making power.

'*Women sit on the ground. They sake hands while being on their knees. However, men* ***also*** *sit on the ground.'* (Adyegi Women Health Network, observational note, April 12, 2017)

2) Increased income

Increased income is also seen as a reducing factor of the effects of gender inequality. Margret Mwanamanze described such a potential situation: '*So imagine, with that kind of approach, and if people can access money, people have better chances, people have jobs, people have high income, the calamity of criminal cases and all that would be reduced as well as gender violence, because we are known for that as well, the gender violence in the homes: men battering women and women battering men. So, I imagine if each one of them has income, because we encourage both women groups and men, once the woman has an income the man will relax a bit, because they don't always have to ask for money from their husband.'* Thus, the women could spend their own money instead of being dependent on the men.

Furthermore, according to Margret Mwanamanze, men will respect women if women have their own income. Therefore, the ministry even promotes an income for women (Margret Mwanamanze, field notes, April 5, 2017). In addition, a female farmer of the farmer's groups Umoja, Agali Awamu & Bukyere said '*For the women, we are now comfortable, because we are always comfortable when our husbands are comfortable, because there is an income now.'* Both described situations imply that the effects of gender inequality are, at least slightly, reduced due to increased income. In the latter example it is implied that the increased income causes that the husbands let their wives be. That is, that the wives are not forced to perform activities, but have the liberty to decide for themselves.

'*Remarkable situation: only a woman was able to speak in English, and translated almost the entire interview from the locale language to English, and the question about gender was answered first by a loud applause from the interviewees.'* (Loro Note En Teko CO-operative, observational notes, April 12, 2017)

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Increased power for women – Women sitting on chairs, Loro Note En Teko Co-Operative

<u>Theme 3: Effects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development</u>

The effects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development refer to the consequences of the cultural/societal differences made between the sexes on inter-firm relationship development. The effects that emerged from the data are a) the majority of inter-firm relationship development occurs between the same sexes, b) the majority of inter-firm relationship development is between non-family members, and c) women barely establish inter-firm relationships.

The majority of inter-firm relationship development occurs between the same sexes

An input dealer from Idhatujje Agencies Ltd mentioned '*we collaborate with all registered agri input companies.'* This raised the question whether he worked mostly with men or women. He answered '*with all sexes, men and women*'. Therefore we asked if women experience any difficulties working in this area. The input dealer replied '*women are not much involved, because at times they are marginalized by their* husbands.' Implying that input dealers could work with women, however, it barely occurs since women are not much involved at this stage. He confirmed this by saying '*at the input level, few of them, we interact with a few of them [women], because most it is the men that come here to buy chemicals.*' Thus, the effect of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development is that inter-firm relationship development mostly takes place between men.

The majority of inter-firm relationship development is between non-family members

As previously described, women develop mostly intra-firm relationships and men mostly inter-firm relationship. This distinction is a consequence of doing gender that results in the majority of the intra-firm relationships between family members and the majority of inter-firm relationships between non-family members. Therefore, this implies that the effect of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development is that inter-firm relationships are mostly between non-family members.

Women barely establish inter-firm relationships

As concluded from the findings described above, inter-firm relationships develop mostly between the same sexes. However, since women only develop intra-firm relations it is implied that inter-firm relationship mostly occurs between men. As a consequence, women barely establish inter-firm relationships.

Summary of the Findings

From the data, three overarching themes emerged, 1) inter-firm relationship

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development, 2) doing gender, and 3) effects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development.

Inter-firm relationship development is characterized by inter –and intra-firm relationships, business relationship characteristics such as the economic benefits that inter-firm relationship offer, and the requirements trust and mobility to actually develop inter-firm relationships.

Doing gender is characterized by the sharp distinction between men and women concerning to the types of relationships the both develop. That is, women develop intra-firm relationships and men develop inter-firm relationship. Furthermore, the effects of doing gender are reduced in a context in which women have more economic power and in which income has increased.

The effects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development are closely related to the first two themes, because it appeared that the effects are that inter-firm relationship development mostly occurs between the same sexes who are not relatives, and that women hardly ever establish inter-firm relationships.

Discussion and Implications

The research was motivated by attempting to theorize the effects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development within the agricultural sector of Uganda. The findings illustrated that doing gender causes that women are hindered in performing certain activities thereby doing gender prevents women from developing inter-firm relationships. First, Ugandan citizens, especially in the rural areas, expect that women do not travel for business purposes. However, mobility, as emerged from the data, is required in order to develop inter-firm relationships, therefore it reduces the changes of women to develop inter-firm relationships. Second, doing gender causes that men do not trust women and vice versa, thereby the second requirement to develop inter-firm relationships, trust, is damaged even before trying. Third, women are not always allowed to communicate with the opposite sex apart from their relatives, which is clearly a constraint for women to develop inter-firm relationships.

The assumption that inter-firm relationships are build from a combination of a rational perspective and a socialization perspective is severely questioned by the findings. The findings illustrate that doing gender affects relationship development purely from a socialization perspective, supporting the theoretical understanding claimed by Cousins & Menguc (2006). The gender differences culturally decided upon affect inter-firm relationship develop in such that there is nothing left for any rational influence. It might be that perhaps in the Western society inter-firm relationships could be based from both a socialization and rationalization perspective, since gender differences are not as apparent anymore. However, from these findings, in the informal economy, it appeared to be disputable.

The findings illustrate that the assumption that individuals perform gender both intentionally and reflexivity as well as unintentionally and non-reflexivity applies for this particular research setting as well. Women kneeled in front of men while introducing themselves, sat down on the ground instead of chairs and other evident demonstrations of doing gender without being reflexive about this behavior. These

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examples seemed also as 'natural' social arrangements to the men, indicating that the men were not reflexive about this behavior as well. In their interactions with others, women and men also perform gender intentionally. For example, during certain interviews female interviewees made clear by their answers that it was not allowed for them to talk about the gender subject. This illustrated that women were aware of their unequal position compared to men, and deliberately decided to comply with this social arrangement.

Theoretical Contributions

This research has made three contributions to the current academic literature on gender and inter-firm relationship development. First, in contradiction to what Gravovetter (1985) and Johannission *et al* (2002) have argued, this research argues that inter-firm relationship building could be based on both socialization and rationalization processes *only if* the effects of doing gender are severely reduced. In the case that doing gender has a substantial influence on such development processes, it is argued that it is hardly impossible for the agents who perform gender to make rational decisions. Therefore, it is argued that doing gender has much more impact on inter-firm relationship development within informal economies, where doing gender is more apparent, than in developed economies – i.e. the degree of influence is assumed to be context dependent. Second, the findings extend our current academic knowledge about how doing gender affects inter-firm relationship building in informal economies by having exposed three major affects of doing gender on inter-firm relationship development: 1) the majority inter-firm relationship development occurs between the same sexes, 2) the majority of inter-firm relationship development is between non-family members, and 3) women barely establish inter-firm relationships (Berger, Benschop, van den Brink, 2015; Holgersson, 2013; Martin, 2006; van den Brink, 2014). Third, the findings resulted into a theoretical model that describes the process of inter-firm relationship development affected by doing gender.

Conceptual framework of inter-firm relationship development

The process of inter-firm relationship development begins with an initial informal relationship development process between different economic actors. The economic actors involved do gender, consciously and unconsciously, resulting into intra-firm relationships between women and inter-firm relationships between men. These relationships result into several economic benefits that enable the gender change context characterized by increased income and increased power for women. The gender change context negatively moderates the gender separation that takes place due to doing gender resulting into less gender separation while developing business relationships. Since the gender change context reduces the gender inequalities caused by doing gender, thereby it increases opportunities for women to develop inter-firm relationships.

Practical Implications

Besides theoretical contributions, this research has made two practical contributions. First, the effects of doing gender appeared to be less harmful for women's economic situation in the case of increased power for women and increased income. Women's economic power was

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increased due to forming groups, which facilitate collective actions that help women overcome certain economic barriers. Practitioners could use this information while trying to improve women's economic position. Moreover, an increased income decreased the negative effects of doing gender, implying that women should not prevent themselves from producing commercially, but instead should produce commercially to increase their income. Second, trust and mobility appeared to be essential to inter-firm relationship development. However, both requirements nearly seem impossible to obtain for women in the current context as a result of doing gender. Practitioners should use this information; spread the word by promoting that also women should be able to move freely and that women are trustworthy. Without attempting to bring the contrary to light, women's economic position will remain subordinate to that of men. This research urges both men and women to reduce gender inequality, since it will be beneficial for both men and women

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the previously described contributions, this research has several limitations. First, in qualitative research, some degree of subjectivity is always incorporated. Although the author of this research attempted to work as rigorous as possible, subjectively cannot be avoided entirely. Second, during the research it became apparent that gender is a sensitive subject, which has likely biased some of the answers provided by the respondents in at least two ways. Firstly, some people avoid answering the proposed questions and secondly, others provided answers that were most likely not based on the truth. The latter situation seemed to occur often in the present of both men and women, where the women were not able to speak freely. The researcher tried to eliminate most of these biases by analyzing both interview transcripts as well as observational notes/photographs. Yet, it is likely that the researcher was not able to eliminate all biases completely. Third, while this study offers rich insights into the effects of doing gender on relationship development within the agricultural sector in Uganda, it is difficult to assess whether the findings are applicable in other similar settings.

This research elucidates three avenues for future research. First, even though this research exposed two elements that appear to reduce the effects of doing gender, future research could further our understanding about this particular subject. These results could reduce gender inequality, and thereby strengthen women's economic position within developing countries. Second, this research is merely focused on the agricultural sector, however, what are the effects of doing gender on relationship development in other settings? Third, since this study revealed that mostly women are negatively affected by doing gender it raises the question if doing gender merely affects women's economic position negatively.

Conclusion

This research has contributed to our understanding of how doing gender affects relationship development within the agricultural sector in Uganda. However, there are still interesting avenues for future research left. Furthermore, the research indicates that many gender differences

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place women in a disadvantage position compared to men. We strongly urge continued effort to reduce these inequalities.

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Appendix

Benefits of Business Relationships	**Illustrative quotes**
Facilitate access to resources (such as economic power, income, and machinery)	*[Farmers working together], for the women, we are now comfortable, because we are always confortable when our husbands are comfortable, [and they are confortable now] because there is an income now.'* (Farmer's Group Umoja, Agali Awamu & Bukyere)
Enable economies of scale	'*The advantage [of business relationships] is that they [grouped farmers] produce in bulks and attract more markets, because when you have enough of specific crops, you specialize in one crop and you produce in bulk and then they attract the big market.'* (Muhamta Akindora)
Enable perceiving trainings	*'Since we are organized in a group, we were educated about the disadvantages of drying on the ground. The group helped us to be educated and enlightened about this practice.* (Farmer's groups Umoja, Agali Awamu, Bukyere)

Table 1: Benefits of business relationships for women.