WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND FORCED MIGRATION:
A VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF EXPERIENCES IN NGO-SPONSORED ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN DADAAB, KENYA

A Dissertation in
Adult Education & Comparative and International Education
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
August 2017
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Abstract

This visual educational ethnography sought to understand women’s empowerment with Somali women who participated in non-governmental organizations’ (NGO) adult educational programs in Dadaab, Kenya. Dadaab is home to the largest refugee complex in the world, with five sprawling camps and over 250,000 Somali residents as of February 2017. Women’s empowerment is a driving force behind educational programming in international development worldwide. Given the growing global migration crisis, this study analyzes responses to forced migration in Dadaab in the form of educational programs that aim to empower women and that are provided by NGOs. I analyze how women participants in educational programs experienced and conceptualized empowerment related to their involvement in the adult, non-formal learning environment. Using innovative visual and educational ethnographic methods, this research seeks to answer the following questions: How is empowerment interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women learners in NGO educational programming in Dadaab? How do women participants in NGO programs interpret empowerment in their daily lives? How does their participation in NGO-led programming, as a social process, develop these experiences of empowerment, if at all?

I conducted a visual educational ethnography of empowerment in educational programs, drawing on data collected in June - August 2014, May - June 2015, and April - June 2016. Ethnographic methods situate NGO educational programs and empowerment goals to capture and record women participants’ voices and experiences. What occurs in the classroom is linked to and reflects field workers’ and participants’ regular daily habits, including power relationships and the use of the term “empowerment” in their lives and work. Visual tools circumvent the traditional research gaze from outside to allow a multi-vocal analysis of videos of learning
I found that women interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, and contested empowerment by describing their experiences of surviving and attempting to thrive in the camps. Women’s interpretations of empowerment centered on improving their lives and the lives of their family members and required NGO support, contrary to field workers’ goal of decreasing refugees’ dependence on organization-provided services. Both challenging and reinforcing gender roles, women identified ways in which they are powerful, including making household decisions, persuading community members to change harmful practices, and being skilled producers of goods for sale. Field workers’ experiences and explanations help explain the systems in which women’s empowerment operates within Dadaab, particularly considering contradictory goals of service provision and ending dependency on NGO programs.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. viii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................... ix
Acronyms ........................................................................................................................... xii
Preface ............................................................................................................................... xiii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... xvi

**Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION** ......................................................................................... 1
  Study Background ............................................................................................................. 3
  Problem Statement .......................................................................................................... 4
  Study Purpose and Research Questions ......................................................................... 5
    Significance .................................................................................................................... 7
    Limitations .................................................................................................................... 9
  Situating the study ......................................................................................................... 9
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 12
  Methodology .................................................................................................................. 14
    Study design ................................................................................................................ 15
    Data collection ............................................................................................................ 15
  Summary Findings ......................................................................................................... 16
  Dissertation Overview ................................................................................................... 19

**Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW** ............................................................................. 22
  Theory and Terms .......................................................................................................... 23
    Power and empowerment ............................................................................................. 23
    Feminist approaches to women’s empowerment .......................................................... 27
    Women’s empowerment in Dadaab ............................................................................. 28
    NGO-led programs to empower ................................................................................. 29
    Forced migration .......................................................................................................... 31
    NFE and NGOs ............................................................................................................ 35
    Learning theory in adult education for empowerment ................................................. 37
    Programming targeting women .................................................................................. 38
  Somali studies .............................................................................................................. 39
  Chapter Summary ......................................................................................................... 41

**Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY** ...................................................................................... 44
  Visual educational ethnography: Theory and comparisons .......................................... 45
    Comparative and international education approaches ............................................... 50
  Applying visual educational ethnography in adult education in Dadaab ..................... 51
    Units of Analysis and Units of Observation ............................................................... 53
    Research sites ............................................................................................................. 53
    Sample ......................................................................................................................... 62
    Data Collection ........................................................................................................... 63
    Data Sources .............................................................................................................. 65
    Multivocal analysis ..................................................................................................... 68
    Data storage and analysis .......................................................................................... 70
  Limitations ..................................................................................................................... 72
  Ethical considerations in data collection and analysis .................................................. 73
  Representation ................................................................................................................ 75
List of Tables

Table 1. Data Collection Schedule Tool ................................................................. 69
Table 2. Topics addressed by NFE empowerment-oriented programs ..................... 112
List of Figures

Figure 1. UNHCR Map of Dadaab, 2012 ................................................................. 2
Figure 2. Google terrain map of Dadaab Main Office Retrieved 18 September 2016. .......... 55
Figure 3. Google terrain map of Kambioos Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016...... 56
Figure 4. Google terrain map of Ifo2 Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016 .......... 58
Figure 5. Google terrain map of Dagahaley Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016. .. 59
Figure 6. Google terrain map of Hagadera Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016...... 60
Figure 7. Google terrain map of Ifo Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016 ............ 61
Figure 8. Sequence of data collection activities.................................................................. 64
Figure 9. Hodan’s walk to school (entrepreneurship program, 2016).................................. 82
Figure 10. Grazing goats on the walk (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).................. 83
Figure 11. Boys posing for a photograph on Hodan’s walk to school (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016)................................................................................. 83
Figure 12. Ambulance passing on Hodan’s walk to school (entrepreneurship program, 2016)... 84
Figure 13. A passing police car on Hodan’s walk to school (entrepreneurship program, 2016). 84
Figure 14. School (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ........................................... 85
Figure 15. Hodan (bottom left) with four of her classmates studying before school (entrepreneurship program, 2016). .............................................................................. 85
Figure 16. Collecting water at the water tap stand (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016)... 86
Figure 17. Hodan’s sister and brother pose (entrepreneurship program, 2016) ....................... 87
Figure 18. Hodan’s products for sale (entrepreneurship program, 2016). ............................ 87
Figure 19. Njera, Somali bread prepared by Hodan for her family (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).................................................................................. 88
Figure 20. Hodan’s mother pours tea for the family (entrepreneurship program, 2016)........ 88
Figure 21. Concept map from Hodan’s narrative. ............................................................. 89
Figure 22. The final products of the soap making displayed for me (Screenshot from training video, soap making program, 2016). ................................................................. 133
Figure 23. Example of compound structures. .................................................................. 161
Figure 24. GoogleEarth image of compounds in Kambioos (retrieved January 2, 2017). ...... 162
Figure 25. The outside of Salatho’s kitchen (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015) ....... 162
Figure 26. Inside Dhuuxo’s home toilet (SGBV program, 2015)......................................... 163
Figure 27. Dhuuxo’s sister covers her nose at the entrance of the toilet (SGBV program, 2015). 164
Figure 28. Home and bedrooms (Farhiyo, entrepreneurship program, 2016)....................... 164
Figure 29. Medina holds her son with a disability in her lap (entrepreneurship program, 2015). 167
Figure 30. A boy with a disability playing with others and posing for a photograph (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015)................................................................. 168
Figure 31. Boys playing and joking for her camera (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015). 168
Figure 32. Her children playing and posing for her (Zeinab, tailoring program, 2016)........... 169
Figure 33. Asho’s daughter holds one of their cats (Asho, soap making program, 2016) ....... 170
Figure 34. Women returning from firewood collection (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016)...................................................................................................................... 172
Figure 35. A woman from a minority group who lived at one of the UNHCR protection centers (Rukio, SGBV program, 2015)............................................................................................................. 173
Figure 36. Listening to the radio as she prepared breakfast (Mako, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ................................................................................................................................. 174
Figure 37. Home and packing (Ifrah, entrepreneurship program, 2016)........................................ 175
Figure 38. Community call center (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).............................. 175
Figure 39. Medina’s old home (right) is now her kitchen, compared with the newer building (left) with tin walls and roof (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).............................. 176
Figure 40. Fabric sold at the market (Ijabo, tailoring program, 2016). ........................................... 177
Figure 41. A well-stocked shop (Ijabo, tailoring program, 2016). .................................................. 177
Figure 42. Women waiting in line during food distribution (Falhado, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ............................................................................................................................. 178
Figure 43. Food for sale in the market immediately following distribution (Deka, tailoring program, 2016). ...................................................................................................................... 178
Figure 44. Ambulance picking up a woman (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ................ 179
Figure 45. The tap stand where mostly women and some children fetching water (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).............................................................................................. 180
Figure 46. A washing tap at her school (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016)....................... 180
Figure 47. A communal waste tank, most of which is underground (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015). .............................................................................................................................................. 181
Figure 48. A popular transportation in the camps (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).... 182
Figure 49. Mako and her mother’s tie and dye production (entrepreneurship program, 2016)..... 183
Figure 50. Tie and dye production (Mako, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ................................ 183
Figure 51. Her son on the way to school (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015)..................... 184
Figure 52. Two school girls walking to school in the morning (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).......................................................................................... 184
Figure 53. Children playing who were out of school or had dropped out (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015). ............................................................................................................................. 185
Figure 54. Classmates at school (Farhiyo, entrepreneurship program, 2016). ............................. 186
Figure 55. The Imam teaching a lesson at duuksi (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).... 186
Figure 56. Her children studying for duuksi (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015). .......... 187
Figure 57. NGO-sponsored water tank (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015). ................................. 187
Figure 58. Neighborhood shop, originally supported by an NGO (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015). ................................................................................................................................. 188
Figure 59. Poorly constructed houses shown for comparison (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015). ............................................................................................................................. 189
Figure 60. Construction in home compounds (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015)........ 189
Figure 61. Good construction (Kowsar, entrepreneurship program, 2016)................................. 190
Figure 62. The football field and potential site for SGBV campaigning (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015)................................................................................................................................. 190
Figure 63. A long line of water cans at the tap stand (Fartuun, SGBV program, 2015)................. 200
Figure 64. Community leaders (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015)................................................ 201
Figure 65. Cropped section of community leaders in Figure 64 (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015). .............................................................................................................................................. 202
Figure 66. Children playing and posing for her, daughter wearing an NGO scarf (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 67. Home compound where work was sold (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 68. Rahmo selling tie and dye in their compound (Farhio, entrepreneurship program, 2015).

Figure 69. Displaying her soap (Kusow, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 70. Beauty supply business and mentor (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 71. Broken water tap (Ifrah, entrepreneurship program, 2016).

Figure 72. The queue at the water tap (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 73. Housing in disrepair (Kowsar, entrepreneurship program, 2016).

Figure 74. School (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).

Figure 75. Aden’s daughter’s hand with an abscess (Aden, soap making program, 2016).

Figure 76. Two men who tried to take the camera from Ijabo (tailoring program, 2016).

Figure 77. Children waving (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).

Figure 78. The boy with dirty hands using the tap (Mako, entrepreneurship program, 2016).
Acronyms

DMO – Dadaab Main Office
DRC – Danish Refugee Council
FGM – Female Genital Mutilation
ILO – International Labour Organization
IOM – International Organization for Migration
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
NFE – Non-formal education
NGO – Non-governmental organization
NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council
PAR – Participatory Action Research
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV – Sexual and Gender-based Violence
UN – United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WFP – World Food Program
WTK – Windle Trust Kenya
Preface

In 2009, I started working in international development with communities affected by forced migration due to conflict. I worked in a Liberian non-governmental organization (NGO) that, inspired by Paulo Freire’s liberatory pedagogy, provided adult education to literacy facilitators, government officials, and community workers. I went to Liberia to understand human rights advocacy in the Global South but I left having learned about the extent and depth of empowerment, variously defined, in international development education programming. I was curious what empowerment meant, and proceeded to work in adult education programming in Egypt, Uganda, and Afghanistan exploring how, why, and to what effect NGOs and universities empowered participants, particularly women. My early research questions about empowerment focused on power, such as “what gives an educator the power to empower?” and I began to explore power and relationships in programming, particularly in forced migrant and conflict-affected populations.

As I became an adult education practitioner in international development programs, I began to connect experiences in conflict-affected populations with (im)migration. All my colleagues in Liberia and students in Egypt and Afghanistan had been displaced by war. Migration had similarly affected healthcare workers in Uganda who enrolled in distance learning.

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1 In my research, I use the term Global South, although imperfect, to delineate spaces and places that are targets of development programming and are less represented in political and policy decision-making. The Global South is not one geographic space but an epistemological perspective located in marginalized spaces.

2 Forced migrants are defined here to include refugees, asylum seekers, or displaced peoples due to conflict, environmental changes and natural disasters, or economic pressures (Castles, 2003).
programs that I developed as they relocated (for economic gain) to rural communities to work in clinics far from urban centers and their hometowns.

As a third-generation Italian American, my own family history of immigration is intertwined with my interest in educational programs for integration, assimilation, and language acquisition. My grandparents often told me stories about growing up as newcomers to the United States in steel mill immigrant communities. Throughout data collection, I often reflected on the small similarities between the experiences of my family members, especially my grandmothers and great-grandmothers as new immigrants in the United States in the 1920s-1930s, and the women I met. My family history is rooted in my grandparents’ integration and assimilation experiences that included learning English, being the first to attend formal education, finding a community that accepted Catholic immigrants, serving in the military, losing children to illness and accident, and staying connected with family who scattered across the United States in search of work and opportunity.

My family was privileged to find paths as educators, with 12 of my first cousins, aunts, and uncles having worked as teachers. Although my family’s occupational paths in my parents’ and my generations are varied outside of education, teaching and the helping professions are over-represented. Inspired by their stories told over the dinner table, I continue to explore the purposes of education, my identity, and my position in transnational and global communities.

(Im)migrant communities such as those in which my parents and grandparents were raised are particularly targeted in adult education programs in the United States and worldwide. In 2013, as a beginning Ph.D. student, I found myself longing to return to education practice in international development. I was connecting adult learning theory with NGO programming and wanted to explore women’s empowerment with a group of people who were situated in a
conflict-affected and migratory setting. Through my own transnational network of colleagues, I was put in contact with RET, an agency working in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, and found an opportunity in program evaluation that would allow me to investigate transnational identities, learning outcomes, program goals, and power relationships in diverse educational environments in the refugee camps. Through coordination with faculty, I developed two dissertation pilot studies and final data collection from 2014 to 2016 in Dadaab, testing visual ethnographic methods to gather data about how women and NGO workers conceptualize empowerment in their programs.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first acknowledge the team of scholars and researchers who guided this dissertation from its inception to completion. The mentorship and support of my committee and the advisement of Dr. Esther Prins who helped guide me through all stages of developing, planning, collecting data, analysis, and writing for this work. Dr. Prins’ unwavering support in developing my research, analytic, and writing skills cannot be overemphasized. I would also like to thank the faculty who agreed to serve on my committee, Dr.’s Melissa Wright, Davin Carr-Chellman, and Joseph Valente. Dr. Wright pushed me to explore feminist methods and approaches to research and to better understand relationships of space and place. Dr. Davin Carr-Chellman was an ever-present advisor in this research and on other projects, specifically helping me identify and explore the theoretical basis of my work. Dr. Joseph Valente supported my exploration of visual ethnography, as well as my reflexive experience during research both as an ethnographer and through an unexpected hearing loss. I could not have asked for a more supportive and intellectually challenging committee to oversee this dissertation process. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Fred Schied who first began to probe my interest in women’s empowerment and Dr. Ladislaus Semali who introduced me to comparative and international education.

This project is indebted to the RET team in Kenya and Geneva, specifically Regina Muchai, Marina Anselme-Lopez, Ronald Odhiambo, and Vincent Wanyoike who hosted, encouraged, and humored my research throughout the three visits. Additionally, Hosea Mogera, Evans Oriwo, Lois Kamau, Gideon Kiongo, Bernard Rono, and Hellen Adongo supported my research and provided invaluable friendship and guidance during my work in Dadaab. Lutheran World Federations (LWFs) and Windle Trust Kenya’s teams in Dadaab were also patient mentors to answer my questions, give me Kiswahili tips, help me access the Internet, and have long
conversations over boiled goat meat and ugali. This community of field workers welcomed me into their work and shared living space, naming me Atieno, and patiently explaining not only their work but also their perspectives on current events in Kenya and internationally. The list of friends and confidantes who supported me and my work during my frequent visits to Dadaab is long but I must pay special gratitude to Winnie Okello and Stacy Tsibulsky for helping to ease the day to day stress of living in Dadaab.

The refugees who agreed to participate in Dadaab formed this study and were welcoming and invested throughout the research process. 30 women took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me and discuss their lives. I worked with several interpreters but would like to thank Nadifo Abdullahi for her contributions in interpreting and discussing interviews and Mohamed Hassan for his supportive attitude during group interviews. Without the insights of refugees and NGO field workers, particularly RET staff, this dissertation would not be possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the Africana Research Center at the Pennsylvania State University during data collection in 2016. In addition, the Comparative and International Education program in the Penn State College of Education, financially supported preliminary data collection in 2014. External funders supported my role as visiting evaluator with RET, including the Student Media Grants Program at the Center for Conflict and Development at Texas A&M University (2015) and the Faster Forward Fund (2016). Financial support allowed me to purchase airfare, cameras, and other data collection tools used in this research.

For my mental health and perseverance throughout this process, special thanks to Rosemary, Jerry, Lauri, and Nick Krupar, and my cohort of friends and colleagues, including, but not limited to Leslie Cano, Ana Diaz, Nakita Dolet, Kelly Edwards, Scott Edwards, Joseph Levitan, Hilario Lomeli, Bola Olaniyan, Reid Quade, Paul Skripnik, Mallory Sutika-Sipus, and
Mitch Sutika-Sipus. Without their devoted friendship and support throughout various stages of dissertation development, this process would not have been possible.
Chapter 1

Introduction

May 18, 2015 was hectic. I arrived in Dadaab, Kenya via plane at 8:40 am, accompanied by a colleague from the agency that hosted me. The sun was brighter and the breeze more welcoming than I remembered and I squinted against the tarmac extending forward at the open-air airport. The organization’s driver picked us up and brought us to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) headquarters, or Dadaab Main Office (DMO), where we unloaded our things in the familiar rows of cement rooms on the shared non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) compound (see Figure 1).

My colleague, who had been working in the refugee camps in Dadaab for more than six years, would stay in Dadaab for a week before returning to her newborn in Nairobi. I would stay for the next six weeks on my second and shortest visit to Dadaab. We quickly ate breakfast after dropping off our things and hurried over to the training center on the other side of DMO. NGO staff were beginning a training on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) for youth in the camps.

The learners in this training were all refugees. They required an interpreter from English, the facilitation language, to Somali, signifying that most had not completed secondary school. As the trainers asked the learners to write their introductions and the participants struggled to do so, I set up the video camera. Throughout this first day of my second visit to Dadaab, I ruminated on the developing research questions I carried with me:

What does “empowerment” mean for field workers who intend to empower women?

What does it mean for the women themselves?

Why does empowerment matter in educational programs for adults in this refugee camp?
Figure 1. UNHCR Map of Dadaab, 2012
What could I learn about empowerment in Dadaab that could provide insights into other refugee camp settings and forced migrant experiences?

I jotted in my field notes a simple answer that I will explore and unfold in the following dissertation. “Empowerment,” I wrote, “is important because it is about change. And refugees in Dadaab are hungry for and in need of change: internal change, social change, ownership of their futures, etc.” (May 18, 2015).

Programs in emergency and refugee environments like Dadaab are often reactive, externally imposed, and contrary to international development theories of local ownership and participatory planning, despite attempts to the contrary (Stromquist, 2015). In response to these limitations, empowerment has become a long-standing goal of many NGO educational programs focusing on migrants and refugees, particularly those targeting women. The term empowerment is pervasive and its universality, vagueness, co-optation, and depoliticization motivate further study, specifically focusing on how empowerment is interpreted and conceptualized by refugee and migrant women themselves. I defined empowerment through the programs analyzed here, focusing on power to, power over, and power with models that included women’s capacities and capabilities, described in more depth below. This chapter introduces this dissertation by situating the study in Dadaab, presenting the theoretical framework of power and empowerment and the study’s purpose, significance, and research methods.

**Study Background**

When states lack the political will or resources to integrate new refugees, they may create national policies to build camps in far-flung locations and restrict people’s movement, colloquially termed warehousing (Crisp, 2004). Encampment is a tool for states that are not able to integrate hundreds of thousands of newcomers fleeing conflict or disaster. To counter the
negative humanitarian crises raised through encampment policies, international NGOs and UNHCR provide resources and services, including education, to refugee populations. Refugee camps follow a policy of encampment that has been and continues to be replicated worldwide in response to conflict or natural disaster (Esri & Koren, 2013). The refugee camps in Dadaab, along with other protracted refugee situations, diminish “human potential” and embody insecure spaces where lawlessness and dependency on aid are status quo (Aleinikoff & Poellot, 2014, p. 201). During data collection between 2014 and 2016, Dadaab hosted over 350,000 people, decreasing over the years, in five sprawling camps. The Dadaab refugee camps, as a replicable model of refugee warehousing, present a human rights and humanitarian emergency. This dissertation, as well as much of the literature about the refugee camps, questions encampment policies. Normalizing encampment is all too easy given the longevity of many refugee camps. Instead, I seek to explore non-formal education (NFE) programs in Dadaab, or programs outside of the formal education system, specifically how these programs challenge and problematize encampment by aiming to empower women and what forms of women’s power exist in the camps, both from field workers’ and learners’ perspectives.

**Problem Statement**

Many NGOs seek to empower women in educational programs in line with Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) to mitigate the risks that forced migrants face or pose in refugee camps, resettlement, integration, or repatriation efforts (United Nations [UN], 2012; 2015a; 2015b). This study fills a gap in research and practice conceptualizing empowerment in NGO-sponsored educational programs for refugee women. Given its size and longevity, Dadaab is uniquely situated for analyzing the relationships
between adult education programming, forced migration, and conceptualizations of women’s empowerment.

**Study Purpose and Research Questions**

Adult education is crucial in refugee and forced migrant settings where many people have missed formal education opportunities due to the conditions in which they lived prior to displacement and the latter challenges of displacement. However, adult education is often reactive, short-term, and under-studied. In addition, NGO-sponsored NFE programs that target adults often aim to empower women without critically evaluating what empowerment entails. The purpose of this study is to explore women’s empowerment in adult education programs in Dadaab to better understand the role of adult education and field workers’ and participants’ conceptualizations of empowerment.

Inconsistencies between program goals, NGO field workers’ views, women participants’ experiences, and national and international agendas may lead to further tensions in communities with forced migrants and refugees, thus impeding repatriation, resettlement, or integration efforts. Refugee experiences in Dadaab and tensions between local, national, and international agendas and the corresponding educational responses require further analysis to identify whether, how, and under what conditions educational programs empower women.

This research applied a visual and educational ethnographic study of NFE programming that aimed to empower women in Dadaab, the world’s largest refugee camp (ESRI & Koren, 2013). Drawing on women’s photographic narratives in adult education programs, I highlight how notions of empowerment are interwoven with refugee and forced migration experiences. This study investigates how empowerment is interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women participants and NGO workers in educational programming and daily
interactions in Dadaab. I connect theories of power to empowerment and refugees’ transnational identities to better understand NFE programming in forced migrant communities worldwide.

This dissertation identifies and analyzes how empowerment is linked with discourses about international development, NGOs’ roles, and gendered constructions of power. As non-state actors, NGOs are situated to respond to concerns facing stateless populations, particularly refugees and forced migrants. However, the diversity of NGOs’ missions and programs complicate empowerment goals for field workers and adult education participants. This research supports programming to critically analyze and respond to the relationship between program and field workers’ empowerment goals and participants understanding of the concept in protracted refugee settings.

In international development, NGO-sponsored education programs have been critiqued for avoiding discussions of power, particularly related to women and development (Rowlands, 1997). This study seeks to ground the definition of empowerment vis-à-vis participation in educational programs, particularly considering gender. I define empowerment in NGO educational programming by analyzing organizational missions, women participants’ and NGO field workers’ experiences, and policies that shape these experiences.

This study sought to address the following research questions:

- How is empowerment interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women participants in NGO educational programming in Dadaab and in their daily lives?
- How do NGO workers believe they are empowering women in educational programs? How do these beliefs compare to women’s perceptions of empowerment?
**Significance.** This study contributes to theoretical explorations of power in empowerment in international development and forced migration, educational research in adult education, and NFE practice. This research addresses gaps in the literature regarding the practice, pedagogy, and implications of NFE and its relationship with empowerment in forced migrant settings. All adult education programs in Dadaab identified in this study have women’s empowerment goals, most focusing on self-reliance and economic development (e.g., Kumssa & Jones, 2014), yet the academic literature describes empowerment as more multi-faceted. Refugees and forced migrants participate in educational programming that intends to empower, but practitioners lack a unified framework of what empowerment is and how it is achieved. This dissertation helps us understand adult education for forced migrants in the Global South, specifically focusing on empowerment in NFE.

The research addresses representation in visual ethnographic methods, particularly with refugees and forced migrants. This study is the first study to use these innovative methods (see chapter three) combining educational and visual ethnography using video-cued interviewing and autophotography to study adult education, NFE, refugee education, international development, and forced migration. As such, I developed a new methodological concept: visual educational ethnography defined in chapter three. Video captured the learning environment and served as a cue to discuss field workers’ goals in interviews. Autophotography allowed women participants to create visual narratives about their experiences and understanding of empowerment. The study’s visual ethnographic methods were ideally suited for studying NFE in Dadaab because they allowed participants to co-create data and contribute to analysis.

By focusing on women, this study furthers analyses of gendered relationships in Dadaab, refugee populations, and Somali diasporas, as well as women’s vital roles in maintaining their
households and furthering family and community wellbeing. In refugee settings, it is women who largely keep the household functioning and are responsible for the education, health, and other immediate needs of children and other family members. The programs studied here focus on women to support communities’ wellbeing, thus placing women at the fore of social change. This study also contributes to literature on women’s empowerment from Black feminist thought by highlighting both individual and social changes that require changing “unjust social institutions” across generations (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 273). Women’s experiences are central to understanding programmatic goals and policymakers’ hopes for social change within refugee communities.

Finally, this research contributes to the field of education through an analysis of the transnational and sometimes contradictory goals of economic development and liberatory social change in NGO educational programming. This study is particularly relevant and timely given the record-setting numbers of forced migrants and refugees worldwide since 2011 (UNHCR, 2015a) and the need for educational programs to support this growing population. Through “NGOization,” or the development of institutions that formalize grassroots initiatives worldwide (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010), adult education with forced migrant populations is increasingly supported by national and international NGOs and part of development and aid funding cycles and political negotiations and compromises. Given the global rise in forced migration, scholars, practitioners, and participants could draw on experiences of empowerment identified through this study to inform programming or program evaluation. By drawing parallels between the Dadaab refugees’ encampment experiences and other camp environments worldwide, this research connects one refugee environment with forced migrants in other locales. My dissertation research addresses practitioners’, participants’, and scholars’ experiences in studying adult
education and NFE for forced migrants, developing a methodology that could be replicated in other protracted refugee environments and with forced migrants.

Limitations. Although this study seeks to address gaps in the literature and contribute to practitioners’ and scholars’ understanding of empowerment in NGO-led educational programming for refugees, it does not represent all programs, field workers’ views, or refugees’ experiences. Due to time and access constraints, the educational programs that I could access in this study do not represent all programming aiming to empower women in Dadaab. The refugee camps in Dadaab cannot be equated to all refugee camps, although there are similarities between programming and overarching international policy. In addition, language barriers between field workers, women participants, and me, limited the depth of some interviews and the communication of some concepts.

Situating the study

This study connects research in anthropology, education, forced migration, and refugee studies (e.g., Lukose, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Unterberger, 2009). Refugees’ and forced migrants’ movements (Banulescu-Bogedan & Fratzke, 2015) are the subject of a growing debate among diverse actors, including political commentators, social media users, activists, and policy makers. The underlying tensions in this public discourse relate to integration, repatriation, assimilation, and cultural differentiation of newcomers. Adult and continuing education programming are frequent activities that target forced migrant communities to help meet their integration and repatriation needs.

For the Somali diaspora, forced migration has been precipitated by violence and famine (Unterberger, 2009). Beginning with the decision to leave their home country, diaspora members fleeing conflict or disaster have a degree of choice in transit, regardless of the risks they faced at
home or in the search for safe-haven. This choice is informed by “the relative attractiveness of potential…host states, the amount of stress encountered by individuals and their ability to adapt, the socio-economic attachments of individuals to their homes, and social interaction” such as community and family relationships (Edwards, 2007, p. 149). Thus, the Somali diaspora in Dadaab may have left home with different motivations and backgrounds, fleeing drought, violence, or the destruction of government institutions and social support, such as those arriving seeking healthcare, education, and other quasi-state services provided by UNHCR and implementing NGOs. For refugees in Kenya, UNHCR acts as a quasi-state (Buck & Silver, 2012) that provides services in the five camps, including adult education programs, in coordination with national and international policy makers. The Somali diaspora in Dadaab encounter distinctive challenges in the refugee camps, compared to urban or resettled diaspora populations.

The large and diverse Somali diaspora in Kenya have lived in refugee camps through national encampment policies in place since the early 1990s, when nearly all arrivals were granted *prima facie* status as refugees unless they had the means to become permanent residents (Buck & Silver, 2012). International and national policies codify repatriation and encampment in Kenya. Policy also reflects national security paradigms and fears of terrorist attacks from the Somalia-based radical group, *Al-Shabaab*, amongst other groups. The Kenyan government, in coordination with the Somali government and UNHCR, is pushing for repatriation of all refugees through the Tripartite Agreement of 2013.

The refugee settlements in Dadaab are post-agrarian communities with high-density housing relative to the surrounding Kenyan host communities, little arable land, tightly regulated employment, and few educational opportunities. During the 2014-16 study period, roughly
350,000 refugees lived in the five camps around Dadaab: Hagadera, Dagahaley, Ifo, Ifo2, and Kambioos. Most refugees arrived from Somalia over the past 20 years, with an influx of refugees in 2011 in response to drought (UNHCR, 2014). Although refugees in Dadaab established communities in the camps, many were also planning (and postponing) their repatriation or hoping for an unlikely resettlement.

In the camps, formal work and education are geared toward reintegration in Somalia. Due to few educational opportunities and “over-crowded, age- and gender-inappropriate classrooms” (RET, 2013, p. 2), many refugees, particularly women, do not continue formal education. Although the Somali government attempted in the 1970s and 1980s to increase women’s literacy and school enrollment, female educational access in Somalia was and remains extremely low. In Dadaab, school enrollment is slightly higher than in Somalia, but women’s and girls’ participation in education is still lower than that of their male counterparts.

The refugee setting in Dadaab presents a dominant discourse concerning education’s purpose and goals, namely that it leads to skill development, which leads to peace and economic development of refugees’ country of origin (Muriungi, 2014). Education in Dadaab is a humanitarian endeavor that aims to stimulate social change and support survival and well-being. Learning in refugee settings is not confined to formal education organized and run by the UN and implementing NGOs. Much of the learning that occurs is informal and related to identity, social structures, security, community building, and navigating international refugee policies. How Dadaab residents interact with bureaucratic refugee policies and international law relates to how they conceptualize, internalize, and contest empowerment in their experiences (Mugure, 2014).
In Dadaab and many refugee camps, “the links that refugees maintain with relatives outside the camps are essential for their daily survival” (Horst, 2007, p. 29). In addition, eastern Kenya is inhabited almost exclusively by people who are of Somali ethnicities, or Somali Kenyans, who may have familial ties to people in the refugee camps but have been living in Kenya since the border between the two nation-states was created. Refugees’ experiences in Dadaab are interwoven with their transnational postcolonial identities because “transnationalism is part of cultural lifeways, where travel is considered to be a site of learning and wisdom not only religiously, but also in a wider sense” (Horst, 2007, p. 67). The prevalence and valuing of travel as an educative experience and investment are thought to benefit individuals and the wider community (Horst, 2007). Cultural valuing of education and travel is related to Soomaalinimo, or the Somali diasporas’ interconnections regardless of place (Horst, 2007; A. Taylor, 2014), discussed further in chapter two.

Kenya is neither unique in the use of NGOs for providing adult education for forced migrants, nor is Dadaab distinct as a protracted refugee settlement. UNHCR continues to rely on camps as a place to host forced migrants. This study links programming in Dadaab with forced migrants’ transnational identities, particularly considering transnational networks in protracted refugee camps and empowerment goals in learning environments. Migration affects global and local experiences in educational programs, including participants’ transnational communities and the scale of programming, from international NGOs to place-based practice.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial and feminist theories frame this research. I first explored the history and inherent power dynamics in education with and for previously colonized peoples through postcolonial perspectives in international development and forced migration studies. Although
the “post” in postcolonial theories may be a misnomer, as though we are now beyond the
influence of colonialism (Spivak, 1988; Tikly, 1999), the term can help clarify relationships
between participant, field worker, and researcher. Postcolonial theory helped me understand
relationships between field workers’ and women’s perceptions, programming goals, and the
reality of women’s lives, especially focusing on refugee women’s experiences, which are often
marginalized in scholarly research (Spivak, 1988).

Likewise, postcolonial theory frames my analysis of the purposes of NGO programs,
considering orientalism (Said, 1978) and constructions of race, ethnicity, and nationality in the
study. For example, field workers believed they were empowering women through their
programs. However, a postcolonial critique focuses on dependency and deficit approaches in the
learning environment (Tikly, 1999) and regional, state-based, asymmetrical power dynamics
between the Kenyan citizens providing educational programs and the Somali citizens (refugees)
participating in them. Similarly, postcolonial theory helped me understand religious dynamics
between the predominantly Christian Kenyan field workers and the Muslim women participants I
interviewed. Using postcolonial and feminist analyses, I sought to understand how empowerment
was internalized in the postcolonial NGO setting to avoid binaries of Kenyan and Somali,
Christian and Muslim, colonized and colonizer, man and woman, and women’s empowerment
and empowerment with no modifier.

Through feminist ethnographic approaches, this research sought “to observe processes in
the construction of gender hierarchies and gendered power relations” within learning
environments (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001, p. 194). Intersectional theories in feminism
address complex identities, including national, racial, ethnic, familial, tribal, and clan affiliation;
socio-economic status; and religion. The intersections in women’s identities in this study helped
illuminate how their experiences prior to, during, and after migration affected their involvement in education and daily life (e.g., Cuban, 2010).

With postcolonial and critical feminist foundations, I recognized the research participants’ and my shared and divergent, or intersubjective, experiences of life and power in the refugee settlements. Our intersubjective ways of knowing the world related to how we understood empowerment in the learning environment, community, and national and international policies that affect the Somali diaspora and forced migrants. I explored participants’ and field workers’ identities, considering intersubjective gender and community experiences as constructed by research participants during data collection (Meehan, 2000). These experiences, learned in community, are not “idiosyncratic but rather draw on concepts and frameworks learned through conversation” with others (Brookfield, 2005, p. 1150). Particularly, the data presented nuances regarding women’s power to earn an income and engage in their communities and to develop power with others, particularly other women. I also focused on complex relationships of domination and subordination interwoven with cultural understandings of tradition and gender roles. I drew on feminist analyses and narratives to conceptualize women’s empowerment as it arose through their participation in adult education. I sought to understand individuals’ multi-faceted relationships, considering their socio-economic status, educational access, nationality, social capital, and participation in NGO programming. I discuss the theoretical framework in more depth in chapter two.

**Methodology**

I used an innovative, multivocal methodology that included field workers’ and participants’ analysis of data collected through iterative, video-cued interviewing and autophotography in NGO-sponsored educational programs with Somali women in Dadaab. This
study was recurrent and iterative, building on three data collection periods in 2014 to 2016. In video-cued interviews, I used film of the educational program as a cue to discuss how field workers believed they were empowering women participants. Research participants reviewed videos and photographs with me, providing insights that extended participant observation and created alternative information than could be obtained through interviews without visual cues. Through autophotographic interviews in which women presented their daily life through images, I sought to challenge notions of essential characteristics of forced migrant women in general, and particularly Somali refugee women, to understand the specific experiences of women’s empowerment. The production and use of video and photographs, coupled with the multivocal analysis of those visual materials, created a collaborative research environment and helped offset asymmetrical power dynamics between researcher and subjects.

**Study design.** Visual methods can help explain how empowerment is interpreted in NGO educational programming by field workers and subsequently internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women participants. Whereas previous comparative studies and ethnographies of the Somali diaspora focused on forced migrants’ identity changes (e.g., Berns McGown, 1999; Bigelow, 2010; Horst, 2007; A. Taylor, 2014) or access to primary and secondary education (e.g., Buck & Silver, 2012), this study focused on what occurs in adult education in Dadaab. Using a “recurrent time mode” approach to visual education ethnography (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 542), I endeavored to create a dialogue with women participants and field workers in diverse educational programs regarding empowerment conceptualizations and goals.

**Data collection.** This study is a visual educational ethnography of empowerment in NGO-sponsored learning environments, drawing on data collected in June – August 2014, May – June 2015, and April – June 2016. Ethnographic methods situated empowerment goals in NGO
educational programs to capture and record women participants’ “voices of lived experiences” (Denzin, 1994, p. 83). Women’s experiences were the main unit of analysis. I also drew on NGO workers’ experiences as a unit of observation to further elucidate and understand conceptualizations of empowerment related to educational programming in Dadaab. In line with educational ethnographic practices, I focused on the learning environment as a micro-culture with shared beliefs, temporal norms that govern behavior (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009), and representations of understood and tacit expressions of power in teacher-student relationships. What occurred in the learning environment reflected and shaped participants’ and field workers’ daily lives, including how they conceptualized power and empowerment in their lives and work. NGO programming presented diverse educational content and goals in which to explore what empowerment meant to women participants.

Summary Findings

NFE programming in Dadaab that aimed to empower women covered diverse topics, but focused on skill- or trade-based programs, integration into formal schooling, psychosocial support related to experiences of violence, community development workshops, and health and disability programming for both awareness and improved well-being. Although this study did not seek to represent all NFE programs in Dadaab, these overarching themes reflected how empowerment was conceptualized broadly. Economic empowerment was clearly linked with skill- and trade-based programs. This was often construed as the “power to” do something, or as the women pointed out, make something or produce goods for sale in the market. Similarly, community development workshops introduced topics to elected political leaders and youth within the camps and neighborhood blocks to build their ability to make social change. The programs investigated here included concepts of empowerment that were also focused on
building power within communities, especially of youth who were underrepresented in local governance structures.

Women interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, and contested empowerment in their narratives about daily life and the changes they experienced related to NGO educational programs. They defined empowerment in terms of abilities, making products for sale, sharing knowledge with other women, and a recognition of their contributions to their families and communities. They defined these elements of empowerment, but did not consider them to be aspects of power. Women defined power as predominantly political power and consistently argued that they did not have power as refugees because they could not influence the systems in which they lived nor alter humanitarian aid, food distribution, or other services from NGOs and UNHCR. Dependency was a theme in both field workers’ and women’s narratives about empowerment rooted in the relationship between refugees and the quasi-state functions of NGOs. This theme was so ever-present that most field workers could not identify or describe a powerful woman in Dadaab in the current policy environment. Some women defined the services and goods provided by NGOs as evidence of their empowerment as they used local resources and services provided to improve their wellbeing and that of their family, and not solely as a tool to develop empowerment. Field workers, on the other hand, hoped that training would help motivate and enable women to hone their skills and enhance their autonomy, especially beyond reliance on NGO resource and service provision. Field workers hoped empowered women would gain skills in the camps that they could use upon repatriation.

Power and empowerment were tenuously linked for field workers and women participants. Power was amorphous, though I could extrapolate and identify some definitions of power that fit within power-to, power-over, and power-with constructs discussed in chapter two,
specifically the power to make an income, political actors’ power within and beyond Dadaab, power over women participants, and women’s collaborative power to produce goods, engage in trade, and lead community development projects. Empowerment signified changes in skills, knowledge acquisition, and actions within women’s families, homes, and communities, but field workers and participants did not equate these with exercising more power. Power, for most participants in this study, existed as a political and economic fact, not directly related to NGOs’ efforts to empower.

Women and some field workers contested empowerment through a patriarchal, gendered lens of domination. Men, it was agreed by many participants and field workers, were not empowered in the refugee camps. Instead, programs focused on building women’s skills and participation at the expense of men. This reflected the emphasis on empowerment-oriented programming, or programs with defined women’s empowerment goals. It also signified internalized patriarchal systems amongst all participants. Finally, field workers viewed refugees’ dependency on NGO programs as disempowering both men and women participants.

I argue that empowerment is interpreted by women participants in this study as the acquisition of new abilities, especially, although not always, related to the production of goods for sale. Similarly, field workers emphasized developing participants’ autonomy and abilities, and deemphasized the role of NGOs in women’s actions. Women internalized the concept of empowerment as a mundane aspect of participation in NGO programming, an expected if unmeasurable outcome, often associated with NGO’s provision of services. Field workers similarly understood the ubiquity of empowerment as a goal of all programming, but more critically considered when their actions and the structure of their programs were or were not developing women’s autonomy. In (re)appropriating empowerment, women emphasized how
empowerment was synonymous with moving toward “the good life” and “learning.” Field workers often simplified empowerment by equating it with learning in educational programs (i.e., participation), but then in interviews described the linkages between the overall organizational objectives, set forth by international agendas, and the specific empowerment in the programs studied here. Both women and field workers contested women’s empowerment, with the emphasis on women. Women described how men were excluded from programming, leaving male family members idle and creating asymmetry in household activities, with women bearing the brunt of domestic and income-generating activities. Field workers also raised issues of gender but returned to dependency models, where refugees were made dependent upon NGOs for services, resources, and programs. Most notably, women identified that social recognition was key to their empowerment and that using NGO programs was a tool, not a symptom of dependency, to reach their desired powerful states. In sum, empowerment is intertwined with NGO programming in Dadaab, subject to international agendas and goal-setting, and interpreted and observed on the ground through increased abilities and independence from services provided by NGOs.

**Dissertation Overview**

This dissertation contains seven chapters: the introduction, literature review, methodology, introduction to the data and educational programs, field workers’ perspectives, women’s perspectives, and the conclusion. This chapters introduced the development of my interest in NGO-sponsored educational programming in refugee settings. I also explored this study’s foundations in post-colonial and feminist theory. My rationale for this study is based on the pervasiveness of empowerment-oriented programming, the growing population of forced migrants, and the need for adult education programming in refugee and forced migrant
communities. As such, this study explored how programs intended to empower women participants, how field workers described this empowerment, and how women conceptualized empowerment in their lives.

Chapter two discusses studies of adult education and notions of power and empowerment in refugee and forced migrant communities, how adult learning theories expose contradictions in program pedagogy for empowerment, and how postcolonial and feminist theories help me explicate women’s empowerment in NFE programs. Chapter three outlines visual educational ethnography, particularly focusing on sampling, data collection, multivocal analysis, and data analysis. I argue that a visual educational ethnography is best suited to understand how empowerment is conceptualized in NGO programs because it allows women’s and field workers’ voices and conceptualizations to guide both data collection and analysis. Chapter four situates the study in daily life in Dadaab from field workers’ and women participants’ perspectives. This chapter draws on observations, field notes, interviews, and multivocal interviews to explicate the spaces in which educational programs operate. Chapter five presents data from the field workers’ interviews to identify their intentions, definitions, and interpretations of women’s empowerment. This chapter is contrasted with chapter six, where women’s perspectives are explicated through the autophotographic interviews. Both chapters five and six involve comparison of educational programs and discussions of findings as they pertain to field workers and women, respectively. Chapter seven connects and contrasts field workers’ and women’s interpretations, internalizations, (re)appropriations, and contestations of empowerment in Dadaab. I conclude by arguing that women and field workers define empowerment in their local environment, as part of the missions of NGOs, constrained by Kenyan national politics, and reflecting international agendas that delineate programming. Women interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, and
contested empowerment by describing their experiences surviving and attempting to thrive in the camps. Field workers’ experiences and explanations, as the unit of observation, helped explain the systems in which women’s empowerment operated within Dadaab, particularly considering the seemingly contradictory NGO goals of providing services while also ending dependency on NGO programs.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Since the 1970s, literature, programming, and policies in international development have emphasized how education empowers women participants, particularly in the Global South (Nussbaum, 2004a). Empowerment is often related to increases in educational attainment, employment opportunities, self-confidence, or overall well-being. Similarly, NGOs provide adult education in international development programs to support economic development, social cohesion, and human development (Sen, 1999). The study builds on and contributes to work about international development and NGO programming in the Global South. I connect theories of power and empowerment through a postcolonial and feminist framework to situate this study in the literature on educational programming.

Although studies on women’s empowerment have examined the meaning and gendered constructions of empowerment in international development and adult education, there are few empirical studies of how women’s empowerment is presented, pursued, or conceptualized in adult education in forced migrant communities, especially by women themselves, rather than from the perspective of those intending to empower. Moreover, the literature includes cultural experiences, identity, and transnational networks of refugees (Horst, 2007), but does not compare connections between individual experiences and NGOs’ missions of empowerment. As such, this study builds on and contributes to work in refugee, gender, and NGO studies.

In this literature review, I first present the theoretical framework of empowerment and power that guide this research. I then discuss forced migration studies. I define adult education and focus on studies of educational programs in forced migrant communities, particularly Dadaab. I include NGOs’ roles as education providers, the learning theories these programs
employ, and how women’s empowerment is linked with education, drawing on feminist and postcolonial theories. I conclude by connecting the literature on forced migration, adult education, and women’s empowerment with Somali diaspora studies to situate my research in the literature about diaspora experiences like those presented here.

**Theory and Terms**

The theoretical framework for this study connects NGO educational programming with national and international policy agendas that promote women’s empowerment in Dadaab. In this research, I explore the policy and programming in Dadaab through women’s photographic narratives describing their lives and how they feel empowered in their daily activities related to their participation in adult education programs. Women’s narratives and empowerment-oriented programming contain assumptions and explicit or implicit power relationships. The analytic focus on policy, programming, women’s narratives, and power offers another contribution to postcolonial, feminist, and critical theory in adult education and forced migration studies. These frameworks guided the development of this literature review, the research methods, and data analysis presented in the following chapters.

**Power and empowerment.** This study is grounded in Allen’s (1999) analysis of feminist conceptions of power, defined as domination, resistance, and collective action, or “power-over”, “power-to”, and “power-with” (p. 123), respectively. I first situated power’s definition in relations, drawing on Habermasian understandings of communicative rationality by focusing on power within relationships. Power exists in our lifeworlds, or our “reservoir of taken-for-granted, of unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation” (Habermas, 1981, p. 124), through our interactions with others and intersubjective understandings of the world. Individuals make validity claims that resonate with
others (or not) in “a model of the circulation of power” (Habermas, 1998, p. xviii) that occurs in daily interactions for the maintenance of the state or social order. I explore how this circulation of power occurs in this study through women’s narratives about when they feel powerful in their daily interactions, much of which relates to communicative actions.

Habermas’ presentation of communicative power relies on equitable access to resources in daily interactions such as volunteering to present in an educational program or chatting with friends or field workers in the program. Communicative power is problematized when “the interlocutors are not fellow members of a political community, with equal rights to participate in political life” (Fraser, 2007, para. 3) or they lack the power to participate equally in a communicative act. This feminist critique of relational power includes “a relation of (male) domination and (female) subordination” (Allen, 1999, p. 7). In this analysis, I draw on relationships between women, within refugee communities, and between refugees and field workers and seek to transform “masculinist conceptions of social and political life that have been at the fore of Western political thought” and sometimes included in refugee education programs (Allen, 1999, p. 7) In this study, participants’ and NGO workers’ experiences of power in the learning environment and elsewhere can affect their ability to make validity claims in dialogue (Habermas, 1996; 1998). Thus, I drew on feminist notions of power, autonomy, and changing gender roles in refugee environments to identify how women participants defined empowerment.

To conceptualize empowerment in relations in adult education programming in Dadaab, I incorporate power over, power to, and power with (Allen, 1999). Power in women’s empowerment is interwoven with gender equality, often constructed as attempts to subvert men’s power over women. Power over is consistent with conceptions of power as subjugation, domination (Lukes, 1974), or disciplinary power (Escobar, 1984), meaning the systemic,
structural, and individual control over another individual, group, institution, or system. In addition, most literature in Somali studies or about Somalia defines power simply as authority, such as political power over a geographic area or group (e.g., Marangio, 2012). Importantly, domination through international law and policy unites refugees and field workers through “their joint subjection to a structure of governance that sets the ground rules that govern their interaction” (Fraser, 2010, p. 65). Power over is not merely one person’s communicative or relational power over another, but also part of larger systems in which women live.

International development scholars and practitioners such as Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2004a) use capabilities approaches to women’s empowerment in a power to model. Empowerment is often conceptualized as power to, “or power as competence,” for marginalized populations to “shape the content and structure of their daily existence” (Bystydzienski, 1992, p. 3). Drawing on Allen’s philosophical perspective and Bystydzienski’s, Sen’s, and Nussbaum’s more practice-based perspective, power to includes both resistance to domination and the capability to act, independently and in concert with others. Power over and power to are typically depicted as “an ability-based definition or a relational definition” of power (Pansardi, 2012, p. 73). This research furthers analysis of power to and capabilities in restrictive refugee camps and refugee policies.

By contrast, power with emphasizes both power to and power over aspects of power (Kreisberg, 1992). Power with occurs “when the power of the individual comes to be seen as inexorably embedded in the power of the collective (for example, in a social class, a culture, a gender, a race, a social movement)” and results in a “possibility of large-scale social change, even of revolution” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 47). It includes “finding common ground among diverse interests, developing shared value and creating collective strength by organizing with
each other” (Partzsch & Fuchs, 2012, p. 360). Drawing on this literature, my theoretical framework emphasizes *power with* in collectives and *power to* do, make, and create, rather than domination approaches to power. This research focuses less on collective revolution in *power with* and more on collaboration.

Like Habermasian notions of communicative action, power “circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 274). I build on critiques of communicative rationality, such that *power with* is not simply a transformation of “communicative power into administrative power” (Habermas, 1996, p. xxviii) but “the formation of communities of need and solidarity in the interstices of our societies” through “genuine collectivities…formed out of struggle” (Benhabib, 1986, p. 353). This study provides additional insight into the (re)interpretation of *power with* related to women’s empowerment in Dadaab, particularly considering the administrative power within a refugee camp.

*Power over, power to, and power with* define the power in empowerment through individual autonomy, action, and collaboration, respectively, in this study. In international development and humanitarian work, educational empowerment-oriented programming often focuses solely on participation or self-esteem, excluding concepts of power despite the theoretical potential of *power with* models for social change. NGO-led educational programming, like formal schooling, may reproduce power inequalities (Gramsci, 2001). There are traditional relationships of domination in education, particularly within the teacher-student relationship or field worker-participant relationship in this study (Bell, Gaventa, Peters, Horton, & Freire, 1990). Power in women’s education is further complicated for forced migrants who (re)construct gender relations and identities through displacement. Refugees, especially women,
are assumed to be vulnerable subjects who lack power through statelessness and loss of autonomy (e.g., Dombrowski, 2004). In investigating women’s empowerment, I focused on identifying how women already saw themselves as powerful, especially through their photographic narratives of everyday life. Through their understandings of power and descriptions of power in their lives, together we explored how power and empowerment are, and are not, related in the refugee camps and situated in educational programming.

**Feminist approaches to women’s empowerment.** Empowerment has theoretical roots in feminist movements that seek to change patriarchal power relationships in favor of those lacking power (Kabeer, 2005). However, empowerment’s uncritical overuse risks essentializing and universalizing individuals’ experiences (Benhabib, 1986) when applied as a quick fix for gender-based inequality (Batliwala, 2010; Stromquist, 1986). For example, Meehan’s (2000) feminist critique of gender equality programming, which includes programming for women’s empowerment, describes how programs can perpetuate gender tropes.

In Dadaab, programming targeting women often focuses more on traditionally gendered female roles, such as women’s roles producing tie and dye clothing, or dyeing fabric, or caring for children with disabilities and men’s roles such as tailoring and participating in community leadership workshops. Such programs tend to ignore power as a relationship (power over/to/with), perpetuate gender binaries, or may reinforce traditional gender roles such as women’s caretaking roles. Although Meehan has addressed women’s empowerment through feminist critiques, I build on her work by analyzing empowerment in refugee camps, where gender roles have dramatically shifted and been redefined through physical displacement.
Women’s empowerment in Dadaab. In Dadaab, empowerment is often defined specifically in each educational program in which it is invoked. To connect disparate notions of empowerment, I defined empowerment to include Kabeer’s (2005) definition of power as “the ability to have choices” (p. 13, emphasis in original) and the ability to collaborate with others to make those choices possible, or “to exercise power individually and collectively” (Prins & Drayton, 2010, p. 209). The operable definition that I began my study with focused on choice, ability, and self-identification, or “the active process by which a group ‘makes itself,’” including individual self-confidence and changes in self-perceptions (Goodman, 2006, p. 54). Building on Murphy-Graham (2012), Prins, Drayton (2010), Rowlands (1997), and Stromquist (2015), women’s empowerment is not solely individual, as in a self-esteem or actualization model, but is also related to collectivity. For an overview of empowerment typologies, I referred to Foster (1995), Murphy-Graham (2012), Prins and Drayton (2010), Rowland (1997), Sen (1999), Stromquist (2009; 2015), and the World Bank (2007).

Programs that support women’s and girls’ education and empowerment are implicated in “the highest return investment” in the international donor community and aim to improve general well-being through women’s income and health choices (Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 133). Program goals that center on investment principles present an instrumental model related to protecting families and reacting to increased, or altered, responsibilities of women in transnational settings (Horst, 2007). However, economic empowerment may uncritically call for increased engagement in the market through one’s capabilities, rather than acknowledging market power dynamics that restrict available choices (Sen, 1999). Economic empowerment and return on investment program goals are particularly meaningful in this study, where refugees are not legally able to work but are nevertheless targeted with skill- and trade-based training. As
such, I draw on Murphy-Graham’s (2012), Rowland’s (1997), and Stromquist’s (2015) works that highlight the interwoven and dynamic aspects of empowerment, such as how “increased economic independence may contribute to an increase in individual self-confidence” or vice versa (Rowlands, 1997, p. 110).

In my research, empowerment draws on women’s “access to resources, agency in decision-making and negotiating power, and achievement of outcomes of value” defined by participants (Murphy-Graham, 2012, pp. 133-134). Programming that aims to empower women must also attend to family dynamics, relationships, and the community, which may challenge or complicate NGOs’ missions or goals. Finally, in this study, women’s empowerment must also address men and gender relationships that are fluid and changing in refugee diasporas (Krause, 2014).

**NGO-led programs to empower.** International development discourses have been critiqued as “Western-style development” (McEwan, 2009, 146), leading to educational projects that intend to empower without critically analyzing who is empowering whom and what gives them the power to do so (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1984; 1994). To empower women, some programs specifically emphasize creating gender-neutral policies that mainstream women into economic activities dominated by men, but these sorts of programs frequently lack transformational aspects of empowerment and instead insert women into programming without critically evaluating how power operates in specific economic spheres (Escobar, 1994). The emphasis on marginality in women’s empowerment literature raises interesting questions for programs investigated here: who is empowering whom? In women’s empowerment, are men empowering women? Are more affluent or powerful women those who empower marginalized women? If so, what sort of empowerment is taking place? If empowerment means abandoning or
altering one’s identity (which is tied to experience, religion, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) to fit an externally established metric of well-being or success, is it truly empowering? Finally, how is empowerment both internally and externally motivated?

Disempowerment is also a relevant concept in this study, as I seek to identify definitions and possible contradictions within programming and in women’s and field workers’ views of empowerment. Related to disadvantage and unequal power relations in the literature (Adusei-Asante & Hancock, 2014), disempowerment was also defined as discouragement in this study. Considering the “western-style” critique of international development programming and the removal of power from empowerment (Nagar & Raju, 2003), the co-optation of empowerment by international NGOs could “disempower” by perpetuating hegemony or unequal power dynamics between groups, leading some authors to argue that “empowerment and control are two faces of the same coin” (Al-Haj, 1995, p. 221). In the following chapters, I explore how disempowerment is related to power over and includes disempowerment that diminishes, and discourages, women’s power to act, produce, or move, and build power with others.

I analyzed power and empowerment at the intersections of constructions of gender, citizenship, culture, identity, civil society, national and international policy, and forced migration. My theoretical framework included postcolonial and feminist linkages between empowerment and NGO studies, especially how NGOs (re)produce empowerment and how women individually make meaning of power. As such, conceptualizing women’s empowerment

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3 Women themselves may choose to abandon an aspect of their identity that they find disempowering without relying on external motivation as well.
in Somali diasporas must also involve understanding and presenting other aspects of their identities, namely as members of their families and communities with diverse experiences and histories of forced migration. These relationships include household, religious, ethnic, clan, and other situated identities, which may be unknown to the field workers who intend to empower them or other cultural outsiders, including myself as a doctoral researcher.

**Forced migration.** To understand NGOs’ roles and goals in providing education to forced migrants, I situated my work in the literature on displacement and transnationalism. Diaspora studies literature has explored the relationship between migratory and national identities in the post-World War II era as both culturally and historically specific and generalizable (Braziel & Mannur, 2003). Much of the diaspora literature emphasizes heterogeneity and change in populations (e.g., Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Gilroy, 1993). Ethnographies of refugee populations often focus on transnationalism (Gilad, 1990), movement (Hoffman & Lubkemann, 2005), and integration through schooling (Naidoo, 2008). I draw on this literature to understand individual and social change as enacted through NGO-sponsored programs for Somali women in the diaspora in Dadaab. Although forced migrants are diverse, they share displacement experiences, often involving trauma, and are targeted, though not always reached, by international and community development programs, regardless of country of origin or destination.

**NGO responses in forced migration.** Diaspora and transnational networks are particularly critical to NGO studies due to increases in forced migration (UNHCR, 2015a) and the nation-state’s changing roles in response to crisis. NGOs play nuanced, complicated roles in providing services to forced migrants, particularly in refugee camps such as Dadaab. For instance, aid organizations, usually INGOs, serve as quasi-states in protracted refugee
environments (Chkam, 2016). The services they provide to ease humanitarian emergencies and human suffering may inadvertently prolong refugee encampment (Chkam, 2016; Terry, 2002). Refugees, rarely allowed to work under encampment policies, risk becoming dependent on service-provision, confounding their abilities to build on their skills and capabilities and decreasing incentives to repatriate (Kisiara, 2015; McAlister, 2013; Wali, 2014; Zarowsky, 2000).

My research attempts to respond to Allen’s (2013) call for feminist critical theory to problematize and reconceptualize NGO goals that are based on historical progress, universalist normative ideals, and socio-cultural historical learning or modernization. Camps contain contradictions, where NGO programming seeks to fulfill universal goals of “the international refugee regime” and respond to experiences of “cultural and political otherness” (Hyndman, 2000, p. 88). In this study, I seek to both understand and call into question field workers and women refugee’s judgements of cultural practices, power, and empowerment considering dominant discourses in NGO programs that seek to change local cultural practices and socio-political ideals toward more universal aims in this research. In seeking to critically understand universality in NGO programming, I question “what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints” in the lives of women and field workers in this research (Foucault, 1997, pp. 124-25, qtd. in Allen, 2013, p. 279).

Enlightenment ideals, by which I focus specifically on notions of universalism and social progress, are enacted and (re)appropriated in development and humanitarian programs. Notions of universality and human rights embedded in international programming can be at odds with local practices. For instance, NGOs and the UN (co)construct women’s empowerment as a
universal goal (such as MDG3 and SDG5) and then attempt to localize it in practice (Batliwala, 1993). NGOs and the UN also may develop programs in one location and export it to others so that programs in Dadaab may have been originally developed in Guatemala, for example. NGOs often strive for universal goals, such as women’s empowerment, gender equality, and economic development (Sen, 1999; Spring, 2008) particularly for populations experiencing forced migration (Lange & Abidi, 2015). I add to critiques of NGOs that focus on universalizing and potentially (re)colonizing (Hearn, 1998; Matlou, 1999) roles to focus more on local understandings of power and empowerment related to and considering non-domination. For instance, Benhabib (1992) argues that universal goals are not necessarily at odds with feminist approaches and that “such universalism would be interactive not legislative, cognizant of gender difference not gender blind, contextually sensitive and not situation indifferent” (p. 3). Drawing on Benhabib’s proposition of balancing universalism, Enlightenment, and feminist analyses and Allen’s (2013) call for critical feminist analysis of non-domination, this research seeks to understand how NGOs balance universalized agendas and local practice and how women participants in NGO educational programs conceptualize empowerment in their lives. I turn now to a discussion of literature that informs my analysis of adult education in refugee and forced migrant settings.

*Adult education and forced migration.* To understand the stated adult education program goals in forced migrant communities, I defined adult education through practice-based literature because this was most relevant to emergency and international development environments (e.g., INEE, 2015). Per the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2015), a leading network of international development practitioners and scholars, adult education enables participants to update their “knowledge, skills, and competencies in a particular field, including
but not limited to the improvement of civic, social, moral, religious, and cultural skills for progress in all spheres of life” (para. 1). INEE’s definition of adult education as skills-based training is in line with human capital theories of education (Sweetland, 1996) and the final comments on education for “civic, social, moral, religious, and cultural skills” allude to critical, experiential, and multicultural learning theories. Although adulthood as a period in one’s life may vary by culture, I reviewed programs that are targeting youth and adults, over age 18, through NFE outside of traditional primary and secondary programs. I considered programming goals related to INEE’s definition.

In adult education, programming and learning settings are often divided between formal (accredited, school-based), non-formal (possible credential, not for a state-sanctioned degree), and informal (everyday learning). In a meta-analysis of literature on these three groupings, Colley, Hodkinson, and Malcolm (2002) find that there is far too much overlap between how the terms are used for them to be distinct categories. As such, in this research I focused on NFE but included programs that were centered about formal education, such as the training for parents of children with disabilities, and analyzed potential informal learning occurring through observation and interviews related to empowerment definitions.

Literature about adult education and forced migration focuses on individual and group identity changes (Alfred & Guo, 2012; J. Grayson, 2014; Morrice, 2013; Warriner 2007). I build on literature focusing on identity and globalization (Keogh, 2003; Mutwarasibo, 2005; Ryan & Fallon, 2005) to understand how women relate their identity, specifically nationality, to their concepts of power and empowerment in Dadaab, where two generations have been born and raised as refugees. I analyzed the role of adult education in empowerment, integration, or identity
formation for refugees taking into consideration participants’ and field workers’ multifaceted experiences.

**NFE and NGOs.** The diversity of NGOs’ missions and programs complicates empowerment in adult education. In international development, NGO-sponsored empowerment programming has been critiqued for avoiding discussions of power, particularly related to women and development (Rowlands, 1997). NGOs’ missions within the Somali diaspora range from gender-based violence “awareness raising” workshops to income-generating projects to literacy programs. Programs in Kenya aim to repatriate women with tools they can use in Somalia. Education is a tool for change (Kabeer, 2005). This research analyzes the change that follows educational experiences, what kind of change emerges, and under whose terms that change takes place.

NGO-sponsored adult education often follows international agendas set by funders who have their own priorities (Argus Nuryatno, 2009). Simultaneously, NGOs localize programming to enhance and support community-based expressions of democracy and self-reliance, leading to potentially contradictory roles as agencies attempt to increase independence, while providing services that may unintentionally increase dependency (J. Grayson, 2014). Self-reliance, in this model, is the opposite of dependency, and is defined as “the capacity or ability to rely on one’s own capabilities (power, resources, judgement or ability to generate an outcome) and manage one’s own affairs” emphasizing individual autonomy (Thomas & Pawar, 2010, p. 76). This research, and women’s perspectives on empowerment, critically evaluates the binary between self-reliance and dependency, with diverse empowerment definitions presented here highlighting a spectrum between these two competing concepts.
Dependency models construct forced migrants as “the powerless victim” (J. Grayson, 2014, p. 184) who, despite their skills, experiences, and expertise, become dependent on services from the state or NGOs. NGO programming, including programs studied here, often try to circumvent dependency models by creating grassroots and refugee-led initiatives, but may fail to recognize that “a refugee camp is not a self-identified community” but rather “an institution generated by the international refugee regime” and inherently imposed externally (Hyndman, 2000, p. 137). I add to the literature on dependency in NGO programming by exploring how field workers intend to address refugees’ dependency on UNHCR and NGO-sponsored services. Although NGOs’ goals relate to individual and community well-being, they are often “complicit with the power structures” (Abdi & Kapoor, 2009) they seek to change, particularly given postcolonial critiques of “cultural imperialism, labeled as a form of enlightenment” (Shizha & Abdi, 2009, p. 28; Spring, 2008). These critiques are salient to my study because I sought to identify the power that women had in their seemingly powerless position as refugees in Dadaab.

The scholarly literature on adult educational programs in international development and with forced migrants primarily includes case studies or projects, with few comparative studies. I could not locate any large-scale, quantitative studies of NGO-sponsored adult education for refugees and forced migrants, likely due to the difficulty of comparing small projects and local environments. State-sponsored adult education programs for recent diaspora and national surveys of literacy and numeracy outcomes allow for large-scale studies but do not consider variability within and between specific programs (e.g., Desjardins, 2013; Prins & Monnat, 2015). Alfred and Guo (2012), in an analysis of adult education research in Canada and the United States, found that there is a growing literature about immigration and migration. They concluded that, given the increasing emphasis on migration, adult education research ought to look further at
globalizing and internationalizing curriculum. I explore globalizing forces on NGO-sponsored NFE programs in Dadaab in response to these calls for further study.

NGO-sponsored NFE focuses on “knowledge transmission of the acquisition of skills” but rarely analyzes the “educational dimensions,” including “the content of the training or extension program, the outreach and delivery strategies, the training of NFE instructors, or the selection of and incentives for the participants” (Stromquist, 1986, p. 2; see also Hetland, 2006). Thus, I focused on women’s learning vis-à-vis participation in educational programs, both from observing the program and interviewing field workers and learners.

**Learning theory in adult education for empowerment.** Empowerment in learning theory relates to both process and outcome, relying on empowering processes within pedagogy (Meyer, 2006). However, in the literature on adult education for forced migrants and the programs I studied, learning theories were rarely explicit. However, learning theories employed in programming with forced migrants help to frame my understanding of adult education and program goals in this study. I identified and analyzed learning theories that field workers described in interviews (e.g., experiential learning) to understand how field workers intended to empower and women’s experiences in the educational program. Program goals presented in the literature and defined by INEE above reflect critical, experiential, and multicultural learning theories.

Program goals imply diverse and sometimes contradictory learning theories, including instrumentalist and human capital, radical and liberatory, participatory, and feminist approaches to learning. Many adult education programs, particularly those developed by non-state actors, are grounded in social justice, radical social change, and participants’ critical reflections (Lange & Abidi, 2015). In liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Gadotti, 1994), learning is dialogical and
participatory (Burke & Jackson, 2007) and empowerment in education links participants’ activities in the learning environment with their voice in or ownership of pedagogy, content, or programmatic decisions. If learning itself is empowering, then pedagogy could affect how it is experienced. Adult education with forced migrants can include an instrumentalist focus on increasing participation in economies or more radical approaches that encourage action to change unequal relationships (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). However, programs may also be deficit-minded (Woods, 2009), viewing forced migrants as lacking in skills or knowledge. In this research, I explore how adult education in Dadaab balanced deficit and liberatory approaches considering their stated empowerment goals.

Feminist researchers such as Mojab and Carpenter (2011) have critiqued patriarchal biases in adult learning. Instead, the feminist analytical lenses that I employ emphasize pedagogy that enables social change and is sensitive to women’s experiences, especially trauma (Carpenter, 2010; Mojab & McDonald, 2008). This feminist approach to adult education is linked with socio-cultural learning theories that emphasize how “social reality is not a structure or system but is human activity” and that through learning “we produce and reproduce not just our physical existence but our entire ‘mode of life’” (Carpenter, 2010). In utilizing feminist pedagogy, I focus on the participants’ experiences as a site of learning to understand how women identify empowerment as it relates to their identities and power in and outside the learning environment.

**Programming targeting women.** In adult education with the population under study here, I avoid “gender-blind research” that ignores the gendered ways that programs provide education and that diasporas integrate into local social environments (Moser & Peake, 1995). The literature places gendered experiences in the diaspora into familial and personal frames that connect women’s participation in adult education programs with their everyday lives. Gender-
based violence against refugee women is well documented (Mojab & McDonald, 2008). Women have varying access to services as refugees, which can compound experiences of trauma in resettlement and protracted refugee settings (Cuban, 2010). Gender roles change throughout conflict, displacement, and (re)settlement (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou, & Moussa, 2008). Women forced migrants are often responsible for maintaining “cultural practices and…social identity” through childrearing (Snyder, 2011, p. 12), while also engaging in low-wage employment (Pisani, 2012, p. 186). Gender and immigrant experiences are tied to “the negotiation (or renegotiation) of expectations and responsibilities pertaining to family roles” (Dion & Dion, 2001, pp. 511-512). Through combining traditionally male roles as income providers with traditionally female caretaking roles, forced migrant women alter their own identities. Considering gender in adult education for forced migrants exposes similar patterns of multiple, sometimes contradictory, program goals. Although literature has focused on gender in educational programming with forced migrants, little research has considered gendered experiences in adult education in Dadaab and other protracted refugee environments.

**Somali studies**

Migration and displacement shape women’s experiences in the Somali diaspora. Although refugee status has been viewed as disempowering (Morrice, 2013), it can also lead to challenging traditional lifeways that may restrict women’s access to education and information (Krause, 2014). NGOs intend to empower refugees in Dadaab to support integration or repatriation, but may (inadvertently) diminish diaspora members’ agency.

Programming in protracted refugee environments has different goals than reconstruction of national identity in integration or resettlement processes, just as immigrants, forced migrants, and refugees have diverse experiences and motivations to pursue adult education. The Somali
diaspora in Dadaab also have unique experiences within the larger Somali diaspora worldwide, due to the protracted refugee environment and difficulty proceeding through resettlement processes. Literature about Dadaab has focused on how Somali women in the diaspora (re)negotiate gender roles in both settings, since women’s access to education increases their likelihood of finding employment outside the home (Buck & Silver, 2013). Although numerous studies have discussed women’s changing roles and vulnerability in Dadaab and specific program and project outcomes (Crisp, Talbot, & Cipollone, 2001; Markmiller, 2013; Obura, Khatete, & Rimbui, 2002; UNHCR, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF], & World Food Programme [WFP], 2011; Wright, 2010; Wright & Plasterer, 2010), little scholarly work has investigated how women conceptualize empowerment related to adult education programs in the camps. Most adult education programs in the literature are listed as examples of educational provision (Bethke, Braunschweig, Diaz, & Quick, 2004; Wright & Plasterer, 2010), but my research adds to this literature by analyzing how programming shapes participants’ identities or social roles from their own perspectives.

Although the literature on NFE or adult education in the Somali diaspora is sparse, Buck and Silver (2012; 2013) have explored (formal) educational programming for women and girls in Dadaab. They emphasized how women’s and girls’ roles are changing in the refugee camps because of increased educational access as compared to access in Somalia. They attributed this to UNHCR’s and NGOs’ enlightenment project to provide equal access to services to males and females without considering quality of programming. Buck and Silver’s (2012) study is particularly relevant to discussions of changing social expectations of the Somali diaspora in Kenya, where women and girls are increasingly seeking education to create a more productive, healthy, and successful future. This study expands on Buck and Silver’s study about educational
access by focusing on what occurs in the learning environment and how empowerment is described by field workers and women participants.

Existing studies focus on what programs are being offered and who has access to them, emphasizing primary and secondary school programs (e.g., Crisp, Talbot, & Cipollone, 2001; Refugee Consortium Kenya, 2012). Programs that target adults, including women, mostly emphasize increasing employment and skills for income generation. The limited literature on adult education programming with refugees in Kenya reflects a gap about programming for forced migrants in the Global South. This research differs from other studies of Somali women in Dadaab by focusing on women’s empowerment through women’s narratives and programming goals.

**Chapter Summary**

Postcolonial and feminist theories help me explore the empowerment and learning goals of programs in Dadaab. Field workers and women learners interact through complex transnational networks, experiences, and programming goals. Since NGOs face competing pressures from funders, emergency circumstances, program goals, and participants, their pedagogy is frequently reactive (Aksornkool, 1995; Stromquist, 1986). The literature on education in international development and refugee populations informs this research by highlighting the sometimes contradictory goals of economic development and liberatory social change in adult and NFE with refugees. This research focuses on discrepancies in how empowerment is understood, internalized, (re)appropriated, and contested by women learners and field workers in educational programs. I attempt to fill the gap in literature about empowerment educational goals and what those goals mean in the learning environment, as defined by participants and NGO workers.
This study also builds on literature comparing adult education within locations, considering transnational connections. As such, migration and displacement shape further research into how women participants and NGO workers conceptualize empowerment through adult education programming, particularly in the Somali diaspora. Many NGOs and adult education programs may not identify empowerment as a general programming outcome, instead focusing on specific types of empowerment, such as literacy, economic development, or individual well-being.

Women’s empowerment programs may provide an alternative to patriarchal models of power. I investigate how education supports participants’ empowerment to understand their values, relationships with others, and how they view changes within their communities. Frequently, empowerment is equated with human rights (Buck & Silver, 2013, p. 128), community development (Crush, 1995), education, or enlightenment; however, I focus specifically on experiences of power described by women. Women participants and field workers situate relationships within social structures that frame how they experience power and empowerment.

By focusing on relationships, critical types of empowerment, and liberatory pedagogy, I can explore how empowerment is (re)interpreted by participants and field workers in the educational programs and their daily lives. The sites of my research are bound up in transnational and universal enlightenment NGO missions and funding paradigms, but participants’ and field workers’ goals may include spirituality, local political participation, and changes within household dynamics, among others. This literature review focused on forced migration, adult education, NGO programming, and women’s empowerment for forced migrants and refugees in Dadaab. There are gaps in scholarly studies of adult education in forced migrant settings and a
need to re-conceptualize women’s empowerment in protracted refugee camps. Chapter three describes the methods that were used to explore these topics.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Throughout four years of pre-doctoral professional experience in international development educational programs, I noticed trends regarding the use and potential of technology for research. As more people worldwide have gained access to mobile phones, many with cameras and other recording devices, participatory research practices and visual research tools have become more common. As a methodologist, I am interested in using visual tools ethnographically to understand the emic perspective of refugee women’s experiences. Through video ethnographic studies (e.g., Asch & Asch, 1995; Boldt & Valente, 2014; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989), I discovered that visual ethnography can answer questions that are comparative, applied, and inclusive of the voice of research participants. In addition, educational ethnography allowed me to focus on the learning environment as a cultural institution where power and empowerment were discussed, reinforced, and debated. I draw on cultural anthropology and webs of meaning created in educational programs through interpretative analysis of empowerment provided by women participants and field workers. Ethnography explores meanings and relationships from an emic, or insider’s, perspective of NFE.

NGO educational programs are “situated sites of social activity in space” that juxtapose “various discourses…that are present (dominant, residual, possible, and emergent)” related to empowerment in this study (Marcus, 1998, p. 73). I used Bartlett’s (2007) comparative ethnographic approach to compare data from each learning environment as a site and connect moments within everyday life. Although this is not a traditional comparative and international education study, I draw on notions of place, scale (Herod & Wright, 2002), and multi-sited
ethnography (Marcus, 1998) to focus on forced migrant women’s experiences participating in educational programs in Dadaab that aim to empower them.

Visual methods have the potential to depict and explain complex experiences in a way that traditional, text-based research cannot (Pink, 2006; Radnofsky, 1996). Previous research shows how visual tools give voice (or not) to marginalized peoples, often women (e.g., Lenette & Boddy, 2013; Prins, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1997). In educational research, visual ethnography has become a tool for multi-sited, recurrent, and comparative work (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009) and applied to inform policy (Adamson & Morris, 2007; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006; Radnofsky, 1996). In this chapter, I describe my methods in this visual educational ethnography, focusing on sampling, data collection, and multivocal analysis to understand empowerment in NGO-sponsored NFE with refugees in Dadaab. Using these methods, I sought to answer:

- How is empowerment interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women participants in NGO educational programming in Dadaab and in their day-to-day lives?
- How do NGO workers believe they are empowering women in educational programs? How do these beliefs compare to women’s perceptions of empowerment?

**Visual educational ethnography: Theory and comparisons**

Visual ethnographic methods situate empowerment in NFE programs by capturing and recording women participants’ experiences. With forced migrants, “making and sharing photographs can be helpful in generating rapport with respondents” (Gold, 2007, p. 145) who may be marginalized in their social environments. I focused on the educational environment’s structure, field workers’ approach to the content, and participants’ engagement and experiences related to programs to identify empowerment through social actions. Visual educational ethnography is a new method to studying educational environments, defined for the first time in
this study as a combination of visual ethnographic (e.g., Pink, 2007; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989) and educational ethnographic (e.g., Eisenhart, 2001; Wolcott, 2002) methods, using participatory tools to co-create data with research participants.

I built a collaborative visual educational ethnography (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989) to allow for reflexivity within the research through video-cued interviews that used videos of the educational program to cue discussion about empowerment. I also used autophotography, providing participants with cameras to document when and where they felt empowered or powerful related to their experiences in the programs. Videos and photographs produced through visual ethnography in this research were both data themselves and cues for interviews, producing further data with research participants (Pink, 2007). As such, my authority as an ethnographer (Crapanzano, 1986) did not rely on the objectivity of my analysis, but was developed through triangulating data between visual sources from and with research participants, both field workers and refugee women interviewees, who had their own “authorial power” (Tobin & Davidson, 1990, p. 271). Visual ethnography engaged research participants more thoroughly in the research process and product as they ascribed meaning not only to the image but also to how it was produced (Pole & Morrison, 2003).

Traditional ethnography requires extensive time and deep integration in the field site (Bain-King & Moss, 2008; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Marcus, 1998). UNHCR policies in Dadaab during data collection did not allow international researchers to live in refugee communities. Instead, I followed educational ethnographic approaches that focused on the learning environment as the primary site of ethnographic study (Wolcott, 2002). I used a “recurrent time mode” approach (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 542) that included detailed observational notes about educational programs and data collection with women participants and field workers over
three visits in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Visual ethnography allowed alternative voices to arise in research through visual-cued interviewing, autophotography, and multivocal analysis of visual data. Drawing on multivocal analysis in visual ethnography, I endeavored to create a dialogue between women participants and field workers in diverse educational programs regarding different empowerment conceptualizations and goals.

The learning environment was linked to and reflected field workers’ and participants’ experiences and conceptualizations of power and empowerment in their lives and work. This was evident in the educational environment’s structure, the field workers’ approach to the content and their beliefs about the community in which they worked, and participants’ involvement in the programs. As an ethnographic study of NGO educational programming, I included the field workers’ cultures, NGO community norms, and an understanding of how programming was developed, for what purposes, and with what intent. Participants engaged in the learning environment, building collegial relationships and friendships with other participants in the program, and applying learning directly from educational programs to everyday activities.

In education, visual methods are rooted in participatory research methods with theoretical foundations in critical and feminist theory (Castleden & Garvin, 2008). Participatory action research (PAR) tools like PhotoVoice and other reflexive photography projects seek to alter hierarchical power dynamics within the research and learning environment. Although PhotoVoice and other critical pedagogic tools can be used in visual ethnography, this research drew more on ethnographic methods than PAR to understand the learning environment and concepts of empowerment as cultural experiences. PAR requires participant-led research design and control (Bennett, 2004), which this study was not able to accomplish using the recurrent time mode approach to data collection. In addition, studying power and empowerment through PAR
could inadvertently support field workers or more powerful women participants in the study who were more vocal, rather than exploring how power and empowerment were experienced by all research participants. Visual and educational ethnographic approaches allowed me to compare diverse learning environments to develop a more nuanced understanding of empowerment as it was experienced and understood by all research participants. Using autophotographic narratives and short video prompts, I worked with research participants to ensure that they agreed with how the educational programs and participants’ experiences were represented through recurrent interviews and data collection.

This research explored film as a tool to represent educational environments ethnographically, such as MacDougall’s (2005) study of day-to-day interactions in school. Film was also a reflexive tool to gather further data through video-cued interviews. I modeled my visual ethnographic approach on Tobin, Hsueh, and Karaswa’s (2009) work in comparative and international education by looking at each learning environment and program as locations for comparison. Visual ethnography lends itself to comparative and international education research by providing alternative views of educational environments through diverse media (Hayashi & Tobin, 2012; Pink, 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Spindler & Spindler, 1987).

Postcolonial and feminist theories. Postcolonial theory helps to elucidate some of the historical misrepresentations that may arise from visual tools in anthropological research, particularly the exoticization of the other (Gallagher & Kim, 2007; Pink, 2003) and assumed objectivity of film and photographs (Harper, 2003). Postcolonial theory also helps define my position as a “border crosser” (Liebenberg, 2009, p. 441) in the research sites and overcome traditional researcher roles that value the authority of an outsider over the research participants’ experiences. Visual anthropological methods that draw on postcolonial theory critically analyze
power dynamics between the researcher and research participants, exploring how the research is conducted, analyzed, and disseminated (Asad, 1975). Postcolonial theory supports an analysis that recognizes the risk of cultural essentialism both within this research and within the educational programs under study (Tikly, 1999).

Using a feminist theoretical lens to understand women’s empowerment in adult education programs with the Somali diaspora requires a methodological focus that allows women themselves to define “their values, principles, articulations and actions” (Batliwala, 2010, p. 120). Through visual ethnographic methods, I included the voices of women participants and NGO workers in autophotography and video-cued interviewing. Through a feminist ethnographic approach, this research sought “to observe processes in the construction of gender hierarchy and gendered power relations at the level of the micro politics of the educational institution” (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001, p. 194). In doing so, I highlighted how women’s “everyday experience” (Davis, 2013, p. 27) were epistemologically valid in their perceptions of power and empowerment during their involvement in NFE (Checker, David, & Schuller, 2014).

I drew on Pink’s (2006; 2011) and Tobin et al.’s (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009) collaborative approach to visual ethnography for reflexivity within the research. Reflexivity was developed through the inclusion of research participants’ voices in multiple modes and through film, photographs, interviews, and field notes. Pink (2007) highlighted video’s reflexive purpose in ethnographic research to “not simply record data, but as a medium through which ethnographic knowledge is created” (p. 96). Multivocal visual ethnographic methods also allowed for idiosyncrasies within each site to arise by providing a
space for research participants to contribute to analysis and respond to how they were presented in film and photographs.

**Comparative and international education approaches.** Comparative and international education is dominated by studies that compare one nation to another, usually focusing on state-based formal education (Carnoy, 2006, Wiseman & Anderson, 2013), with notable exceptions (e.g., Crossley & Broadfoot, 1992). For forced migrants, the state is not always “the supplier and definer of education” (Carnoy, 2006, p. 555), but instead acts as a host to programs coordinated by international and local organizations. Although a comparison between state-based or nationwide educational programs for forced migrants would support a comparative and international study, it would not allow for the depth of analysis in the learning environment itself afforded by this visual educational ethnographic approach. This research drew on alternative notions of comparative analysis to contribute to answering questions relating to transnational refugee identities that address “relational conceptions of space, through analyses of networks, connections, and flows” (Larsen & Beech, 2014, p. 191) of people and ideas.

Drawing on notions of place, scale (Herod & Wright, 2002), and multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1998), I focused on one refugee settlement to understand women participants’ experiences in empowerment-oriented educational programs. As a refugee settlement, place is transient (Rodman, 1992) in Dadaab and although women’s experiences focus heavily on the space used in the following chapters, place is not fixed at a local, national, or international scale. The refugee camp is bounded and serves as a container for women’s and field workers’ narratives but it is not static. Women participants were part of a global refugee movement, many of whom were born in the camps and idealize or seek resettlement and a continuation of their refugee status in Western countries (Buck & Silver, 2012). However, women’s experiences as
refugees are not solely tied to the space of the refugee camp, rather their transnational movement and identities are part of this multi-sited research (Falzon, 2009). In sum, who and where are connected in this study, but not static. Thus, my analysis of programming in this environment does not follow traditional comparative and international education methods or approaches, but emphasizes transnational networks and spaces in which refugee women and field workers live and work.

Although the focus of this research was a local site, it includes national, regional, global, and transnational connections of women participants and NGO workers. The multi-sited study was defined by social space in and created by this research, where educational programs and interviews created temporal spaces to compare women’s experiences and empowerment narratives. Instead of focusing on disparate, bounded geographic spaces, I compared NGO educational programs. Drawing on Bartlett’s (2007) comparative ethnographic approach to educational projects, I compared each learning environment as a site within the Dadaab refugee camps and connected concepts and experiences of empowerment to global networks in which women participants and NGO workers operate (Marcus, 1998). I added to the available literature, predominantly based in resettlement countries, that uses visual methods with forced migrants (e.g., Lenette & Boddy, 2013; Lenette, 2011; 2013). This study’s use of visual ethnography for comparative study of educational programming in Dadaab explores forced migration, diaspora studies, adult education, and comparative and international education.

**Applying visual educational ethnography in adult education in Dadaab**

One critique of ethnographic methods is the ethnographic present, or how studies show a culture as static, and always in present tense (Fabian, 1983; Tobin, 2014). Educational ethnography is also critiqued for being too unrelated to anthropological questions about culture,
too specific, and too disconnected from everyday experiences (Wolcott, 2002). Considering these critiques, I approached this study through recurrent and iterative data collection, or using a recurrent time mode. This ethnographic mode includes in-depth analysis of specific events, observations, and “comparison with previous research visits” (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 542). I also emphasized the plurality of experiences, drawing on Dreier’s (2008) praxis that emphasizes “tracing persons’ movements across the various contexts of their everyday lives,” which I used to understand how women conceptualized empowerment (Lave, 2012).

In pilot research in 2014, I used video-cued interviewing as a prompt to link field workers’ ideas of how their programs empowered women to what occurs in the learning environment. I attempted to interview women participants but found unclear interpretation jeopardized the data I could collect, discussed further below. I gathered very little data from women participants in 2014 and returned to Dadaab in May to June 2015 with a new tool for data collection for this population: autophotography. In April to June 2016, I returned and completed the recurrent, iterative study. I met with four field workers and one participant whom I had already interviewed, using a short video-cue from data collected in 2015 to discuss multiple views of empowerment in NFE. Data from the three recurrent collection periods supported an iterative, multivocal approach to data collection and analysis by allowing me to revisit research participants over time and explore changing experiences, programs’ foci, and conceptualizations of empowerment.

I worked in Dadaab with two tasks: to conduct pilot dissertation research and to evaluate programs for an NGO (RET International [RET]) working in the five sprawling refugee camps. Granted entrée through RET, I began to conduct independent visual ethnographic research on educational programs for adult participants to explore the meaning of empowerment in NGO-
sponsored adult education. Given my work experience in NGO programming and dual role as an
evaluator, I fell into an insider and outsider position. At times, I was read as an NGO practitioner
like my colleagues. I remained an outsider due to my nationality and physical identity markers
reflecting my Mediterranean ancestry. During the research interviews I fell into a third category,
an “in-betweener” (Valente, 2015, p. 103), as both an outside researcher and an insider as a field
worker. When perceived as a field worker, my research was viewed as an intervention or
evaluation, complicating the research and requiring repetition of the research goals at each stage
of the research.

**Units of Analysis and Units of Observation.** The units of analysis that best allowed me
to explore the subject matter (Baptiste, 2008), women’s empowerment in NFE programs in
Dadaab, were women’s voices and experiences. Women participants were interviewed
individually and in groups about their autophotographic narratives. Each woman’s narrative of
empowerment through autophotography was a unit of analysis. As such, the photographs
produced by women in their autophotographic narratives were also part of the unit of analysis.

The units of observation that assisted in my understanding and analysis of the units of
analysis were the experiences and conceptualizations of field workers. These interviews were
secondary and explanatory, providing background for the women’s narratives described in
interviews. Field notes, organizational artifacts, photographs, and video of educational programs
were units of observation to explore the units of analysis in more depth.

**Research sites.** The research sites included the five refugee camps in Dadaab, only three
of which are studied here, and DMO (see Figure 2), where most field workers who participated
in this study lived and worked. DMO, which was also my home during my three visits, housed
most of the organizations working in Dadaab, with some agencies scaling down operations but
leaving behind semi-permanent structures. DMO has been criticized for being luxurious in comparison with the refugee camps at best, and at worst, for exemplifying corrupt aid policies where spacious, tree-lined paths lead to air conditioned housing for the most privileged field workers on the compound (Rawlence, 2016). The trees and smaller compounds, as well as the thick, seemingly impenetrable wall with an internal dirt road circling the compound’s interior, are visible in Figure 2. Some, like myself, lived in smaller, un-air-conditioned units with private washrooms, and others, predominantly newer staff at smaller organizations and support staff such as cleaners and drivers, lived in tents with shared washrooms. Each NGO’s compound, often shared by multiple agencies but organized by one, had a shared dining facility and kitchen, with some also having pubs, such as Pumzika, on UNHCR’s compound and our local watering hole, Ege. The social environment eased data collection because when necessary I could hang out with and interview field workers in off-hours in shared spaces.

Each camp had unique identities and social organization, but I focused on women’s experiences in Kambioos and Ifo 2 (see Figures 3 and 4, respectively), because most of the women who were targeted in educational programs that I attended were from these camps. In response to the hundreds of thousands of newcomers in 2011, UNHCR, INGOs, and the Kenyan government raised funds to build these two new camps through political negotiations with the government of Kenya, which was opposed to new construction in Dadaab at the time. Some of the women interviewees arrived during the famine migration but most moved to the new camps for more space and a chance to start shops outside of tightly controlled markets in the older camps. Kambioos and Ifo2, as the newest camps, lacked the structures and resources of the older camps developed in the 1990s and reorganized repeatedly over camp-planning efforts throughout the years.
Figure 2. Google terrain map of Dadaab Main Office Retrieved 18 September 2016.
Figure 3. Google terrain map of Kambioos Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016
Kambioos followed a grid structure visible in Figure 3 with central hospitals and schools in compounds surrounded by housing. The UNHCR and NGO compounds in Kambioos, as in all the camps, were guarded and had wire fences with barbed wire on top surrounding their perimeters, including primary schools and hospitals. A new market was under construction during June 2016 during data collection, though not visible in Figure 3. Kambioos was the smallest camp in Dadaab, with a recorded population of 12,721 as of August 31, 2016 (UNHCR, 2016b).

Ifo2 was the largest camp geographically; field workers and refugees often divided it into two quadrants: Ifo2 East and Ifo2 West (also called Ifo3, see Figure 4). Although Figure 4 shows the expanse and size of Ifo 2, it’s geographic size does not match the population as the second smallest camp in Dadaab, with 35,957 inhabitants as of August 31, 2016 (UNHCR, 2016b). The central compounds in Ifo2 included UNHCR- or NGO-run schools, hospitals, and administrative offices.

One woman interviewee lived in Dagahaley refugee camp (see Figure 6). Dagahaley, along with Hagadera and Ifo, was one of the oldest camps in Dadaab, built in the 1990s prior to the 2011 influx of refugees (see Figure 5). In comparison to the newer camps, all three of the older camps, including Dagahaley (see Figure 5), were more maze-like, with less of a structured grid and services dotted within the residential areas rather than separated in central locations. The remaining two refugee camps not represented in women’s narratives included Hagadera (see Figure 6), the oldest camp in Dadaab, and Ifo, one of the original three camps. Hagadera was home to the largest market, often rivaling the market in Dadaab town itself. Although Ifo (see Figure 7) and Ifo2 were geographically larger than Hagadera, it had the largest population,
82,922 as of August 31, 2016 (UNHCR, 2016b). Dagahaley and Ifo had 67,634 and 63,802 inhabitants, respectively.

Figure 4. Google terrain map of Ifo2 Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016
Figure 5. Google terrain map of Dagahaley Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016.
Figure 6. Google terrain map of Hagadera Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016
Figure 7. Google terrain map of Ifo Refugee Camp Retrieved 18 September 2016
The research sites included the refugee camps, the policy and programming environment in which field workers provided educational programs and women participated in them, and the local experiences of women’s lives, between their homes and community shared spaces.

**Sample.** The visual ethnographic methodology began with snowball sampling of NGO workers to identify empowerment-oriented programming. I asked field workers to identify programs they knew of that had explicitly stated women’s empowerment goals, either in organizational proposals, content, or materials. I conducted these preliminary, unstructured interviews with education-focused field workers, recorded in field notes. During snowball sampling, field workers and I discussed how women’s participation was lower than men’s in all NGO-sponsored education activities in Dadaab. In collaboration with research participants, we agreed to focus on educational programs with at least 50% female participants since these programs were most likely to consider gender and support a gendered analysis of empowerment in the learning environment. Following initial snowball sampling, I selected programs based on field workers’ and participants’ interest and willingness to participate in the study. Within each educational program, five women participants were selected at random from the participant list and requested to participate in the autophotographic narrative component of the data collection so as not to purposely exclude any participants’ voices from the study. Sampling included self-selection by NGO workers and a random selection of women participants who agreed to participate.

The study included identification and observation of nine learning environments, group interviews with eleven field workers, individual interviews with seven field workers, and group interviews with 31 women participants, 25 of whom used autophotography. I also built on data gathered in the three iterations of the research and met with one refugee woman and four field
workers for a multi-vocal interview in 2016, after they participated in data collection in 2014 or 2015 to discuss videos of the learning environment and photographs. My sampling techniques did not seek representativeness but rather diversity and multiplicity of views and in-depth narratives from women participants and field workers.

**Data Collection.** I used video to document the educational programs and as an interview prompt in group discussions with facilitators (see Table 1). I began with anthropological “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 7) of adult education environments, or a “complete literal description of the incident or entity being investigated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). The descriptions I developed in field notes were expanded through interviews with field workers and participants so that they presented different voices than my own, and deeper descriptions than what I could gather in field notes during observations of educational programs. Given the frequency of empowerment-oriented programming, field workers and women participants alike could provide their own definitions without my explanation of the terms.

After I received permission from the field workers, I asked participants in the learning environment for permission to film and conduct the research. I described the data collection briefly at this time, including the use of the video and autophotography, in 2015 and 2016 iterations of the study. After I had written permission from field workers and verbal permission from participants, I filmed the program. During the program, I took notes using an observational guide and occasionally participated when asked (see Appendix A and B). In 2015 and 2016, I met with five women selected to participate in the autophotography interviews, distributed cameras individually, and instructed them on how to use the cameras, with the assistance of an interpreter as needed. I arranged a time to meet with the women one week following the end of the program to conduct autophotographic interviews (see Appendix C and D). Women were
given a small financial incentive in 2015 and 2016 to attend this interview, the equivalent of $5USD to cover transportation costs to and from the interview location. All the women arranged their own transportation to the UNHCR compound where I was based and were interviewed individually but in the presence of the other women participants, with an interpreter as needed. They were then provided $2USD for tea and snacks and a Penn State t-shirt for their participation. Unfortunately, due to security protocol, I could not visit each camp for extended periods to meet or interview women in their homes or communities.

After the programs in 2014-2016, I edited the video footage to 15 to 20 minutes to capture regular activities and routines in the learning environment. I showed the edited video to field workers, using it as a prompt to discuss how they attempted to empower women during the program and within the program goals (see Appendix E and F). Finally, in 2016, I met with four field workers and one participant individually to revisit a previous video of programming taken in 2015 and the associated autophotography and talked about how empowerment might or might not have been presented, understood, and conceptualized in the visual data (see Figure 8 and Appendix G).

Figure 8. Sequence of data collection activities
Data Sources. Data sources included field notes, film, video-cued interviews, autophotography interviews, and multivocal interviews (See Table 1). To better understand the programs, I also collected artifacts from educational programs, including proposal drafts when available, hand-outs, PowerPoint slides, instructional materials, and participant-developed posters and written materials.

Field Notes. My field notes began en route to Dadaab, including my enculturation into the NGO environment as a visiting evaluator and day-to-day experiences as a field worker. During the educational program, I took field notes using an observational guide to explore “different takes on a common object of study” (Prosser, 1998, p. 129) within the educational program such as introductions, agenda setting, establishing rules, small group work, participant-led presentations, and other elements that occurred across learning environments. I focused on these pedagogical components of the program because they were described as participatory and potentially empowering throughout the recurrent data collection and the literature. Field notes in video-cued interviews and autophotography interviews included detailed descriptions of field workers’ and participants’ experiences in using and interacting with visual tools (Lomax & Casey, 1998). They also included my reflections and experiences during programming and interviews, identified through bracketing (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Framed in feminist methodology, I considered recognition of “the humanity of both researcher and participant” to “bring richness and honesty to…research” in my field notes (Deutsch, 2004, p. 889). I drafted field notes first as jottings in situ and then created more detailed notes including bracketed personal responses to events after the educational program and interviews (Gibbs, 2007). To understand empowerment and power, I also took field notes during interviews with field workers and participants.
Filming. While writing field notes using observational guides (see Appendix A and B) during the educational programs, I filmed the programs. After confirming that field workers and participants agreed to participate in the study, I identified two or three locations to position the camera where I could have the widest view and zoomed in on action. I took detailed notes while filming and participated in the learning environment when called on by field workers to contribute.

Video-cued interviewing. I interpreted footage through my research perspective (Pink, 2007), identifying common events in the learning environment using an observation guide and cutting the film to a 20-minute selection for video-cued interviews. I showed the shortened film to field workers as a prompt to discuss their women’s empowerment goals and how these goals were visible (or not) in the film. Videos were made with the field workers in mind to identify aspects that could have resonated with them. However, videos did not necessarily capture what field workers believed was empowering about their educational programs because they had, at times, different ideas of empowerment than I had identified. I used in-depth and open-ended ethnographic interviewing (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte’s, 1999) in interview protocols to gather personal responses and views of empowerment. The video-cued interview allowed for a multivocal analysis as field workers contributed their thoughts about what was and was not empowering about the program regardless of what was captured in the film. The video-cued interview enabled field workers to talk about their potentially contradictory perspectives, goals, and beliefs about empowerment. Although it was not evaluative, the video-cued interview allowed field workers to consider and reflect on their practice differently than a traditional interview without video.
**Autophotography.** After conducting participant observation and filming the educational program, I distributed cameras to five women participants in each program, asking them to take photographs of moments and places in their lives during and directly after the program when they felt powerful or empowered. Specifically, I asked the autophotography participants to agree to the following, interpreted in Somali:

As new photographers, I ask that you take pictures of moments in your life when you feel empowered or powerful. Avoid taking photographs of the faces of individuals. Focus on things, places, or interactions that represent your life and that you would feel comfortable sharing with a public audience. You may pose in the photographs or ask someone else to take a photo of you.

I will print three of the photographs and share them with you during our interview. During the interview, I will ask you to describe how the photographs show power and empowerment to you. If you do not want to share publicly specific photographs or any of the photographs that you take, please inform me during the interview or any time after you have shared them with me…

I also asked participants to consider what they might do if people did not want to have their photographs taken, or how they would explain the project to others at home. Women participants could contact me by phone or refer others to me to understand more about the project.

This was both an autophotographic project where participants created their own photographic narrative (E. Taylor, 2002) and a visual prompt to discuss empowerment in interviews. Photographs were used to create a narrative, or “records of and records about” how women understood power and empowerment in their lives related to their experience in the adult education program (Prosser, 1998, p. 112). The goal of autophotography was to let women
define empowerment in their lives. I asked questions about each photograph, what it depicted and how, if at all, it related to the woman’s feelings or experiences of power or empowerment. I also asked about how these images did, or did not, show changes in the woman’s life and how those related to her interpretation of empowerment. Participants and I met after the program sessions and they explained each photograph they took and why, with an interpreter’s assistance as needed.

Multivocal analysis. Research participants’ multivocal analysis explored definitions and examples of power and empowerment through interviews using program videos and autophotography. In 2016, I created a short film as a multivocal cue; it was based on video and photographs collected in 2014 and 2015. I met with researcher participants who participated in earlier iterations of the study to discuss programs with which they were unfamiliar and identified what may or may not be empowering from a non-participant’s perspective. I also linked interview transcript files and field notes with photograph files provided by participants to identify the narratives that each learner shared in interviews with the photographs they discussed. Drawing on Tobin’s (1992) multivocal visual ethnography, the “third voice” allowed NGO workers and participants to consider how adult education programs intended to empower in very different environments (Tobin, 1992, p. 47). During this final video presentation, the photographs and videos were viewed by field workers and participants who were not involved in the program, and thus “interpreted in different ways,” creating a multivocal understanding of empowerment in adult education (Pink, 2007, p. 119). Interpretation by research participants added another layer of data to analyze empowerment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Data Collection Schedule Tool</th>
<th>Research participants</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>• June to August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• May to June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April to June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational program artifacts</td>
<td>Myself and field workers</td>
<td>• June to August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• May to June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April to June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Field workers and women participants, all participants in educational program</td>
<td>2014:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2015:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2016:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-cued interviews</td>
<td>All field workers from each program</td>
<td>Two to three days after each program ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Field workers from the following programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher training (n = 3 field workers)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training for parents of children with disabilities (n = 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Livelihood training (n = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexual and gender-based violence program (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Apprenticeship training (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tailoring training (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Soap making (n = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Entrepreneurship program (n = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autophotography</td>
<td>Five women participants from each program</td>
<td>One week after each program ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multivocal analysis</td>
<td>Field workers and learners who participated in 2014-2015 data collection</td>
<td>• sexual- and gender-based violence program, apprenticeship, tailoring, soap making, entrepreneurship (n = 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Field workers (n = 4) and woman participant (n = 1) participated in multivocal interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of multivocal elements focused on explanations and further insights shared over recurrent visits with four field workers and one refugee woman, Nadifo, who served both as my interpreter in 2016 and a border crosser between field workers’ and refugees’ experiences. The video in the multivocal interviews served as a cue to discuss programming empowerment goals more broadly than in one instance and provided further insights into goals and field workers’ intentions. I was also able to contribute my voice in the multi-vocal interviews with research participants with whom I worked most closely. I described how and why I assembled the footage from the 2014 and 2015 educational programs, which allowed me to connect my own understanding of empowerment with research participants’ personal experiences.

**Data storage and analysis.** All data were stored in password-protected folders on a personal hard drive organized by year, program topic, and data type (field notes, training organizational documentation when applicable, interview notes, transcripts, photographs organized by photographer, video recordings of training including multivocal videos, and audio recordings of interviews). I coded field notes and transcripts to identify key terms, such as power, empowerment, and specific terms relevant to each program. In the project timeline, open coding initially occurred following data collection in 2014 when I explored programming in Dadaab and got a wide view of what programs meant to empower women and how field workers defined empowerment. This period involved listening intently to field workers’ critiques and

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4 Nadifo was an invaluable resource and her engagement during the interviews surely changed how women responded compared to earlier interviews that involved male interpreters who were also NGO incentive staff and who simply happened to be working during the days of the interviews. Male interpretation may have constricted women’s openness and limited back and forth conversation that occurred when Nadifo interpreted.
views and reviewing data to understand and clearly define the research questions. This was a formative period.

I continued to do open coding throughout the three data collection periods as I developed observational check lists for the educational programs in 2015 and 2016. Observational checklists in the educational programs (see Appendix A and B) were useful to create codes, which I subsequently used to create the video cues for interviews with field workers and to identify common elements in programming. I also classified observations that I gathered through “hanging out” as they related to concepts identified from the literature and from terms used by research participants during recurrent data collection. Field notes documented all aspects of my experience as a visiting researcher and evaluator, including casual conversations over meals, meetings related to project evaluation tangential to this study, and interactions directly related to my research questions.

I began axial coding to construct women’s narratives with women through autophotography in 2015 and 2016. I began to identify the story that linked field workers’ and women’s daily lives with empowerment-oriented programs, women’s understandings of empowerment, field workers’ expectations and views, and how these understandings related or diverged. Finally, selective coding of specific keywords from the data helped me develop a story, or “descriptive narrative” (Gobo, 2008, p. 235) about women’s empowerment through NFE programming in Dadaab. Through autophotographic interviews, I developed narratives about women’s experiences in collaboration with them, rather than solely through the photographs they provided.

Selective coding is where I fine-tuned the themes for analysis, drawing on what arose in the data during the recurrent data collection process. I coded photographs first by categories
identified during interviews and related to how women defined and exemplified empowerment and learning from the educational program (see Appendix H).

I analyzed the data with research participants first by coding the terms they used in interviews, including power and empowerment, and derivations thereof, and then by asking participants and field workers involved in the study to review the video and autophotography from a program with which they were unfamiliar. All transcripts, field notes, and photographs were coded with my research questions in mind to explore nuances in narratives and experiences of empowerment related to adult education programming.

**Limitations**

There are limitations to visual methods in adult education. Prins (2010) describes how a participatory photography project in El Salvador raised suspicion and increased some participants’ self-censorship, while also “enabling them to exercise some degree of power by choosing how to represent themselves, their lives, and their communities” (p. 14). Prins’ (2010) work established a basis for further research in using photographs taken by and with participants to understand their experiences in their communities, and how cameras may raise tension with other community members. To address this limitation, during interviews I asked about the photographic experience and how the images and act of photographing were related to power and empowerment in their lives. Another limitation was that visual tools could be internalized as part of the learning outcomes from the educational program, such as how to use the camera or confidence built through photographing one’s community. Thus, I attempted to differentiate the data collection tools (photography) from the education program’s empowerment goals by transparently and thoroughly describing each stage of data collection. Even so, women often
described how using the camera to document their lives made them feel empowered, an unexpected finding linked with methods.

Although I used multivocal approaches to confirm field workers and women’s views of the educational programs in an attempt to share authorial power, the final product was solely written by one researcher through one perspective. Shared authorial power was both an “illusion and reality” as I attempted to co-analyze educational programs through film and women’s experiences through autophotography (Tobin & Davidson, 1990, p. 279). Tobin and Davidson (1990) highlighted how putting participants’ words into text can change their meaning and apply an outside interpretation, either from the readers or from myself as the researcher. Textualizing field workers and women’s experiences resulted in one perspective being presented here; my own. I identified programs to attend, with the support of field workers but not women participants themselves. I also decided where to put the camera and which sections of the film to use in the video-cue. Field workers contributed to the analysis of what occurred in the educational programs after the programs occurred and were presented through my interpretation. However, I did not direct women’s autophotography, allowing women to develop their own narratives that they shared with me. Despite this attempt at authorial power, I was the final arbiter of which photographs and aspects of women’s lives were presented here, particularly connecting women’s narratives to my research questions.

**Ethical considerations in data collection and analysis.** The first step to an ethical practice in this research was to “develop an understanding of the ethical context(s)…, a reflexive approach” to my “own ethical beliefs, and a critical approach to the idea that one ethical code of conduct could be hierarchically superior to all others” (Pink, 2007, p. 49, emphasis in original). I also focused on intended and unintended consequences of data collection (Wang & Redwood-
Jones, 2001), especially related to women’s participation in autophotography. Part of my reflexivity was centered on conceptualizations of empowerment and learning that I introduced to the research and gained from research participants.

Research ethics in visual ethnography with Somali women in the diaspora must consider traumatic experiences related to marginalization or displacement (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Work with refugee and marginalized diasporas follows a “do no harm” model to minimize negative repercussions of research on research participants (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Although care ethics (Noddings, 2012) would support developing close relationships with women in this study, it was not possible to create such relationships in an NGO educational program that can be as short as one or two days. I drew on care ethics not in terms of specific relationships between research participants and myself, but through ethical decision making based on “care, compassion and a desire to act in ways that benefit the individual or group who are the focus of research” (Wiles, Prosser, Bagnoli, Clark, Davies, Holland, & Renold, 2008, p. 6). I asked research participants if they would prefer a pseudonym to protect their identity, some of whom agreed to use their first names without a pseudonym. I also described each step of the research for their approval and continuation. Although this approach reflects traditional Western ethical oversight, I drew on postcolonial theory by ensuring that the methods used were demystified in “the research process and ruptur[ed] the researcher gaze” (Wiles et al., 2008, p. 24) by explaining each step of the research clearly and ensuring that research participants understood who I was, what I was researching, why, and how their participation fit into the research goals.

In Dadaab, the most common language was Somali and Swahili. Interpretation was a large obstacle to accurately understanding the information provided by participants and field
workers. In 2014, during a group interview with the participants, my field notes were littered with concerns about whether the participants understood my questions: Was the interpreter describing this correctly? Why was the interpreter summarizing the participants’ points rather than interpreting their words? These doubts plagued the data analysis of the group interview with the participants; as such I discarded data from participants’ interviews in 2014. To alleviate these concerns, I collected data in 2015 with stricter interpretation guidelines and more emphasis on gathering women’s voices through autophotography. Through recurrent, iterative studies, I identified interpreters in Dadaab who were interested and invested in this research and served a valuable role as researchers. I considered how interpreters could bias responses based on their preexisting relationships and experiences in the community (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003) and finally worked with Nadifo, a young, female interpreter who was close to an equal with women interviewees in terms of gender, age, and experiences.

**Representation.** Representation was possibly the greatest ethical dilemma in this visual ethnography. In ethnography, typicality and representativeness are often not the research goals; instead researchers focus on local and individual cases (Tobin, 1992). As a comparative study between programs, I did not attempt to identify a universal experience of women’s empowerment. My analysis does not represent all NGO educational programming nor all NGO workers’ nor Somali women’s views of empowerment in the diaspora, but focuses on the meanings of empowerment as described through the data. Photographs and videos “conceptualize each other, forming not a complete record of the research but a set of different representations and strands of it” (Pink, 2007, p. 120). Visuals were ascribed meaning and representation through interviews that I analyzed to understand how empowerment was internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested.
To study women’s empowerment, I sought the voices of women who were participating in projects that aimed to empower them. In preliminary research in 2014, all field workers who participated in group interviews and led the educational programs were male and the participants were predominantly female. In 2015 and 2016, only two women field workers each year participated in the study. I corrected the sampling weakness by introducing autophotography in the 2015 data collection with women participants.

The use of video also raises additional questions about typicality and how my interpretations could affect field workers’ and participants’ perceptions of the educational programs. Does the video show a typical adult education program? How could my edits as a researcher and videographer change the field workers’ and participants’ perceptions of the educational program, particularly between programs? The multivocal method developed by Tobin and Davidson (1990) addressed these concerns by allowing field workers to critique how the educational program was depicted in the video. Through video-cued and autophotographic interviews, I explored the intersubjective experience of research participants in data collection. Multivocal data collection grounded in visual educational ethnography offered a unique approach to understand forced migrant women’s perspectives on empowerment in learning environments.

Although autophotography was used to address some of the ethical dilemmas about representing women’s experiences, it also presented its own risks. Through preliminary data collection in 2015, I reminded participants and field workers of the purposes of the research and worked with women autophotographers to understand who had consented to have their pictures taken. With the support of an interpreter, the participants in both groups agreed not to take photographs where a viewer could clearly see someone’s face, to inform the subjects that they
were being photographed, and to consider which photographs might be shared publicly. Participants in some groups were careful to avoid faces. Others saw no problem taking photographs of peoples’ faces, with a few women briefly becoming the community photographer where people approached them to have their photographs taken. What would the subjects of these women’s photographs think if I shared their photographs with others not involved in the research? I risk censoring the women who may define power and empowerment in close relationships or showing only parts of their lives and their community. To mitigate this risk, I first ensured that I had permission from the women photographers to share their photographs in the dissertation and removed all photographs that they did not want to be used in this analysis. I then included photographs here that have lower resolution or in which only family members of the women photographers, as identified in their interview, were visible. It was essential in my study to represent women’s narratives truthfully and some photographs where faces are visible were used, despite my hesitations, to fully depict women’s understandings of empowerment in their daily lives.

Beyond discomfort, women in the Somali diaspora may lack the social capital to be able to refuse to participate in this research (Prosser, 1998). One way to mitigate this risk was providing cameras to the women participants. Within the learning environment, participants and even field workers may have believed that they could not refuse to participate. Thus, before filming I sought permission both from field workers and participants. Although no participants or field workers refused to appear in the film, I developed two approaches for each group if they declined participation in filming. If field workers did not wish to be filmed, I would identify a different educational program. If any participants preferred not to be filmed, I would ensure that they were not in the film, using careful camera angles and shots from the back of the room that
avoided faces. I documented the data protection methods and distributed information to all research participants in writing and orally, reminding them that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time and if so, the data they provided would not be used.

Finally, I considered my own position using autophotography with women in the Somali diaspora. In Dadaab, security threats to foreigners limited my movement. The security situation did not allow me, an international researcher, into the communities in which participants lived. However, visual ethnography with participants using the tools described here provided perspectives that I would normally not be able to access due to these security constraints. Photographs are one way I can understand the reality of the women’s lives and how they define empowerment. However, photographs simply show the visible, not necessarily the reality of life that can include aspects and situations much more complicated than a static image can convey (Emmel & Clark, 2011; Pink, 2007). To understand women’s narratives through photography, their experiences of empowerment, and how they applied NGO-sponsored adult education to their lives, this research triangulated data from photographs, interviews and from the learning environment to be mindful of false representation, simplification, or generalization.

**Conclusion**

This research drew on multimodal and multivocal approaches to visual ethnography. I used multiple modes: autophotography, or photography taken by research participants, film of the educational program, field notes, interviews, and video-cued interviews (Pink, 2011). I also used multivocal approaches to involve field workers and participants directly in data analysis of conceptions of empowerment and power in NFE.

Some literature showed that visual methods can be empowering in themselves (Pink, 2003; Wiles et al., 2008). As a study of empowerment from NGO-sponsored adult education, I
clarified in interview questions and my analysis how empowerment might be related to the research methods versus the educational experience. This was linked with concepts of power in the community from field workers’ and participants’ perspectives. These methods created alternative data than if I had only interviewed participants and field workers about what occurred during an adult education event.

Cameras could be viewed suspiciously with concern of who will view the final product. In using visual tools, research participants in this study were aware of who would see visual products, when they may see them, and how much identifying information would be associated with them. This clarity of goals and data sharing and analysis helped build trust in the study methods.

Representation concerns are inherent in all research and this study need not attempt to represent all NGO-sponsored NFE programs, all women participants, nor all the Somali diaspora’s views of empowerment. Instead, visual ethnography using the tools described above elicited participants’ views and experiences in learning environments to compare adult education programming in Dadaab. The study linked NGO workers’ and women participants’ expressions and understandings of power to integration and repatriation experiences, challenges, and programming successes. Through visual ethnography, this research explores how the methods here can illuminate empowerment and its interpretation in NGO-sponsored educational programs with Somali women in Dadaab. The dissemination of video and accompanying photographs and the final product including the multivocal analysis of those visual materials assists greatly in creating a collaborative research environment and off-setting traditional power dynamics between researcher and subjects. The use of visual methods from this research can assist future
researchers interested in using visual ethnography, particularly in NFE and other learning environments.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the research design, including the three iterations of recurrent field work in 2014, 2015, and 2016. The following chapters draw on data from video-cued interviews; autophotography and interviews with women participants; and participant observation of the educational program, including the film, artifacts and documents from the educational programs and fieldworkers, and day-to-day observations gathered in Dadaab during data collection. This chapter focused on visual educational ethnographic methods, which were ideally suited to understand how women’s empowerment was presented, interpreted, conceptualized, and contested among women participants and NGO workers. I described data sources and a preliminary plan for data analysis, emphasizing the inclusion of research participants’ voices.
Chapter 4
Life in Dadaab to scale

To understand empowerment in women’s lives in Dadaab through NGO educational programs, I first present women’s and field workers’ experiences in and around the camps. Individual daily experiences, including my reflexive experience as a researcher-practitioner, connect with transnational identities and international networks influencing NGO programming. Considering geographic scales, regional histories, and transnational networks reflected in current programming, I explore how relevant policies implemented by UNHCR, NGOs, and the Kenyan and Somali governments structure women’s and field workers’ daily lives. The programming environment in the camps and types of programming offered reflect international and national discourses of empowerment translated into local refugee systems. This chapter outlines general themes in daily life, further elaborated in chapters five and six. I begin with Hodan’s and my own experiences in Dadaab.

Hodan’s Vignette

For Hodan, a 19-year-old tie and dye participant involved in the entrepreneurship training, one day began with her walk to school. Hodan is a typical student in her primary school, where most of her classmates are in their early twenties, with some students in their thirties. Rarely do children in Dadaab have the opportunity to attend school from primary to secondary without any breaks or interruptions (I never heard of such a case during data collection), due to family pressures, school availability, the number of students interested in secondary school, and test score requirements that often keep students, especially girls, from accessing secondary school. Hodan was in standard 8, the last year of primary school before she would sit for the
Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam to attempt to score high enough to be accepted to secondary school.

She photographed and talked about the distance between her home and the school, located in what she called Ifo3, or what field workers call Ifo2 West. Hodan’s walk was about 45 minutes from home to school as the sun rose one morning (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Hodan’s walk to school (entrepreneurship program, 2016)

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5 Ifo2, one of the newest camps, was built under strict regulations agreed upon by UNHCR and the government of Kenya in 2011. At that time, only two camps could be built under these negotiations, Kambioos and Ifo 2. However, the population that needed to relocate out of the three original camps exceeded the capacity of these two camps. To abide by national regulations, Ifo2 was branded and presented as one camp, but geographically it is the size of two camps. NGO operations sometimes target Ifo2 in its entirety and sometimes locate their programming in the east or west quadrants due to the long distance between the two sections. Thus, Ifo2 was locally recognized as two camps, either Ifo2 East and West or Ifo2 and Ifo3.
She took photographs of grazing goats (see Figure 10) and groups of boys playing or heading to school and *duuksi*, an equivalent of Islamic primary school (see Figure 11).

*Figure 10. Grazing goats on the walk (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

She also took photographs of passing ambulances (see Figure 12) and police cars (see Figure 13) on a long barren road between Ifo2 and Ifo3.

*Figure 11. Boys posing for a photograph on Hodan’s walk to school (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*
Photographing police cars was punishable by beating and having your camera taken, which led Nadifo, the interpreter, to call her fearless.

At school, built and run by an NGO, Hodan arrived early, and the compound was almost empty except for her and her friends who had travelled together from the neighborhood block (see Figure 14).
She took photographs of herself, classmates, and teachers and emphasized the “revisions,” or studying, she was doing outside of class time. Hodan’s teacher took the photograph below of his students studying, or revising (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Hodan (bottom left) with four of her classmates studying before school (entrepreneurship program, 2016).
After school, Hodan took photographs of a visit to the tap stand to fetch water (see Figure 16).

![Image](image-url)

*Figure 16. Collecting water at the tap stand (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

Fetching water is a major time commitment for nearly everyone in Dadaab, regardless of age or gender, but still a duty dominated by women and girls. While Hodan was in class, her mother dropped the jerry cans (water containers distributed by various NGOs since the construction of the Dadaab camps) off in the long line of others for her daughter to pick up after school. A matronly woman usually guarded and organized the filling of jerry cans for a small fee from neighbors using the tap. At tap stands, many children from more impoverished families waited long hours to fill their jerry cans when their families could not afford to pay the woman who regulated and guarded the taps.

By the time Hodan got home from school it was the heat of the afternoon and she showed pictures of her family relaxing and joking in the shade in their compound, especially enjoying the camera that she had been given (see Figure 17).
She also showed pictures of their products, beautiful brightly colored tie and dye clothe drying on the line (see Figure 18).

She included many pictures of her own cooking, njera and spaghetti to feed her younger siblings and mother (see Figure 19 and 20).
Her father was in Somalia, (re)establishing a homestead, or so her family hoped.

Communication was infrequent between family in Somalia and Kenya due to international call
charges, and Hodan, being the eldest daughter, was not in direct communication with her father, compared to older male relatives and her mother.

Hodan’s day was unique to her experience, particularly her involvement in formal education and her mothers’ participation in tie and dye. Because they both were producing materials for sale, they sold in different markets. Hodan’s goods were sold out of their home compound, whereas her mother’s goods were sold in a more trafficked shop run by a neighbor in the market. Their sales and socioeconomic position allowed them to buy a solar panel in their compound, providing both electricity at home and another source of income, since neighbors would come to charge their phones and, sometimes, laptops. This vignette of Hodan’s day shows the many interstices in life and interactions with different scales (see Figure 21).

![Figure 21. Concept map from Hodan’s narrative.](image)

In the following chapters, I will discuss in more depth how Hodan’s narrative of daily life connects to her ideas about empowerment through her participation in an entrepreneurship training. There are clear themes related to international and national policy and programming as well as her daily experiences and familial obligations and roles.
**My daily experiences**

As a field worker myself, I was a participant observer of field workers’ lives. My daily routine as an evaluation specialist involved breakfast at 7am, arriving in the office by 8am at the latest (when the power returned), and desk work or meetings until 1pm. After 1pm the power was cut for rationing and lunch was served. We then returned to our desks for grueling hot afternoons with unreliable air conditioning and electricity. We spent much of our time discussing where we could get Internet access to send various emails and files to each other and to staff in Nairobi and international headquarters when the Internet was unavailable.

I went to “the field,” or the refugee camps, to conduct programming or other activities less frequently than most field workers. On days when I went to the field, we woke up slightly earlier, and after breakfast went straight to the car park where we would pile into dust-stained sport utility vehicles (SUVs) marked with NGO logos and drive to the central meeting point in the Dadaab Main Office (DMO) compound that housed many of the NGOs working in Dadaab. We would wait until all vehicles had arrived and drive to our various locations in convoys with a police escort at the head and tail. If a vehicle was late for the convoy, they either risked the trip without security or returned to the main office. The roads between the camps were relatively even, though floods and wind made them movable and sometimes unreliable.

Upon arriving in the refugee camps, all field workers travelled directly to their compounds, peeling away from the convoy and into fenced compounds with security guards. This was where most NGO-led programming took place. “The blocks,” or the communities where the refugees lived, were not safe even for Kenyan national field workers due to the risk of kidnapping and thus few provided direct programming there. Also, the NGO compounds often had the best meeting spaces for trainings studied here. Smaller programs such as the beadwork
training I was referred to in 2014 (see Table 2), were conducted directly in the neighborhood blocks. Field workers generally stayed in “the field” until the afternoon, eating lunch at the compound in which programming was occurring that day. For security reasons, I was not able to stay for a full day even at programs conducted at NGO compounds close to the camps. Thus, like other monitoring and evaluation staff, I collected most of the data in the mornings, arriving back to DMO by lunch time with police escort.

I attempted to participate fully in field workers’ activities, including many memorable lunch-time conversations where I would request that colleagues speak in English so I could understand the conversation and learn more about their experiences. These conversations were some of the most valuable ethnographic “hanging out” because we all bantered about recent political news in Kenya, and sometimes in the United States, and I was able to ask questions and understand in more depth other field workers’ work, views on controversial topics, experiences in Dadaab, and personal goals. These connections and my identity as both insider and outsider affected my relationships with participants by building close ties with field workers, sometimes seemingly at the expense of building ties with refugee women who participated in the study. The only refugee woman with whom I could “hang out” was Nadifo, who interpreted interviews in 2016, participated in a multi-vocal interview, and was also an NGO “incentive worker,” or refugee paid less than national and international staff but employed by an NGO, described further below. Otherwise, I was read as another NGO worker by refugee women with whom I met, and was often asked at the end of interviews if I knew of scholarships in the United States or other programs for resettlement, as if I had some expertise or connections that could assist women participants beyond their participation in this research.
My daily experience in Dadaab as a field worker, like Hodan’s vignette above, was unique to me. My role as an outsider, physically demarcated as other by my ethnicity, made my experiences in “the field” and role in the organization as a visiting evaluator, other. In making the unfamiliar familiar, however, my role as field worker was like the experiences presented in chapter five by other outsiders to eastern Kenya, Somali customs, and refugee life. For instance, my movement was limited, but so was the movement of other field workers, who rarely traveled without police escorts and never travelled in personal vehicles of their own or of Somali Kenyan colleagues. The position’s remoteness heightened its status as a hardship post, far removed from most field workers’ family members. Remote and often cut off from social contact with family and friends in Nairobi and western Kenya, field workers’ motivations to work in Dadaab were particularly interesting to me and helped me understand their expectations about women’s empowerment, described in chapter five.

**Local to global history and policy**

The relationship between local, national, and international residents of Dadaab reflects complex transnational histories, networks, and identities. As I began to understand the transnational identities of refugees in eastern Kenya and my Kenyan colleagues, I explored the region’s history, both as described to me in data collection and in the scholarly literature. The precolonial history of eastern Kenya was documented through trade routes that continue today, unabated by drought, conflict, forced migration, or border closure. The British colonial regime in Kenya viewed the eastern provinces, home to predominantly Somali pastoralists, as a useful buffer between their sphere of influence in Kenya, independent Ethiopia, and Italian-colonized Somalia (Cassanelli, 2010). Yet, the British colonial government viewed pastoralists in the region with distrust due to their mobility and the associated difficulty of surveilling them. The
colonial government mainly interacted with mobile populations in the east with force, “to halt raids by unruly pastoralists into the settled districts, or to prevent them from displacing more tranquil livestock-keepers like the Oromo” (Cassanelli, 2010, p. 135). The colonial administration’s preference for some ethnic groups, predominantly in western Kenya, over others, predominantly in eastern Kenya, continues to influence national politics.

Since the British colonial era ended, there has been conflict between ethnically Somali eastern Kenyans and the Kenyan government. Beginning with the Shifta War in the 1960s, secessionists in the new Kenyan state’s eastern provinces fought for autonomy from arbitrary colonial borders. Secessionist efforts failed but reinforced the view of the borderlands as wild and uncivilized. The borderlands between Kenya and Somalia have been contested, neglected, fought over, and left to fend for themselves throughout the British and post-colonial Kenyan governance. The current Kenyan government’s policies toward historically nomadic Somali Kenyans and Somali refugees in Dadaab have roots in this colonial and post-colonial mistrust and conflict in the region.

These tensions appeared in data collection. For instance, one of my western Kenyan colleagues in Dadaab called the area west of Garissa, “real Kenya” as opposed to the arid, sparsely populated eastern provinces inhabited by ethnically Somali Kenyans (field notes, 2014). The political milieu in Kenya today is complex, with political parties elected along tribal lines despite attempts at multi-ethnic parties (Cheeseman, 2015). Several field workers argued that refugees must return to Somalia rather than be integrated in Kenya because eastern Kenya would gain a large voting block were refugees integrated, upsetting the country’s tenuous balance of political power.
**Becoming a refugee in Dadaab.** From national to international policies, becoming a refugee in Dadaab relates to regional histories and current development and humanitarian schemas. Globally, forced migrants may be comprised of refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced peoples due to conflict, environmental changes and natural disasters, or economic pressures (Castles, 2003; Lew, 2009). Forced migrants are typically marginalized “in the distribution of wealth, resources and power” and thus a “less than voluntary” mobile population (Rapport, 2014, p. 205). The 1951 Refugee Convention determines refugee status, defined as “someone who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 2015b, para. 2). The legal definition of refugees, coupled with expansive forced migrant movements beyond legal parameters, ground this study in international policy from the UN and UNHCR, and the MDGs and SDGs. Despite extensive calls to include forced migration in the SDGs (e.g., International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2015; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2015), the current goals only touch on the rights of migrants and efforts to decrease internal state violence, with no mention of refugees. Development and humanitarian response, although interwoven in practice in Dadaab, remain separate in refugee policy.

Throughout the 1970s, the first legally recognized Somali refugees began to arrive to Kenya fleeing drought and eventually tens of thousands fled the Somali government’s collapse and the fall of Siad Barre in 1991 and settled, temporarily, in Dadaab. By the drought in 2011, hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees traversed the arid region seeking sanctuary and opportunity in Dadaab. Once states or international governmental organizations like the UN
recognize individuals and groups as refugees or asylum-seekers, UNHCR (2015a) policy toward diasporas fleeing conflict- or disaster-affected environments follows three “durable solutions”: integration into the host country, repatriation to the country of origin, or resettlement to a third country. As refugees settled in Dadaab, they interacted with the local environment and community and placed demands on infrastructure that the state was not willing or able to provide. Internationally, these demands are complicated in the current forced migration milieu that recognizes forced migrants as “representative of an increasingly globalized world” while also presenting Muslim migrants particularly as a potential threat, given the “War on Terror,” radical Islam, and Islamophobia in states receiving Muslim forced migrants (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002, qtd. in Ben-Rafael, Sternberg, Liwerant, & Gorny, 2009, p. 421). NGOs that provide development activities such as adult education programs seek to ease the tensions engendered through repatriation, integration, or resettlement for displaced peoples.

The outsider and exiled relationships with host communities complicates power and identity formation in education in these settings. In addition, forced migrants are connected with larger diasporas through personal transnational networks, migratory experiences, and national (im)migration policies. Although forced migrants may not have anticipated or consciously developed transnational identities (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002), their role at the border between states necessitates transnational networking. For example, diasporas are interconnected (Horst, 2007) and encounter similar political, legal, and social obstacles to community and individual development (Kusow & Bjork, 2007), including programming that seeks to meet MDG3’s and SDG5’s international benchmarks related to empowerment.

Refugees in Dadaab, who have yet to find a durable solution, live in a protracted refugee setting, where generations have lived in the camps since 1991. Given the Somali diaspora’s
longevity and diverse experiences outside of Somalia, this research does not propose that the
Somali diaspora are homogenous, other than sharing a national identity at some point. However,
the literature on the Somali diaspora identifies commonalities and connections between diverse
sites, emphasizing *Soomaalinimo*, or Somaliness (e.g., Al-Sharmani, 2007; Kusow & Bjork,
2007; A. Taylor, 2014). One Somali women refugee in this study described *Soomaalinimo* as
Somali patriotism associated with being Somali culturally, rather than attachment to the nation-
state.

In a study of Somali refugees and *Soomaalinimo* in Cairo, Al-Sharmani (2007) found that
diaspora membership was viewed from within “as a positive condition that protects one from the
suspicions of being implicated in the war-time atrocities and also makes one more appreciative
of the importance of a national identity as a source of unity and empowerment” (p. 79). Somalis
in the diaspora are also united through a “brain drain” in which the diaspora has had more access
to education than those who remained (Lindley, 2008). However, membership in the Somali
diaspora can be stigmatized due to increasing suspicion from governmental authorities in Kenya
and elsewhere of complicity in the war and international terrorism (see Amnesty International,

Identities in and around Dadaab have always involved transnational networks with
surrounding countries and peoples, including western Kenya, Somalia, international trade
partners, and other peoples in the region. The movement of peoples within the borderland region
also created ties between Somali and Somali Kenyan populations, especially in similar cultural
norms, values, gender roles, property ownership, local political power structures, and resources
(Faith, 2015; Mohamed, 2014; Monica, 2016). These similarities relate to identity not only
internally, but how identities are mapped onto groups. For instance, in 2016, two western
Kenyan colleagues and I sat at dinner one night and they explained to me what had and had not changed since my last visit. During the conversation, they described how Somali Kenyans, as well as Somali refugees, refuse to work with authorities to identify Al-Shabaab recruiters who move through the area. As “clan mates,” these field workers saw little differences between Somali Kenyans and refugees, who have allegiances beyond the Kenyan government (field notes, 2016). However, refugees who I met had different perspectives, with many emphasizing the cultural diversity within the refugee camps, though not specifically within the Somali population and their knowledge about threatening outsiders possibly recruiting in the camps. The identities mapped by participants in this study reinforce divides between local, national, and transnational identities.

**Camp closure.** Being a refugee is not solely a local and national identity, but defined structurally by international systems and governmental bodies as described above. Encampment has become a fourth unwritten and less than “durable” option for many receiving countries that are politically unable to integrate refugees and for refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin for extended periods. According to Faith, who worked in an NGO in Dadaab, “We need a solution. Refugees keep looking for durable solutions. They die waiting” (Interview, 2016). Somalis’ word for resettlement dreams, *buufis*, relates to the imagined prosperity and well-being achieved upon resettlement, especially in the West (Horst, 2006). The Dadaab camps’ protracted nature exemplifies many refugee environments where return is untenable, integration is politically impossible, and resettlement is dream-like.

In 2013, one year before I began data collection, the Kenyan government, Somali government, and UNHCR agreed to a three-year timeline for refugee repatriation to Somalia. By 2016 when my data collection concluded, the Kenyan government had made steps, some
controversial, toward meeting this goal. Between political posturing (Daily Nation, 2015) and
detailed planning (UNHCR, 2015c), conservative estimates place repatriation for most Somali
refugees in Dadaab as occurring between 2018 and 2019.

On May 6, 2016, while we sat in an afternoon staff meeting planning the close of the
fiscal quarter’s programming, the Kenyan government (2016) abruptly issued a statement via
Twitter that the refugee camps in Dadaab would be closed and the Department of Refugee
Affairs (DRA) disbanded (Republic of Kenya, 2016). The DRA was a government agency
intended to process all refugee documentation and manage the camps. But, the DRA had been
dogged with accusations of corruption and served more as an accessory to UNHCR’s operations
than in a management position. Nevertheless, the news sent refugees and field workers into quiet
conversations and meetings about what the next steps would be, both individually and
organizationally. One refugee woman described listening to the radio as she prepared breakfast,
only to hear that she would be living in Somalia by November. “So scared,” she said, as I asked
her if she believed what she heard (Mako, 2016). Since the Kenyan government’s closure of
Dadaab, the High Court of Kenya ruled that government attempts to shut the camp were illegal,
rebutted by the government in another Tweet appealing the decision on February 9, 2017
(Bloom, Clarke, & Sevenzo, 2017).

The impact of a Tweet, with information unavailable on any website but discussed at
length on news and talk shows in Kenya, also reflects the scale of repatriation, from the local
staff meeting and individual smart phone, rippling out internationally, catching media headlines
and motivating political speeches far from Dadaab. Ripples through international media,
however, flatten out. Recognizing this, several women interviewees here emphasized how taking
photographs of their daily lives was something to show the world what was happening in
Dadaab, both in its beauty and poverty, in their personal triumphs and struggles (Kowsar, Mako, & Hani, 2016).

Camp closure is double edged, presenting an opportunity to end what some have called an open prison (NPR, 2016) but also risks of instability and continued violence perpetuated by Al-Shabaab in Somalia. A generation of Somalis have been born and raised in Dadaab and now have children of their own. This population often has familial ties to Somalia but no communities to return to. For the most vulnerable in Dadaab, who have missed out on formal education, have large families with little income, or have no remaining family or property in Somalia, this risk is even higher. In February 2017, the Kenyan high court overruled the government’s speedy repatriation plan and disbanding of the DRA (Aljazeera, 2017). As of April 2017, the camps remain open with small numbers of refugees returning to Somalia every month. Repatriation is voluntary, though there were reports from field workers in June 2016 of clinics closing and the market ending credit services to refugees, implying that repatriation may be covertly forced in the coming months and years.

**Refugees’ daily experiences in Dadaab.** Impending repatriation and NGO programming decisions made far from Dadaab shape daily life both in the camps and for field workers. Although being a refugee is recognized internationally as temporary and “solved” through repatriation, integration, or resettlement, many refugees in Dadaab have never known any citizenship or social life outside the camps. Here, I explore women’s and field workers’ daily activities and the structures in which they live and work. Daily life relates to and shapes

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6 In June 2016, reportedly, 180 refugees returned to Somalia voluntarily but roughly 33,000 repatriated in 2016 (Mohamed, A., 2016; UNHCR, 2017).
perceptions of power and empowerment during educational programs. There is great diversity amongst experiences in Dadaab; however, a brief overview from observations and field notes supports analyses of power and empowerment in chapters five and six.

In the camps, food distribution from WFP occurred during the first week of the month. There was social stratification, with relatively wealthy business people at the top of the socio-economic pyramid and a sizable middle-income group of “incentive workers” who are paid between $80 and $100USD a month to work with NGOs as teachers, cleaners, interpreters, community organizers, and in many other roles. Most income earners have small businesses but also relied on food provisions and the sales of certain provisions. Some families have no incomes at all, relying completely on food and other goods distributed by UNHCR and NGOs. Since I began research in 2014, the UN had been using biometrics to ensure that refugees were not taking more than their share of rations. Prior to biometrics, the estimated population of Dadaab was about 500,000, but through household surveying, UNHCR identified how many people had sold their ration card or given it to family prior to departing. In 2011, it was estimated that about 30,000 to 40,000 Somali Kenyans fraudulently registered as refugees to access resources in the camps (IRIN, 2011). Like many towns in eastern Kenya, the camp boundaries are porous and local Kenyans can join a family or rent space in preexisting compounds. Identifying the population through biometrics not only identified who was a legal refugee, but also who was entitled to access services such as NGO programming, food distribution, and free education.

Camp life is constricted. The camps are comprised of blocks, or neighborhoods, where particular clans and ethnicities have developed communities, some organically, but most due to UNHCR policies that placed ethnic groups together to reduce risks of interethnic violence (Faith, 2016). Despite UNHCR’s and NGOs’ efforts to create livable planned housing and community
spaces (Sipus, 2010), the camps were not structured or designed to last over 20 years, from the basic housing materials and fuel for fires available to the high density of camp life among the majority traditionally nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists. Camp longevity and density, coupled with regional conflict and remoteness, invited insecurity both from internal actors within the camps, external Kenyan banditry, and Somali terror groups who can move undetected by Kenyan authorities through the camps (McSweeney, 2012).

The lack of security within the camps has led to crime, indiscriminate attacks by refugees (on other refugees), Kenyan police, and outsiders, including Al-Shabaab members (Rawlence, 2016). Rape and sexual assault are common experiences, either occurring along the way to the camps during initial migration, in the blocks, or on the camp borders where women and children often collect firewood and fencing materials from what few bushes and trees remain, venturing further and further into isolated areas. Although theft is less common, there have been frequent bombings and shootings, followed by police crackdowns that can include beatings and rape (Rawlence, 2016). UNHCR (2015c) estimates that nearly 100,000 refugees who initially fled the 2011 drought have returned to Somalia to escape the brutality of camp life.

Although camp life is difficult and often dangerous, it can be preferred to the instability of Somalia. In Dadaab, refugees have access to food, sanitation, and water through distribution, latrines, and taps provided by UNHCR and NGO partners during camp development. Targeted distribution also includes solar lamps, feminine hygiene products, school uniforms, and other goods associated with NGO-led programs. Importantly, refugees also have free education and access to other programs provided by NGOs. Some Somali Kenyans joined the refugee camps to access better services than are available in town as Kenyan citizens. In addition, there are three markets in the camps and two under construction as of June 2016. Some refugees (field notes,
2016) and researchers (Rawlence, 2016) reported that the markets are dominated by specific clans, families, and refugees who have been in the camps longer or had businesses and established trade networks prior to arrival. As such, the new camps, Ifo2 and Kambioos, attract refugees who wanted to start businesses or shops but could not access the best spaces in the markets in the older three camps. Refugees looking to start their own shops must have some capital to purchase a spot in these new markets, and are sometimes supported by agencies hoping to help build business cooperatives, often through livelihoods programs described below. In sum, daily life is a balancing act between resource provision and individuals making ends meet with the few resources available to them and between national and international policies reflected in NGO programming.

Gendered labor, familial, and social roles shaped daily routines. Women predominantly served as caretakers of the family, a difficult and time-consuming task that involved coordinating collection of food, water, and materials to build and maintain the household shelters. Women’s main activities included “caring for children, fetching water, and preparing meals for their husband” (George, 2016). They also were involved in “livelihoods programs” where women were trained in skills such as tailoring, tie and dye fabric design, beadwork, farming, or other trades so that they could bring an income into their homes (see chapter six about economic empowerment and specific conditions for women).

Chapter six explores the daily life of women who participated in this research in more depth, especially drawing on their photographic narratives, which captured typical experiences. The 24 women interviewees took 1,430 pictures in their own home, the most frequently identified location in interviews and photograph analysis. Themes from women’s interviews focused on daily actions, since most women took photographs of almost everything they engaged
in after receiving the cameras. Hodan’s vignette above highlights these themes from women’s interviews and helps frame the following chapters’ description and narratives regarding women’s experiences in the camps.

**Field workers’ daily experiences in Dadaab**

I present life in the camps in the following chapters through collages related to field workers’ and participants’ interpretation and contestation of empowerment from educational programs. For field workers, camp life was a hardship post, with no families allowed to accompany staff, except for children under the age of one if their mothers worked in the camp. Field workers were in Dadaab on six-week rotations with usually one or two weeks of “rest and relaxation” in Nairobi during their breaks. Some field workers, such as the facilitators in the soap-making program described in this research, lived outside of Dadaab town on NGO compounds in or very near the refugee camps. Many of these compounds have moved residential facilities to the UNHCR headquarters, DMO, due to insecurity described below. Most field workers lived at DMO, a compound nicknamed “Geneva” by some and with relative luxury such as semi-reliable electricity, some air-conditioned offices, and more options for fresher, newly-arrived meat, fruit, and vegetables brought for sale in Dadaab town. Daily life for field workers in Dadaab had little to offer outside of work, a few social spots for drinks and food in DMO, and conversations with coworkers.

In 2014, within days of arriving in Dadaab, my hosts and colleagues told me “political things are not right” concerning the recent attacks on tourists in Mombasa, ongoing violence in Lamu, and regional attacks in Garissa (field notes, 2014). One field worker connected the political troubles with the Kenyan Defense Force’s (KDF) actions in Somalia and politicians exploiting tensions for their own gain. Since the beginning of the KDF’s actions in Somalia in
2012, insecurity, the number of weapons, kidnapping, and the use of improvised explosive devices in and around Dadaab increased (field notes, 2014). This insecurity was also associated with the massive influx of refugees during the 2011 drought. Since kidnappings in 2012, all NGO field workers were required to travel with Kenyan police escort. However, police were often targeted and so NGO drivers “keep a safe distance” from the escorts intended to protect them (field notes, 2014). In 2014, another attack claimed the life of a driver while an international NGO worker fled the vehicle into a neighboring compound. In 2015, shortly after the Garissa College attack, the deadliest terrorist attack claimed by Al-Shabaab in Kenya, my colleagues at RET, my organizational host, witnessed an attack on their home compound outside Hagadera where one Kenyan teacher was targeted and killed. The team was deeply affected by this loss, one of many close calls for field workers who continued to work in Dadaab. Some, but not all, attacks in Dadaab and throughout Kenya are claimed by Al-Shabaab, and the flurry of rumors about these incidents abounds. One afternoon in 2014, Abdul, a driver for an NGO, tried to make me aware of the reality of insecurity at the camp. “Even [I],” he said, “could be Al-Shabaab. You don’t know” (field notes, 2014). His message was that I should trust no one completely while moving around Dadaab and echoed refugees’ experiences described by Rawlence (2016) and interviewees in this study: you don’t know anyone’s story, so it is better to be quiet and listen. This attitude also led to cautious interviewees, particularly among refugees, sharing only limited information during interviews but telling more detailed stories through photographs.

**Transnational Identities**

In general, refugees had freedom of movement between camps or to the UNHCR compound in Dadaab town. Entry into DMO required identification and approval from a
receiving organization. However, outside Dadaab, movement to Garissa or Nairobi for medical care, education, and resettlement procedures was strictly limited without relevant documentation. In 2016, with the threat of camp closure, this travel became more difficult. On the other hand, NGO and UN field workers could access flights three to four days a week and travel by road from Dadaab to Nairobi (a six- to eight-hour drive) and back semi-regularly. As a visitor from the United States, I had the most opportunity to move freely, traversing continents. Identities and the power one holds to move freely were tied to nationality and access to opportunities and resources.

Learners frequently described their transnational aspirations as focusing on finding scholarships to study in western universities. In every interview, I asked an open-ended question about what the women would like to know about my research or what I am working on and the most frequently raised question was, “Do you know of any scholarships to the U.S.?” This question was partially rooted on the assumption that as a United States citizen, I had the knowledge and power to provide scholarships to the women or to direct them to sources to which they did not already have access. The reality was that the women themselves knew much more about the scholarships and application requirements than I did. Women also described their transnational plans of repatriation, such as Hodan’s description of her father setting up a household in Somalia for her family to join.

In addition to aspirations, many of the women interviewees and the interpreters I worked with had their own transnational networks of family and friends who had been resettled. Resettlement is the most sought after opportunity to increase transnational networks and family livelihoods (Horst, 2006; field notes, 2016). Resettlement and transnational identities in the camps related to economic wealth, clan affiliation, and political power. Having a family member
who was resettled meant an increased income from remittances and some degree of social status for the connection. However, resettlement is a long and difficult process, with roughly 2,000 refugees being resettled from Dadaab annually in the years I conducted my research (Lembo & Nyabera, 2016).

The refugees were not the only Dadaab residents with dreams beyond Kenyan borders. In 2014, one Somali Kenyan NGO worker told me about his dream of winning a visa to the United States, a lottery process in Kenya. I was at first surprised by his goal, since I viewed his position as one of privilege in relation to the refugees. But for many of my field worker colleagues, the opportunity to study or work abroad was enticing both for social mobility within Kenya and for the chance to enhance their own well-being and that of family members. Dreams of resettlement and migration, *buufis*, were part of transnational identities in the Kenyan borderlands, regardless of nationality. Shared experiences of Dadaab host-community members, or the Somali Kenyans who inhabit Dadaab, refugees, and NGO field workers included financial incentives, trauma, and insecurity.

Although there were many experiences that connected Somali refugees with Somali Kenyans, there were also many social barriers. Similarities, including *buufis*, clan affiliation, and familial relations, did not ease tensions between the refugee camp and the host-community. Life in the camps depended on provisions from international sources, causing resentment from the host-community who saw resources going to refugees but few going to building their own schools, hospitals, and communities. Although the Kenyan population in Dadaab has skyrocketed since 1991 (field notes, 2014), many Kenyans living in the area, both Somali Kenyans and western Kenyans who work in the camps, resented the resources provided to refugees when they had few resources from their own government.
My own transnational identity was mapped onto me as my western Kenyan colleagues presumed, at times correctly, my social, political, and religious views. Over the three years of returning visits, this identity became more nuanced as I presented more of myself to colleagues and refugees with whom I worked regularly. My interactions with the refugees who participated in this research did not include as much informal “hanging out” to talk about controversial political topics and other experiences unrelated to the main research questions because I did not have the opportunity to sit over meals and talk about the latest news and gossip with refugees as I did with field workers. Both in working alongside field workers and with refugees, my position as an outsider was relevant to which conversation topics were posed to me in informal conversations.

By deconstructing and discussing my objectivity as a researcher, participants and I could have more open conversations. They presumed what my position on women’s empowerment was, based on their previous experience with international NGO workers, such as the Kenyan academics who facilitated the teacher training in 2014. Over the week I attended their program and met with them in DMO, I had many arguments with Michael, an outspoken education professor who believed firmly that women were already empowered and any attempts to empower them were futile (field notes, 2014). Given the length of my participation in the teacher training program, I could complicate and present my own views that may have reinforced his expectations.

**NGO Programming**

As migration increases through globalization, adult education historically has been linked with assimilationist policies and programs, particularly but not solely related to workforce development (Lange & Abidi, 2015). Social support programs including adult education are
frequently established by the state, NGOs, and faith-based organizations to ease integration and assimilation. NGOs providing adult education may use the threat of insecurity from diasporas as a motivation for their development work, aiming to decrease this threat through opportunities for potentially vulnerable diaspora communities (C. Grayson, 2013). Programs also hope to create what De Genova, Peutz, Walters, and Cornelisse (2010) call “the informed-migrant,” or someone who is “able to accumulate both the information and the means to, on the one hand, overcome the rising symbolic and material walls of defense meant to block entry into” their new country of residence “and, on the other, find those vital niches guaranteeing their continued residence, survival, and evasion of deportation” (p. 237) in new locations. Educational opportunities may motivate migration itself (Hetland, 2006) and support migrants who find themselves “in and between two cultures” (Mutwarasibo, 2005, p. 32; see also Salt, 1985).

Adult education empowerment-oriented programming in Kenya is most frequently provided by the government, except in cases such as Dadaab where recipients are not Kenyan citizens (Bunyi, 2006). Kenyan encampment policies restricted refugees’ freedom of movement out of the camps (C. Grayson, 2013). In response to pressures from the Somali based Al-Shabaab militant group, the Kenyan government, in coordination with the Somali government and UNHCR, was pushing for full repatriation of all refugees living in Dadaab. Thus, in Dadaab, NGO-sponsored adult education was supported by UNHCR with goals for repatriation (Crisp, Talbot, & Cipollone, 2001). In previous studies, women in the Somali diaspora also highlighted increased educational access as a motivation to leave Somalia (Israelite, Herman, Alim, Mohamed, & Khan, 1999).

**Programming aiming to empower women.** In Dadaab, adult education focused on community or individual growth and instrumental approaches to literacy and skills-based
Adult education programs that focused on skill acquisition and employability fit within instrumental models. They also followed a human capital approach that emphasized economic production and productivity (Sen, 1997). For example, women forced migrants “are encouraged to develop skills that are useful in low-paying jobs” (Zajda, 2008, p. 8) to supplement family income and individual integration in resettlement. Studies of empowerment in Dadaab and other forced migrant communities present pedagogy that is generally instrumental and often deficit-minded, focusing on skills-development that allows women to be more autonomous and in control of their assimilation or repatriation. However, goals of empowerment, social cohesion, and social change also hint at the potential of liberatory pedagogy. The social environment influences adult education practice as well. Due to insecurity within and surrounding the camps, adult education programs in Dadaab were short, generally between one- to two-day sessions to six-month programs.

In Dadaab, UNHCR defines empowerment in practice through economic development, skill-building, community participation, peacebuilding, and rights-based programming (Dube & Koenig, 2005). Somali refugees engaged in programming specifically for economic and repatriation goals to build skills they could use outside of the refugee camp and to reduce their dependency on aid. Almost all programs in Dadaab with women’s empowerment goals focused on self-reliance and economic empowerment (e.g., Kumssa & Jones, 2014; Dube & Koenig, 2005; Mugure, 2014). For instance, women’s empowerment was described by practitioners as “training in henna manicure and hairstyling” that would provide women a livelihood (Dube & Koenig, 2005, p. 65). Empowerment also had to do with “knowledge of health, nutrition, sanitation and community management” so refugees were equipped to engage in development projects upon repatriation (Dube & Koenig, 2005, p. 54). Empowerment programming also
aimed to decrease the risk of violence upon repatriation (Ali, 1990; Kumsaa & Jones, 2014; Lewela, 2012). Programs aimed at empowerment most frequently used “capacity building,” which included training about community challenges, business, “management, simple accounting, dressmaking and the like” (Kumssa & Jones, 2014, p. 41). Buck and Silver (2013) placed empowerment within the “enlightenment project” of NGOs and the UNHCR quasi-state in Dadaab, whereby programs presumed individual autonomy and agency in their empowerment goals.

**Programming in the field.** Programming in Dadaab is directly influenced by the international community and national lawmakers. In the 1990s, the camps moved from reactive, life-saving measures of providing humanitarian support, especially food, water, and healthcare services, to include more long-term provision of services, such as primary education (Alex, 2014). By the early 2000s, programming was focused on improving systems such as sanitation and access to water, while also building schools to reach more students, such as secondary schools. The refugee influx caused by drought in 2011 returned programming to its earlier, reactive roots. Faith provided a sobering and simple explanation of the 2011 famine: “A lot of people, a lot of children, died” (field notes, 2014).

In the educational sector, Hagadera hosts an educational center (equipped with corporate-sponsored tablets); primary schools are available in all camps, though secondary schools are less common and Kambioos and Ifo2 have the largest educational gap because of the lack of schools, the camp’s newness, and the recency of arrivals (mostly from the 2011 drought) who lacked educational access prior to arrival and in Dadaab itself. Schools frequently lacked electricity and teachers were divided because there were Somali refugee incentive teachers at the same school as Kenyan national teachers who were paid as much as four times more than incentive teachers.
There were limited university opportunities that were suspended in 2015 after the attack on Garrisa College. Most students go to duuksi and then madrassa, Islamic schools, before accessing NGO-sponsored schools. NGOs also provide training for camp leadership (good governance training) and livelihoods training programs (vocational training). My research put me at the juncture of educational programs and livelihoods programs.

During three years of recurrent data collection, I identified some trends in NFE. Each year, I conducted snowball sampling to identify empowerment-oriented programs where I could attend and conduct this research. The following table summarizes the programs that I was referred to, attended, or attempted but was unable to attend (see Table 2). Table 2 shows the topics of programs and trainings identified during fieldwork and a glimpse into the NFE empowerment-oriented programming in Dadaab. This included programs, usually consisting of more than one training or class, that focused on or were like formal education (such as adult literacy programs).

Educational programs were all mixed-gender, with some having higher women’s participation than others, depending on the community and the connection with other programs. Several field workers described literacy programs that related to other programs hosted by their organization so women learning tailoring could also gain literacy and numeracy to expand their businesses.
Table 2. Topics addressed by NFE empowerment-oriented programs.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs connected with formal education</td>
<td><strong>Teacher training</strong>8 for refugee teaching staff</td>
<td>Alternative secondary schools for older learners</td>
<td>Alternative secondary schools for older learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adult literacy classes</td>
<td>Adult literacy classes</td>
<td>Adult literacy classes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent-Teacher Association training at new secondary schools</td>
<td>Alternative secondary schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
<td><strong>Program for field workers to develop livelihoods programs</strong></td>
<td>Mentor training program in apprenticeship program</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship training for tie and dye participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information and communication technology (ICT) training program for community members</td>
<td>Community savings and loan program</td>
<td>Tailoring training program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apprenticeship program for tailoring</td>
<td><strong>Apprenticeship program for entrepreneurial skills</strong></td>
<td>Soap-making training program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocational programs at a community center</td>
<td>Agribusiness training program with community leaders</td>
<td>Technical education in diverse trades</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beadwork training program</td>
<td>Farming management training</td>
<td>Youth vocational program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enterprise development program</td>
<td>Financial empowerment training program (tailoring)</td>
<td>Business administration training program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship program</td>
<td>ICT training program</td>
<td>ICT training program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business planning training</td>
<td>SGBV victims’ income-generating activities (tailoring)</td>
<td>Liquid soap-making training program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning and management of income generating activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial literacy and livelihoods programming for SGBV victims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SGBV related</td>
<td>SGBV training for women, including psychosocial support and counselling for survivors</td>
<td>SGBV training program for youth to engage in community projects</td>
<td>Protection and SGBV training program</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SGBV prevention program</td>
<td>SGBV awareness training program for men (2 programs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community leader training program about SGBV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community development workshops</td>
<td>Community workshops on camp safety for community leaders</td>
<td>Project management training program for youth</td>
<td>Arts training program - music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Governance and capacity building for community leaders</td>
<td>Elected community leaders training on conflict resolution</td>
<td>Youth-led training programs in the camps</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leadership and governance training for women leaders</td>
<td>Leaders training program on camp management</td>
<td>Youth community development training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth empowerment training</td>
<td>Leaders training program on community service</td>
<td>Women's empowerment through film</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth community development</td>
<td>Youth community development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health programs</td>
<td>Psychosocial support training</td>
<td>Girls’ education advocacy training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nutrition training program</td>
<td>Splint training program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td><strong>Parents of children with disabilities training program</strong></td>
<td>Wheelchair management for people with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7 Bolded programs were programs I attended in this research.

8 The terms “training” and “program” are used interchangeably on this list.
Livelihoods programs were the most frequently referenced when I conducted snowball interviews to identify women’s empowerment in programming. The foundation of livelihoods programs rests on the realization that refugees are not legally able to work, outside of low-income incentive jobs at agencies, and that many refugees arrived in Dadaab already with businesses or other skills to make an income. Although refugees cannot find gainful employment outside the camps or have few opportunities in the formal economy, the informal economy including small business and crafts can offer economic opportunities. Livelihoods programs aim to support newcomers and longer-term residents who did not already have the capital, skills, or connections to start a business prior to arriving. Some of these programs are partnered with resource distribution, especially tools like sewing machines to start businesses, but also monetary incentives.

Livelihoods programs overlapped with programs aiming to support victims of, raise awareness about, and prevent SGBV. Some community development trainings were related to community leaders and youth becoming advocates against SGBV, as well as engaging in conflict resolution, community development, and camp management. Since many of the SGBV-oriented programs enrolled victims, I did not feel it appropriate to video tape these programs and thus did not attend them. Instead, I focused on one SGBV-related program that emphasized community organizing, social change, and development projects and that did not directly target people who had experienced SGBV.

Finally, I was referred to NFE programs on health and disability topics. These were often presented together, but with specific divergent goals. Empowerment was described in these programs related to knowing how to do something, how to care for a family member, how to
provide assistance, and how to fix your wheelchair, for example. The program I attended on


disability topics focused on mothers of children with disabilities to encourage them to send their


children to school. Empowerment in this program included parents’ ability to ensure their


children’s survival and focused much more on basic human needs than the programming


described above. Table 2 presents an outline of NFE programs for women in Dadaab, directly


related to daily life, needs, and aspirations of women that have been identified and supported by


NGOs.


An overview of empowerment in programming. Field workers believed they were


empowering Somali women in the diaspora through educational programs. However,


postcolonial theory critiques dependency and deficit approaches that frame participants as


passive recipients (Tikly, 1999). Postcolonial theory questions who is defining universal norms


and how that informs program implementation. NGOs are neither active providers of education


to passive peoples, nor are participants simply “economically useful and politically docile in


relation to dominant global interests” (Tikly, 2004, p. 174). Although NGOs in this research


were reliant on funding from international sources, they had diverse approaches to how best to


balance local necessities with the requests of powerful funding agencies who often may represent


former colonizers. For example, funding priorities in education projects in refugee and


community development programs emphasized children’s education before adult education,


leaving a gap in programming (Buckland, 2006; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Hetland, 2006; Naidoo,


2005). Although it was less of a priority in funding paradigms, the commonly held belief by


NGO practitioners, funding agencies, and policy makers was that “adult educational programs


can teach refugees skills that will be useful whether they settle in host countries or return home”


(Foster, 1995, p. 15).
In Somali, empowerment means *xoojin*, also defined as to strengthen, amplify, consolidate, intensify, or reinforce (field notes, 2015). In defining empowerment in Dadaab, *xoojin* is a useful term because it presents a local interpretation of what NGO adult education programs are doing when they intend to empower learners. Programs were attempting to make learners stronger both through what they learned and what they could do. In this way, learning is the key focus of *xoojin*. Knowing that NGOs working with refugees want to deconstruct dependency and build local community ownership and skills with refugees, and that the Somali definition of the term also emphasizes building on preexisting conditions, helps to situate the analysis of empowerment in this study.

**Chapter summary**

This chapter outlined the regional and transnational networks in eastern Kenya and for Dadaab refugees specifically. I explored educational programs available during my research visits and how these programs reportedly intended to empower women. The generalizations about daily life presented here only show a glimpse of experiences presented by individuals, the learning that occurs, and the relationships that are built and maintained related to educational programming in Dadaab. These different descriptions of daily life and concepts of empowerment are explored in more depth in chapters five and six. I will explore in more detail specific instances of how educational programs do, or do not, empower women learners from the perspectives of field workers and learners. Visual narratives portray empowerment in interviews and through multi-vocal analysis and recurrent conversations. The following two chapters explore first NGO field workers’ and then women participants’ descriptions of empowerment.
Chapter 5

Field workers’ narratives

In 2014, during snowball interviews to identify empowerment-oriented programs, a program director provided almost flippant advice: “all our programs intend to empower, and all our proposals include that language” (field notes, 2014). I was pleased to hear this because it opened my research to any NFE program with field workers and learners who agreed to allow me to attend, participate, and interview them. From there, I began to develop my understanding of the NGO workers’ perspectives of an empowered refugee, despite restrictions placed on refugees that put them in a “dependent position” (Phillip, 2014). The purpose of this chapter is to situate women’s empowerment through the perspectives of field workers to understand how programs intended to empower. Here, I intend to answer the following research question: How do field workers believe they are empowering women in educational programs?

Field workers and women participants are not mutually exclusive, since some refugee women are “incentive” field workers (including the interpreters I worked with during data collection). However, I present them separately to understand the field workers’ perspectives during and after their work in empowerment-oriented programs. Field workers’ narratives and perceptions help explain their actions and goals in the learning environment as units of observation in this study. In this chapter, I first describe field workers’ views of and relationships with refugees in the camps. I then discuss the similarities and differences in pedagogies to document how the programs were intended to empower. I then summarize field workers’ beliefs about women’s empowerment and actions that engender empowerment, focusing on unique issues related to gender and potentialities for disempowerment. I conclude with field workers’ conceptualization of women’s power in Dadaab, linking those concepts to their beliefs about
programming’s goals and objectives. In chapter six, I discuss the unit of analysis, women’s conceptualizations, internalizations, and contestations of empowerment through NGO-led educational programs.

Field workers’ views of refugees

From the beginning of data collection, it was apparent that field workers felt unable to reach women in the refugee camps. “You cannot see them,” (field notes, 2014) one complained to me about the inability to monitor what was going on in the camps and participants’ daily lives. Beyond the security restrictions and inability of NGO workers to work directly with refugees, there were also programming stressors related to changes in populations. The 2011 influx of refugees was predominantly comprised of pastoralists or rural people who arrived, beleaguered and sometimes starving, and gradually regained some of their health. The earlier camp residents, especially the families who arrived in the 1990s, originated from urban environments around Mogadishu and were acculturated to NGO programming while the newcomers may have never had access to any schools, educational programs, or other services common in the camps. “The [Somali] system has failed,” remarked a field worker, explaining how these two populations diverged. Newcomers who had been in the failed state for longer faced different challenges and had different experiences that arose in NGO programs and service-provision. For instance, the older generations who had more access to education had higher literacy and English language skills than the newcomers, as well as access to the best spots in the market and well-developed business partnerships with local and regional merchants.

A distrustful environment. The tension for Kenyan field workers when speaking about refugees is further illustrated in Terry (2002), who described the difficulties working in refugee camps after the Rwandan genocide where some former genocidaires sought aid and atrocities
between Hutus and Tutsis continued in the camps meant to provide sanctuary. The risks for Kenyan field workers were not as high and violence not as frequent as what Terry described, but several field workers spoke about their mistrust of refugees, particularly after repeated attacks on NGO compounds or vehicles where only an insider, potentially a refugee working with an NGO, could have facilitated or provided information to the attackers (field notes, 2015). The loyalties of Kenyan NGO staff were not just tested by immediate threats to their lives and safety. If refugees harbored Al-Shabaab and others who wished to kill Kenyans, what role were the field workers playing in aiding potential threats to their compatriots and family members? These questions contributed to lively and sometimes heated conversations over dinner as field workers reflected on their work, the latest news from Nairobi, and updates about impending camp closure.

**Stereotypes.** Beyond immediate mistrust, field workers built relationships with refugees, particularly incentive workers. It is unethical and highly problematic for field workers to engage in romantic relationships with refugees, although these assuredly occurred at times. More commonly, relationships between field workers and refugees, including incentive workers, were collegial or that of a mentor and mentee, such as the relationship between Monika (a Kenyan national), Omar, and Abdirizack (Somali refugees) whom she worked with as co-facilitators and trained on tailoring. At times, the power dynamics between field workers and refugees surpassed a mentor role into a more condescending and stereotyping relationship. I observed these power dynamics in how field workers described refugees, and Somalis in general, such as when a field worker in 2014 told me, “Somali’s only care about certificates. The roads are straight [here] they are not used to obstacles” (field notes, 2014). This field worker was critiquing refugees for not wanting to pursue knowledge; rather, he thought they preferred certificates of completion. More
to the point, the field worker emphasized that Somali refugees do not know how to respond to challenges but rather await handouts from organizations. These comments about handouts and “motivation,” which was synonymous with payment or distribution of goods, stemmed from field workers’ stereotypes of lazy or uncritical refugees.

Stereotypes of refugees as uneducated and incapable were rooted in deficit approaches in program goals, to educate and provide refugees with motivation to use their skills or unknown capabilities. For instance, Phillip (2015) described how “people do have skills. But then they, there's a way they cannot be able to use it, because they probably are not motivated or they haven’t been given the gift to even have a different kind of a view that awakens that potential, that potential in them [to] do something.” He reiterated that refugees in the apprenticeship program “do have skills,” and talked about how they may doubt those skills themselves. Phillip’s approach to refugees in his program refuted the deficit view of refugees at the same time as he questioned whether refugees knew their own potential.

Incentive workers played the role of field workers in the camps where the Kenyan national field workers could not go. Incentive staff were often interested in furthering their work in community development beyond the camp confines and upon repatriation. Several field workers I interviewed worked closely with an incentive worker who “didn’t seem like a refugee” or presented himself differently, more confidently, than most other refugees (field notes, 2015). At times, field worker’s viewed refugees as dependent, uneducated, and incapable, so when incentive workers and other refugees presented themselves as confident, knowledgeable, and capable, field workers’ expectations were confronted. Dependency was particularly referenced in relation to disempowerment, discussed in more depth below.
Negative stereotypes about lazy refugees were common, though not shared by all field workers. Joseph, a facilitator in an entrepreneurship training in 2015, told the participants that “the Somali community loves doing business,” echoing field workers in various informal interviews who noted that Somali women prefer to be involved in programming related to financial and economic training due to this love for white-collar work. This more positive stereotype was reiterated in Joseph’s training when an interpreter presented a Somali phrase: “If you have an axe, you’ll not miss a tree to cut,” meaning if you are skilled, you will succeed in your business. In sum, field workers sought to understand Somali refugees and Somali culture and in doing so often generalized about who the Somali community was. Field workers’ generalizations about participants were reflected in pedagogy that drew on both deficit and liberatory models.

**Pedagogy**

The diversity of programs that intended to empower women are reflected in the nine sessions I observed between May 2014 and June 2016. During observations, I noted similarities in pedagogy, defined here as what takes place in the classroom, including the instructional methods, interactions, and use of resources. I emphasized resources because it was apparent that the setting and space in which the programs occurred affected how the facilitators used the space as well as what they found empowering about their programs. For instance, having access to resources like electricity or other tools allowed field workers to do different activities, from PowerPoint presentations to hands-on practice.

In addition to focusing on resources, I observed programs to better understand pedagogy following two overlapping typologies. Critical pedagogy, including feminist approaches to socio-cultural learning, emphasized participatory learning and dialogue between facilitators and
participants. In this pedagogy, women participants were actively involved in deciding what content would be discussed and how, such as when participants in Joseph’s program spoke at length about literacy activities in the camps. Feminist pedagogy acknowledged women’s experiences, such as in the SGBV program when facilitators were careful to respect and seek to understand Somali gender roles. Instrumental and deficit approaches, on the other hand, focused more on providing skills or knowledge to women participants, as if they were a blank slate or lacking in some knowledge. Observed educational programs often followed a “knowing how” model, where training “leads to high proficiency in a specific skill” as opposed to “knowing why,” where learners gain methods to “deal with and solve a broad range of problems” (Essenhigh, 2000; Moore, 1998; O’Lawrence, 2016, p. 141). However, programming often included indicators of critical, feminist, instrumental, and deficit pedagogy, such as emphasizing skill-development while facilitators connected with participants individually to understand their roles and opportunities in the camps. Entrepreneurship programs intended participants to change society through altered gender roles and new sources of wealth, while also emphasizing that learning should lead to instrumental life changes such as gaining marketable skills.

Few field workers directly linked their teaching and facilitation methods to their empowerment goals; however, several identified participation and experiential learning as pedagogical tools for empowerment. Mohamed, a Somali Kenyan working in development in the eastern provinces who led a program training field workers to increase and improve livelihoods programs for refugees in 2014, believed that the methods he used in his training followed adult learning principles because “adults learn by doing things. They also learn by observing, you see, they also learn by reflecting their experiences. They are … reflecting back the experiences. Then they are going to use them.” He called this experiential learning, where content came from
participants’ experiences in the livelihoods training-of-trainers as well as his predetermined topics to be covered. He hoped to provide a training that used methods that would engage participants so that they could use the same methods in their own training.

**Teacher Training Pedagogy.** Mohamed’s training-of-trainers was like the teacher training program, both observed in 2014, whereby participants were trained in new methods, with pedagogy modeled in the program. The teacher training was conducted in an NGO training center in DMO; a long hall with screens on two walls and a steep pitched thatch roof. The furniture was moveable with six long rectangular tables. The five women and 40 men in attendance sat together by school, with three schools’ teachers in attendance. Given the heat and dust, five rotating fans kept the room cool. On the second day of training, Ramadan began, and most participants fasted, abstaining from food and water from dawn until dusk. To accommodate the fasting participants, the training started at eight in the morning and ended in the early afternoon. The facilitators, William, Gerald, and Michael, were contracted from a Kenyan university, ethnically from western Kenya, not Somali speakers, but well versed in learning theory. They used problem posing in their lessons in questions like “so as a teacher, how do people learn?” (field notes, 2014). Instructional methods included lecture, demonstration, small group activities and discussions, case studies, and role play. The participating teachers took

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9 Although the teacher training program was the longest educational program I attended throughout field work, it was also the first and thus the data I collected was limited as I practiced and corrected my methods to hear more from women participants. In addition, there was minimal involvement of women in the program itself, a reflection of the professional teacher population in Dadaab that was dominated by men.

10 As discussed in the methods, this program was the first I attended in Dadaab and did not adequately meet the requirements of the study because it developed iteratively.
detailed notes during these sessions. Yet, the few women in the room were timid in responding and spoke softly. At the program’s end, in recognition of the teachers’ work, the local Kenyan District Education Officer, an elected official overseeing schools in Garissa county, came to speak to the teachers. He emphasized refugees’ returning to Somalia to scattered applause from the refugee teachers.

Each day, and often after breaks, the facilitators cracked jokes, sometimes at the participants’ expense, stigmatizing refugees as dependent, lazy, traditional, and dangerous, but, the field workers teased “there are some liberal ones” (field notes, 2014). Seemingly contradictory, the facilitators encouraged participants to help their students critically understand their position as refugees, because “an uncritical mind will think this is how the world is” (field notes, 2014). Unfortunately, to a large degree the field workers’ pedagogy neglected “how the world is.” For instance, the facilitators, as outsiders to Dadaab, were not aware of the limitations they would face as facilitators or that the teachers would face in their practice. Most of the presentations were made on Microsoft PowerPoint, which required electricity that was often unavailable even on the training compound. They also expected higher levels of students’ literacy than was available and did not understand that secondary students were often over-age learners, having missed opportunities to attend school during typical ages for formal education in Kenya. Given their outsider status, facilitators could make social faux pas, beginning with the consumption of water during Ramadan. Another small example was the human knot ice breaker, where participants were asked to hold hands and untangle themselves from a huddle. Women could not participate in this ice breaker because it was culturally inappropriate for them to hold hands with a male to whom they were not related. Although the field workers did not have
culturally relevant pedagogy at times, their emphasis on criticality related to their empowerment goals described below.

Parents of Children with Disabilities Pedagogy. The relationship between NFE and formal education, such as that presented in the teacher training, became clearer in the training for parents of children with disabilities. This program focused on raising parents’ awareness of the potential and capabilities of their children with disabilities and building relationships between the organization’s schools and parents. In the primary school compound in Kambioos, the training began with prayer, as Abdi, a Somali Kenyan facilitator ensured that lagging parents arrived in time. As women and men settled into the small classroom, the numbers grew to 33 women and eight men, with several children accompanying women. Abdi interpreted most of the training materials while two other NGO field workers, Alex, a western Kenyan preacher with expertise in disability, and Hassan discussed mostly in English, although Hassan, a Somali Kenyan, provided interpretation occasionally. George, a western Kenyan who was managing the program throughout data collection from 2014 to 2017, came in and out. The three shared facilitation, rotating between lead presenters, as they discussed the rights of people with disabilities and the importance of children’s ability to take care of themselves (emphasizing hygiene), and engaged in a hands-on activity with learners using a Braille typewriter. They also drew on the 13 types of disabilities put forward by the Individuals with Disabilities Act of the United States. Alex spoke about the limitations of using this imported tool to define disability in Dadaab individually, discussed further below. There was no question and answer in this half-day session, but this was the first of several trainings to work with parents of children with disabilities in the camps.
**SGBV organizing pedagogy.** Turning away from programs linked with formal K-12 education, the SGBV-related organizing program worked with youth (ages 18 to 35), in or out of formal education, to increase their participation and involvement in community decisions and social change projects. The SGBV program began with introductions. Sixteen men and nine women convened in the IOM training program described in the teacher training vignette. Unfortunately, the facilitators’ goal of 50% female participation was not met. As the program began, some participants struggled with their written introductions, having low English literacy and speaking skills. Language interpretation remained erratic throughout the two days, with some facilitation not being interpreted into Somali at all. The group set ground rules and responsibilities for the two-day program. Abasi, a western Kenyan specializing in technology who worked briefly in Dadaab, confessed to having little experience in SGBV programming before this activity. However, he led most of the sessions and Faith provided expertise about SGBV in Dadaab. Faith’s sessions focused on defining and identifying SGBV, the importance of girls’ education and other types of gender-based violence outside of assault, and defining consensual relationships. The program’s second day focused more on community mobilization, and Eric, a western Kenyan program manager who participated infrequently in the program but was present both days, described what the learners could do to address issues of SGBV in the refugee camps, including meeting with community leaders and influential community members to begin to spread the message to stop SGBV. At this point, I was asked to facilitate an impromptu session on how to write notes from focus group discussions. The two-day training ended with activity plans for groups of youth to engage community leaders in dialogue about SGBV.
The facilitators described their pedagogy at length, especially that they wanted the participants to come to their own conclusions about how to respond to SGBV. However, they also had to first pose the issue to the group, forcing them to acknowledge that SGBV was not only real but something they could change about their community and not merely passively accept. The field workers were aware of tensions between what they taught and common SGBV occurrences in the community. They were careful to avoid discussing SGBV as it related to religion, as Abasi described, “And even in our training … remember we were very, very careful when we came to touching on a culture and even religion issues. So, that you really don’t find yourself abusive, or maybe talking ill of a religion, or a practice that has been approved by their religion and all that. They are working again in a very funny environment but they don’t go back and say, ‘Ah the Koran says that but this is what is right.’ Over there [in the camps], they say ‘who told you?’ And ‘we are taught by [the NGO].’” Abasi (2015) did not want youth to attribute anything anti-Islamic or against cultural practices to the organization, although he also hoped participants would change practices related to SGBV. This was a delicate balance between traditional practices and universal human rights discourses. Abasi, Faith, and Eric recognized and emphasized that they could be doing more damage in communities and families if the subject matter was not localized. For instance, Eric (2015) agreed with Abasi and added, “If the training, if it's not delivered very well then, and people get out thinking we are policemen to look for perpetrators then we lose out on intention.” Eric’s intention was to help youth identify and solve issues of SGBV in their community, rather than to create a group to ascribe to his solution.

**Livelihoods Pedagogy.** In livelihoods programming, which were the most common programs I was referred to during data collection, pedagogy often related to business concepts and certification processes. The first livelihoods program (2014) I attended was a morning
session of a training to build NGO field workers’ knowledge about livelihoods programming in a training-of-trainers approach, focusing on value chain analysis and business development. Participants, who were staff members of various NGOs, were expected to conduct their own similar trainings with women’s groups in the camps and Dadaab host-community to build local business opportunities. Since participants in the 2014 livelihoods program were NGO workers themselves, the environment was relaxed, as though staff were on break at a retreat, even though most of the participants were from different organizations and had not met before. During the training, it was clear that the participants were very serious and focused on the subject matter. Most took notes during the training and asked clarifying questions, which also helped me understand the content better as an outsider.

In 2015, I attended an annual training for apprentices in tailoring and tie and dye, or fabric dyeing. I interviewed Phillip and Joseph in different trainings in that program, along with four women. The 2015 and 2016 apprenticeship program followed a mentor and mentee structure. Throughout every year of data collection, the apprenticeship program provided mentorship and specialized “business training” for participants while they completed placements with mentors. Participants in entrepreneurship training, one of the business training courses in the apprenticeship program that I observed in three iterations, were never formally trained in the trade they practiced but through informal and non-formal learning environments with mentors, moved toward expertise in that area. Mentors themselves were unlikely to have formal certificates or degrees in their trade, such as tailoring, due to the lack of formalized technical and vocational education in Dadaab, Somalia, and eastern Kenya.

The 2015 program was divided into two days, with two separate facilitators who did not collaborate on content. They each had participants from camps north and south of the Dadaab
Main Office (DMO) UNHCR compound, respectively. Both sessions took place at DMO in a shared hall with a projector, air conditioning units, ceiling fans, and heavy drapes to block out the dust. The first program focused on apprentices in Dagahaley, Ifo, and Ifo2, and the second convened participants from Kambioos and Hagadera. Despite the lack of coordination between field workers, the program’s content and target populations were similar. I describe Phillip’s and Joseph’s pedagogy individually because the programs ran autonomously, despite being part of the larger entrepreneurship training provided by one NGO.

**Phillip’s Pedagogy.** Phillip’s day-long training began late as we waited for the interpreter to arrive. Phillip, a western Kenyan with over five years of experience in the camps but no expertise in business, sat at the room’s front answering email until there were enough people and an interpreter available to begin. He began with a lecture about the purpose of business training “so that they [the participants] can be millionaires” (field notes, 2015). Four men and 25 women sat in the room, with one woman lingering outside to breast feed her baby. Phillip led introductions, provided ground rules, and although there was a printed agenda, the program moved through topics based on questions raised by participants. Phillip focused on lectures defining business, using PowerPoint when electricity was available. The training began and ended with prayer. Ahmed, an incentive worker who interpreted, addressed questions, often without interpreting for Phillip who did not speak Somali. Most of the women neither spoke English, nor could they read the English written on the PowerPoint slides. At one point, Phillip distributed a handout in English and Somali and asked who could read Somali. All the men and two women raised their hands. Those who could read, read the handout aloud, with some trepidation.
Phillip’s pedagogy emphasized interactions and participant-led activities, with unexpected results. At times, Phillip asked women to present about their experience, where they described their work as mentors in Somali, and Ahmed interpreted. After lunch, the participants were tasked with identifying their business groups and presenting their business plans. However, it was clear that participants were unsure of what their business plan should be and most presented that they were planning on becoming self-sufficient, with no explanation of how or what they would do. The afternoon session became heated as groups presented repetitive and ill-defined plans. Phillip critiqued participants for not taking notes, despite low literacy levels. These small grievances came to the fore when the women became upset that they were being forced to stay late into the day when food distribution and other household tasks were pressing at home. The participants mutinied and ended earlier than expected, with two groups missing the opportunity to present their plans.

**Joseph’s pedagogy.** Joseph’s training, although part of the same overall program, was held separately from Phillip’s. Twenty-six women and ten men, including two interpreters, gathered for the training. Joseph did not conduct introductions or set ground rules but immediately broke the participants into groups and handed out paper and pens. Once the groups were formed, he asked one of the men to lead the morning prayer and they developed ground rules as a group. He was careful to call on participants who were less vocal, telling one man from Kambioos, “You’ve talked a lot, I want somebody different” (field notes, 2015). This group appeared to have higher literacy skills than participants in Phillip’s program with many of them taking notes throughout the day. The women, like those in Phillip’s program, were vocal about their needs and requested certificates of completion once the program was finished. Joseph interrupted his facilitation about the definition of business to explain to me that most of the
participants were students in a local adult literacy class. This led to a conversation from the women about their needs as literacy students, particularly requesting solar lights. Returning to the topic at hand, Joseph led a discussion about definitions of business ideas and profit making. Participants led sessions about specific strategies to sell in their communities, including working with “hookers,” or people who sell clothing on hooks, keeping sales ethical and along Islamic principles related to pricing, and finding a location from which to sell. Joseph, like Phillip, encouraged the participants to become millionaires, leading them on a chant of “yes we can” to motivate them to succeed in their business groups. He concluded with group presentations and a topic recap.

**Vincent’s Pedagogy.** Vincent led the 2016 business and entrepreneurship training in the apprenticeship program, this time located in a classroom of a primary school outside Ifo2. The school was a patchwork of classrooms, built at different times and with assorted purposes. The room for the entrepreneurship training was also makeshift, with a piece of cloth and half-nailed board flapping in the wind, menacingly. At one point, the chalkboard fell on Vincent, exemplifying the intense winds and poor construction quality. Vincent’s training convened 22 women, including two mentors and 20 apprentices.

Vincent began the program by setting ground rules with the participants. Aden interpreted with Ahmed’s help. Vincent was much more relaxed about note-taking than Phillip and Joseph the year before. He asked that the women take notes, and some of the younger women did, especially those still in primary or secondary school, but he did not insist or shame them for not taking notes. However, he relied heavily on English facilitation, sometimes cutting off the interpreter or not leaving enough time for the interpreter to speak. The room was small and the group huddled together with four or five women to a bench, making an intimate
environment. Vincent attempted to stimulate discussion several times throughout the session, and the mentors seemed more than willing to lead discussions, but the apprentices were hesitant and shy, blushing and hiding their faces when Vincent called on them.

Vincent presented entrepreneurship “as an individual and group project that moves people towards self-reliance” (field notes, 2016), foreshadowing Vincent’s discussion of empowerment in a later interview. Vincent covered a wide range of topics with a loose agenda, first defining entrepreneurship, then discussing sales within the community. He drew heavily on the mentors’ experiences, asking participants to list successful businesses in the camps and helping them identify what made those businesses successful. For business plan development, Vincent instructed them to use an analysis focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in the market in Dadaab. After the SWOT analysis section, Vincent sent the participants out to another classroom for tea, a much-needed break on such a hot, dusty, and windy day. After tea, which also included a dose of sand baked into the samosas and mambazi (Kenyan doughnuts), Vincent concluded the program with a discussion about best practices in locally relevant pricing and competing with other crafts people. The women seemed pleased with the training, smiling broadly during the concluding session.

Soap-making pedagogy. Like the entrepreneurship training, the 2016 soap-making program in Kambioos emphasized women’s business groups and practical implementation. This program was unique because the traditional instruction was completed by the time I attended the session. Instead, what I observed was a day in the life of women soap makers as they gained

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11 Although Vincent focused on building businesses, he made no mention of how women participants could build businesses outside of Dadaab because of the legal limitations of refugees’ work.
expertise in the trade. Thus, I considered the training as more of an example of informal learning, where learners fine-tuned their skills to make soap and sell it in their community. One of the reasons I was referred to the soap-making project by field workers at DMO was because the program aimed solely at women, and it seemed that field workers wanted the chance to showcase it through video.

As a day of practice rather than organized instruction, that day’s training was much less structured than other programs I attended. The room was the size of an average classroom but where the standard bench desks would go were large metal machines. The first machine heated the raw materials to process the soap. Asho, a woman who participated in the soap-making program for over two years, arrived first and turned on the smaller machine in the room’s far corner. This machine processed the soap, making long spaghetti-like strands of the raw materials and then finally shaping the bars. On the day I observed, all the work involved reshaping the soap, checking its consistency, making and stamping the bars, and packaging the final products. The room was loud and the machines were dangerous and hot. The women did not wear protective clothing, much to the distress of the team in DMO. There also was some confusion as to my purpose, with one refugee trainer interrupting the women’s work and making them start a new batch so I could see the beginning of the process. I asked that they return to the work they had planned for the day to capture a typical day and eventually they did. As an observer, I identified that women were learning in the process, in refining the soap and making it into smoother and better-made bars, then assessing the bars, and finally measuring and stamping the bars. I also noticed the satisfaction of seeing the piles of bars completed and ready to be sold as field workers and the women showed off the piles for my camera (see Figure 22).
Figure 22. The final products of the soap making displayed for me (Screenshot from training video, soap making program, 2016).

John, the program facilitator who was one of the few western Kenyans I met who spoke Somali, was very critical of the women’s work because they were not using gloves or protective clothing. “You’re not supposed to put your hand in there!” he exclaimed as we watched the video together. John, who was present during the filming and had access to the protective clothing, was likely being critical of himself as well as the women working for not getting in a habit of using the protective clothing. The women reached into the spinning metal that chopped the soap to push it through more quickly. However, he was impressed watching the women work while critiquing the activities they did that “compromised the quality” of the soap. He would return to the sessions to instruct them on improved practices based on the video I captured. The training reached 120 women who learned how to make soap in both hot and cold processes.

**Tailoring pedagogy.** The tailoring program I attended in 2016, occurring on the same compound as the soap-making program in Kambioos, followed a more traditional technical and vocational education model. Participants could sit for exams in this program if they completed two years of coursework. This program aimed to equip learners to start their own businesses or join other tailors in business groups.
Immediately upon arriving in the Livelihoods Center, Monika, the tailoring facilitator who was a western Kenyan tailor, gave me the tour, introducing me to each class. The first room was full of beginning tailors. They pounded their feet on the pedal to make their machines whirl when we walked in, despite not having any cloth to sew, to show us their practice on using the pedal. This group was not the one I would be observing, but were just becoming familiar with the machines and were beginning the tailor program. They used paper to test their work.

After we left the beginner class, Monika introduced me to the tailoring class I would be observing. Monika conducted introductions to 12 women, spanning two generations in ages, and four men seated at sewing machines throughout the room. She was joined by Abdirizack, a youth I had met with earlier that month about a project evaluation, and Omar, both of whom were incentive staff of the organization and had some experience in tailoring. Abdirizack and Omar literally and figuratively interpreted the organization’s mission in the camp. Although they did not have the same views of the programming as national staff, described further below, they fell between “beneficiary” and “field worker” as incentive workers.

After setting an informal agenda, Monika used lecture to (re)introduce the day’s dress project and then question and answer to assess how much the participants knew about the pieces needed for that dress. She also had learners present how to sew particular garment elements. Finally, she asked the participants to work together to cut the fabric, dividing the group in two. This process took a great deal of time because only one person could cut the fabric at once and the few men did most of the cutting. After the participants had their fabric, they returned to individual work that they would continue throughout the day, occasionally calling on Monika, Abdirizack, or Omar for help.
Interpretation was contentious for Monika, who said that English-language instruction was a problem during the program. In the interview, she focused on how the participants were preparing to take an exam in English administered by the Kenyan National Industrial Training Authority, although most of them did not “know how to read and write” in Somali or English. The organization encouraged participants to attend literacy programming hosted in the camp so they would be able to pass the exam without language barriers. Monika divided the day for participants; beginners were expected to practice tailoring all day after a morning instructional sessions but the second and third year participants were only given instruction in the morning so they could go to literacy classes in the afternoons.

**Gender roles and empowerment definitions**

Both Abdirizack and Omar, refugees and incentive field workers in the tailoring program, agreed that “women are human beings” and “need to learn.” This seemingly obvious position revealed that for some people in Dadaab, women were not viewed equally to men, especially not related to education and abilities. Gender roles in Dadaab were starkly defined and gendered constructions of empowerment were present from the beginning of field workers’ definitions. This section analyzes gender roles and empowerment definitions in more depth from field workers’ perspectives.

**Gender roles.** When describing women’s roles in the camps, Phillip (2015) posited that “most of the time Somali women, they are around their house, while men go to different places, directions, to go and look for work.” Confined to the home, Phillip believed that women worked more closely together because “they have more free time to get together.” Although the definition of “free time” is arguable given women’s roles in caretaking, food preparation,
fetching water, and income-generating activities, his observation of the division between men and women’s roles was also reflected in other field workers’ and women’s interviews.

Faith provided insight into men and women’s roles in the home, highlighting that men “track the females’ income” and activities and expect income to be spent on quality meals (field notes, 2016). When men track women’s activities, Faith said that “this type of control on what one has been doing indirectly requires one to account on expenditure or how they use their monies” (field notes, 2016). In this way, women live under some amount of supervision, although the women presented their narratives with significantly more autonomy described in chapter six.

Mohamed (2014) also related women’s empowerment to gender roles involving control of assets:

An empowered woman is a woman who has all the abilities in terms of what we've been talking about: assets, in terms of finance, in terms of fixed assets, in terms of movables. You know? She’s the one who has all of the control of all the assets. And she has all the capabilities in terms of education. And she's enlightened in terms of understanding the prevailing circumstances, including livelihoods including all other factors that bring problems. So, that is a woman who is, who is…empowered. Yes. … and she’s able to stand and say this is not right and that is right. Yes. That’s an empowered woman.

To get to this level of empowerment, women need training.

Gender roles were most clearly defined by field workers in the training for parents of children with disabilities. The program was aimed at women due to cultural understandings that women were responsible for child care and childrearing. Alex complicated motherhood in the program as it was linked with disabilities. He described how in Kenya and in Dadaab, “We refer
to [children with disabilities] as children of the mothers” (Alex, 2014). In this way, even the field workers internalized that “we kind of blame the mothers” for disability (Alex, 2014). Mothers were the ones “in charge” of raising and taking care of children. Placing the responsibility of children’s education on the mothers, Alex described how if they were to train the fathers, the father then “has to go again and teach the mother until the mother accepts to release the child” to go to school (Alex, 2014). In this way, it was almost irrelevant for fathers to participate in the program, since they would need to convince their wives of what they learned.

Similarly, Phillip was keenly aware of the challenges that women faced in his program. Reflecting on a woman breastfeeding during the training, Phillip identified differences in working with men and women. Women “have other responsibilities” and “distractions” so they are difficult to recruit and mobilize for training programs. Although Phillip was frustrated at his inability to mobilize women to participate actively in the session, he was also aware of the different pressures they faced at home and most of the women left his program early to wait in line for food distribution in the afternoon. For men, “they will come very early to the training” and “they will actively participate” but women “will not participate,” or speak openly, especially in mixed-gender trainings.

Voice: Or “what you call being bold.” Field workers noted that women were quieter during programs than men and they presented that silence as an attribute of gender roles. For many field workers, women were viewed as the most vulnerable, lacking a voice (Vincent, 2016), or unable to represent themselves. Vincent presented the problem plainly: “Ladies in this context in Dadaab, they really don’t feel like they have a voice. They don’t like to come out strongly.” Vincent was hesitant to describe an empowered woman in Dadaab because
in the Dadaab context women are, I would say, are oppressed culturally. … They don't have a voice. They're not even supposed to talk. They are not supposed to be doing anything. They are supposed to be at home, bearing children, and taking care of their husbands, and doing all the work.

Many field workers felt that women would need to find and express their voice as part of empowerment.

Faith, who had extensive experience in the camps, including before the 2011 drought, gave several examples of powerful women in camp leadership roles, but always with the caveat that they were exceptional and that she could not understand how their husbands tolerated their behavior. Faith argued that women can also be empowered by being respected and listened to by other women, but that women in the training program struggled with this ability to speak because they would simply agree with the more vocal (often male) participants. Faith concluded with an anecdote she witnessed in the camps:

There's a woman who had going for the meeting. And the men are seated and suddenly this lady was supposed to address them. So, what she does, she takes the microphone and speaks in the microphone. … She was given the microphone because she was the leader of some women's group of some sort in the community. But instead of talking and looking at the men, she looked at the other side and talked. So, you see she's empowered because she's speaking to other women, who are also empowered because they have a women's group. But … that was my first chance of seeing someone say things. So, I am wondering what comes between empowered and what you call being bold. (Faith, 2015)

Faith presented a vivid narrative not only of gender segregation customary in Kenya and among refugees, but also a focus on boldness and courage to speak, often presented in
psychological interpretations of empowerment. She struggled to think of what an empowered woman looked like if she was not bold or did not feel confident to speak for herself, even with her back to the male audience.

**Gender Equity.** When pressed about the difference between empowerment (with no gender modifier) and women’s empowerment, Michael, a facilitator from the teacher training, explained that women were already empowered: “Well, allow me to argue this matter of gender inequity and empowerment of woman personally is getting a little disturbing in context,” Michael argued, having already identified my position on the topic.

Have you attained a hundred percent empowerment of women in America yourself in your country? Some would you say so. So, I think women are more or less empowered… I hear literally women are more empowered in America and they have more opportunities. (Michael, 2014)

My response to this was, “No, that’s not true,” clearly presenting my perspective to Michael and perhaps altering the conversation’s direction in doing so. Michael also did not see how systematic gender disparities in opportunity were related to his program, and believed that the lack of women teachers in the program was “external to us” (2014), or that he could not control who was recruited to teach in the schools. In fact, he argued, women were over-represented in the formal classroom, and he was more concerned about encouraging men in schooling than women.

Although Michael was perhaps the most vocal critique of empowerment focused on women, many field workers spoke of the poor performance of boys in school and the
overemphasis on girl’s education, especially in western Kenya. Vincent also described how the emphasis on women’s empowerment in Dadaab and in Kenya in general had led to de-emphasis on the “boy child” and resulting higher education outcomes for girls than boys. He also observed that as women were entering the workforce throughout Kenya, men were stepping back, leading to tensions within the family as traditional gender roles were thrown into question and some men became “disempowered,” described further below. Abdirizack and Omar also concluded that women were more empowered than men in Kambioos because more programs aimed to empower women, although they also noted that men could use “their own force” more than women.

Joseph (2015) also highlighted the differences between men’s and women’s empowerment:

I think it's different. Empowerment is different. Because there is a belief that a man should be at the top, throughout the culture. I don't know how it happens in the Western culture but in my community… [there is] the feeling that a man should get a good education and a man should be the breadwinner and should have a job. A man should be the one to lead. So, if you try to challenge the system then the problem comes in, in a way…. I think the training would bring us the empowerment in women stronger than the men. … Because even for my training women really concentrated, in the group work. They were very active, that means inside them as a woman she feels oh like, "This kind

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12 Even in the United States, researchers are interrogating concerns about boys’ schooling at the expense of girls (e.g., Kleinfeld, 2009; Ringrose, 2013)
of training is going to empower me." But for the man he feels, "I'm already empowered so. It is not a big deal."

For Joseph, men are already more powerful than women and so he thought it was more important to emphasize women’s empowerment, especially in the livelihoods program. The larger program from which the observed training occurred focused on gendered work, with men learning tailoring and barbering, and women learning tie and dye and running salons for other women. In this way, the program itself differentiated between men and women’s work and the social spaces in which men and women function, and thus what and how they were intended to be empowered.

Finally, Mohamed also did not believe empowerment was the same for women and men:

… if you empower one woman, that means you have empowered the whole village.

Because one woman for example could be empowering a woman to set up business. She will be able to feed her children. She will be able to pay for her baby. But a man, he goes and marry a second wife.

Mohamed drew on the common international development trope that empowering a woman was empowering a village. He also was not the only field worker to describe an empowered man as one who takes a second wife. In 2016, Vincent shared the same views that if he worked to empower men, they would take a second wife and their resources would be spread even thinner than if you work to empower a woman. Both Vincent and Mohamed viewed empowerment, then, as control of resources in the family.

**Empowerment definitions and locations**

Empowerment in Dadaab was translated and reinterpreted from international policy and programming guidelines to everyday experiences. I focused here on local definitions presented initially in programming. International definitions of empowerment were also influential because
all programs were developed and structured based on international norms and donors’ emphases. For instance, publicly available documentation from organizations working in Dadaab, as listed by UNHCR (2016a), defined empowerment as capabilities, especially related to entrepreneurship (IOM, 2015), community development and peacebuilding (RET, 2016; UNICEF, 2016), equitable distribution of power, local ownership and collaboration through inclusion of refugees in programming (Danish Refugee Council [DRC], n.d.), communities as the basis and source of empowerment (FilmAid, n.d.), and developing empowerment through education (Windle Trust Kenya [WTK], 2014). UNHCR (2001) defined empowerment as “a process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities, to reach a level of control over their own environment” (p. 2). These definitions apply to international programming supported or conducted by NGOs. Local practices reflected these programmatic agendas but also refined and translated international discourses about empowerment locally.

The diverse programs described above had common pedagogical tools, notably small group work, question and answer, and discussion. Field workers linked some of these pedagogies directly to their empowerment goals. Mohamed specifically identified his pedagogy as empowering because he hoped to model good pedagogy that the field workers in his program could use in their own work. Yet, empowerment was not solely described in procedural descriptions of how programs empower participants, but was often a broader goal of NGO programs linked with international agendas and organizational missions beyond the specific training observed. I identified three interconnected empowerment goals in programming from field workers’ narratives: learning, financial independence, and change.
Learning. Before observations, field workers defined empowerment as they referred me to specific programs. Empowerment was described in literacy programs specifically as it related to preparing women to (re)enter formal school or adult basic education (field notes, 2015) and understand their businesses built as apprentices, described further below. Empowerment through literacy was also equated with learning at times. For example, George (2016), a field worker who co-facilitated the training encouraging parents of children with disabilities to send their children to school, described empowerment in literacy programming as “learn[ing] English and Swahili languages.”

The teacher training field workers’ goals were to provide in-service training and assess the teachers. As part of those goals, empowerment was defined as developing skills, attitudes, values, and competencies (field notes, 2014). Specifically, they wanted to “empower the teachers,” or to help them teach better, so that they had faith in their abilities and could critically evaluate their environments while encouraging their students to do the same (field notes, 2014).

Similarly, in the program for parents of children with disabilities, the training intended to teach parents how to care for their children and “empower them” to send their children to school (George, 2014). Despite the training goals that focused on educational access of children with disabilities, related to social change emphases in empowerment programming, the field workers spent much of the training emphasizing how to care for and integrate children with visual impairments into the home, community, and schools. Abdi described the rights of children with disabilities as “cleaning himself, toilet training, … bathing, personal hygiene, and washing” (field notes 2014). This training presented the difficulty in balancing information dissemination, often presented through activity-based learning in the training, and more action-oriented approaches to empowerment that included supporting participants to lead social changes beyond
their participation in the program. Thus, the empowerment that the field workers identified from
the teacher training and training for parents of children with disabilities included the direct
learning and encouragement from the training. The facilitators in both the teacher training and
training for parents of children with disabilities prioritized participants’ learning new approaches
and tangible skill development in their work or homes, respectively.

Joseph (2015) believed his whole program was empowering to women participants
because they learned business skills. He equated empowerment with learning, self-esteem, and
being “able to have different ideas for moving their business to the formal level,” or growing
their businesses. Joseph defined empowerment more specifically as a verb, “to give an individual
an opportunity, to do any form of training, to enable them, to move an individual from one level
to the other” in a learning process (Joseph, 2015).

**Financial independence.** Field workers most frequently described livelihoods programs
as NFE programs that empowered women, explicitly or implicitly connecting empowerment to
financial independence, production, and income-generating activities.¹³ Livelihoods is a sector
of NGO- and UNHCR-affiliated programming that aims to build refugees’ skills to earn an

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¹³ Income-generation and women’s empowerment are linked in literature focusing on economic empowerment.
Because many micro-enterprise projects reinforce women’s traditional roles, channel them into low-paying work,
and have little control over whether women can control the income they generate, debates on this topic center on
(re)valuing women’s work in the home (Sen, 1999), the potential positive and negative aspects of development
emphases on women’s roles in production (Rowlands, 1997), and women’s financial autonomy or lack thereof
(Stromquist, 2015). In addition, the utility of microenterprise development in refugee camps given resource
constraints and legal employment restrictions has been analyzed, with some positive findings (Kachkar, Mohamed,
Saad, & Kayadibi, 2016).
income, or improve their livelihood. Activities included technical and vocational education, apprenticeship programs, mentorship related to a specific occupation, and in some cases, higher and formal education. Monika described that vocational programs, such as tailoring, were specifically those that provided certification from the Kenyan government. Most programs in Dadaab were non-formal, potentially leading to participation in a certificate program but more often equipping participants with skills to begin work without state-recognized certification. Even the tailoring certification program that Monika facilitated had never had a graduating class, despite the goals of encouraging participants to sit for the Kenyan certificate exam in tailoring. Livelihoods programming was presented by field workers as empowering through increasing income, autonomy, and decreasing refugees’ dependency on others by allowing them to support themselves financially and building the confidence to do so.

The livelihoods programs were more focused on independence and autonomy. For instance, Phillip hoped that the participants would be more equipped to profit from their skills and run their own businesses after participating in the program. Phillip argued that empowerment was being able to use one’s skills to succeed, particularly by working in “commercial groups” (Phillip, 2015). More specifically, he defined empowerment as “something that gives someone control over their own life” (Phillip, 2015) and he emphasized independence from “relying on other people or any other assistance, like in the case of refugees here.”

Vincent’s (2016) goals in his entrepreneurship training were to increase women participants’ understanding of “the basics of business, definition of entrepreneurship in business” and skills to work in groups to succeed in business. He mentioned women using their skills “to sustain them, to give them a bit of livelihood and independence” (Vincent, 2016). Vincent defined empowerment as
enabling someone to be able to be self-reliant. For example, if you empower someone with a skill such that they are able to move on in space and can use that skill to earn a living. So, empowering means getting someone a step higher than they were before. It could be you empower someone with information or education, could be a skill, could be in startup kits, for example. So, you empower that person. You leave them better than they were before. (Vincent, 2016)

Similarly, John also sought self-reliance so that “if they [women participants] go back to Somalia, they can use the soap-making.” John thought that it was empowering for women to get new ideas. He also defined empowerment as “restoring dignity” which he defined as helping women become more independent and less reliant on services provided in the refugee camps or even other people to provide an income for themselves or their families.

Monika explained the pedagogy and planning of the livelihoods activities at the center in Kambioos, including the distribution of start-up kits, or materials including sewing machines for participants to start their own businesses. The distribution of goods, or “handouts,” was discouraged by most field workers, and even Monika provided an explanation of why they would distribute materials. She explained that they give start-up kits to the best students to encourage participation and avoid increasing participants’ dependency on the organization to provide materials. She particularly highlighted that the organization could not afford to give equipment to all participants. Abdirizack and Omar had different views on the start-up kits, linking them

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14 As described in the chapter two, self-reliance ideologies bound up with individual autonomy are often presented as opposite to dependency. However, women interviewed, and some field workers, identified that collaboration and social recognition were necessary components to empowerment and contradicted dependency expressions.
directly to the possibility of empowering participants. For Abdirizack, the tailoring program’s goal was to provide skills and then start-up kits, or materials for participants to be able to be successful tailors, including hard-to-get sewing machines. Abdirizack explained the training’s purpose as “to empower women.” He went on to describe that “after this training we understand that women can do things, make things, learn.” He defined empowerment as “taking up the person to get a good life” or helping someone improve their day-to-day well-being.

Based on these definitions, an empowered person has a “good life,” access to education, their needs met, and money. Monika defined both goals and empowerment as a process whereby “from the little that I have maybe through skills and knowledge given to me. I become a different person by being empowered with the skills.” These factors, knowledge, skill development, and access to resources, were repeated by both participants as necessary ingredients in empowerment.

**Exposure and social change.** Empowerment goals were defined broadly as learning, income-generation, and social change. One social change focused program that I participated in hoped to “change their [participants’] thinking so that they can do it as a community” or to create a space for communities to lead social change, rather than follow NGOs. The refugee camps include elected officials, local leadership, or “block leaders”, and religious leaders. Elections are coordinated by UNHCR and NGOs but community led. Programming intending to enable participants to lead social change aimed at developing “good governance” or participants’ skills to engage with elected officials. Although field workers hoped to motivate participants to engage in local political structures and create their own advocacy campaigns about community-specific issues, they also directed those campaigns and interactions about specific topics. The SGBV program exemplified this goal by focusing on working with youth to help them identify issues
they wanted to change in their communities, without completely directing the youths’ goals.
Similarly, parents of children with disabilities were tasked with spreading the information they learned to their wider communities to connect learning to action as an empowering process (field notes, 2014).

“Communities empower themselves by doing,” one field worker explained in 2014.

Field workers balanced an emphasis on development-oriented program sustainability (the notion that refugees could make changes without them) with the reality of the humanitarian situation, that refugees were still dependent on food, water, and services distributed by UNHCR and other organizations. Dependency, or refugee dependency syndrome which is described in scholarly literature (e.g., Kisiara, 2015; McAlister, 2013; Wali, 2014; Zarowsky, 2000), was a recurring theme across all the NGO worker interviewees, who described, critiqued, and tried to work against systems that kept refugees dependent on them and other agencies for goods and services, discussed further below. Both field workers and refugees were trapped between development-oriented programming that focused on community ownership and local initiative and humanitarian provision to address human needs in displacement and circumvent policies that disallowed refugee’s freedom of movement and work.

Refugee dependency syndrome is often presented as a pathology in scholarly literature that relates refugees’ dependence on service provision with powerlessness (Kisiara, 2015; McAlister, 2013; Wali, 2014; Zarowsky, 2000). Refugees’ dependency is usually presented as solely negative, although Nussbaum (2003) and others have highlighted how all people are at times dependent on others, whether as children, during illness or due to disability, or in old age, that dependency is compatible with self-respect, and that understanding how people are both dependent and capable is crucial to understanding and working toward gender equity.
Empowerment also involved being “able to see the world differently, … widely” through exposure to new ideas, and have opportunity in their communities (Joseph, 2015). For instance, Vincent hoped that women who participated in the program would have a greater understanding of their work and how they can make successful businesses by seeing “the bigger picture,” or by understanding systems and interactions beyond the refugee camps. Vincent posited that an empowered woman is “someone who is educated … because they are able to see the bigger picture outside Dadaab” and are not dependent on their husband in understanding the world, generating income, and even planning their families. Vincent defined the choices that an empowered woman could make in Dadaab by their access to education and training. His program specifically empowered women to “see the skills they have as a means of starting a business” In this way, empowerment was directly related to exposure, learning, and recognizing one’s own capabilities. By recognizing capabilities, women could potentially become less dependent on others, including family members in Vincent’s view, and find a path out of refugee dependency.

Along with exposure to new ideas and participant-led social change, empowerment was linked with human rights discourses. Empowerment gives “a person knowledge to understand [a] persons’ rights” (Abdirizack, 2016). By connecting empowerment with human rights, Abdirizack, and several women interviewees, identified international sources and norms to define empowerment. Claiming ones’ rights was related to the social change and learning goals of empowerment-oriented programming.

**Power dynamics observed by field workers.** In identifying women’s empowerment in NGO programming, field workers had trouble pinpointing when and how women were powerful in the refugee camps. Joseph was the only field worker to describe power dynamics in the classroom. For example, “When I stand in front of them doing the business training within their
hierarchy they feel [that I] may be more educated, So, ‘Whatever he's telling us is more important so let us keep listening.’” He argued that these power dynamics increased participants’ engagement and learning, which he equated with empowerment, because he was an outsider and deserved respect. More commonly, field workers linked empowerment to power within interpersonal relationships in the home and community. However, defining power in empowerment was difficult for field workers who could understand women’s power within their spheres of influence but defined power more broadly in terms of political influence. Refugees, not having the right to vote in Kenya, were not viewed as politically powerful, despite local elected officials and community leadership.

In the home, mothers had power in the family as active agents of change in their children’s lives. Monika connected power in the home with power in the community by defining it economically. She described power as related to money and leadership. Power for refugee women was “what you can show that you have as a person – money.” Monika presented women’s power as being able to provide for their families and support their own businesses financially. Women’s businesses and homes were intertwined in Monika’s tailoring program, where most women worked out of their home or their neighbor’s home. As such, women who worked had power within their immediate family and community by presenting their skills immediately for sale to passersby and other community members.

According to most field workers, political power was the only clear option for participants to gain real power. Monika related power to the leadership responsibilities within the livelihoods center, the blocks, and the camp at large. John also cited soap-making participants’ power because within the group there were chair ladies, or soap-making decision makers who coordinated with the organization and local merchants, treasurers, spokespeople, “and they are
all women.” He identified these leadership roles within the soap-making groups as expressions of power in the group, although they were externally developed and assigned by field workers. Field workers in the training for parents of children with disabilities hoped parents would gain power to demand educational access for their children and to address grievances. Abasi, Faith, and Eric defined power through political systems, not identifying power outside of elected office or actions by community leaders. Faith invoked Kenyan national politics, claiming that “you can have power but you are not empowered” and Abasi explained that in those cases “you are using it [power] against the will of the people.” Faith and Abasi referenced Kenyan national politics, a topic frequently discussed by Kenyan field workers in Dadaab and connected with their political perspectives of power in empowerment.

In terms of women’s power to create social change, field workers in the SGBV program identified that women and men had to work together to end SGBV in the community. Field workers viewed men as more powerful than women, which was why they perpetuated SGBV and argued that “men… have a responsibility to participate strongly to use their power in and out to protect and prevent SGBV occurrences” (Abasi, 2015). Abasi, Eric, and Faith agreed that when it came to the SGBV program, the women participants would always lack the power to end SGBV. Eric, somewhat jokingly, suggested that the only way the participants would gain that power is if they said “that now from here on, here is the gun. Get anybody committing whatever, kill that one” (2015). Faith brought this point around to the systems in which refugees live, where “they don’t have a court. Since they don’t have any judicial system, they will actually take the law in their hands” (2015). She gave an example of a man who was shot after being accused of rape. Eric followed up by arguing that “if you want to just dump SGBV completely maybe another type of power would come in and maybe give them the legal power to prosecute the offenders.”
Without a functioning judicial system, the only power Eric, Faith, and Abasi could envision the women participants having in relation to the SGBV program was the knowledge and skills they gained from participating and vigilante justice.

John had no trouble connecting power and empowerment. He identified power as leadership, governance, and rights. Women with power could “realize their rights and exercise them.” However, Vincent did not see how power was part of empowerment. Instead “power is far ahead of empowerment,” meaning empowerment could lead to power as women slowly gain more opportunities and access. In sum, the “power in empowerment” that I explored with field workers was the learning that occurred in the program and potential community-based expressions of power, although political power, or power over systems and others, was rarely identified as part of women’s empowerment.

**Field workers’ disempowerment definitions.** To understand how field workers intended to empower women, I also investigated what disempowerment could look like in Dadaab. Because of the durability and frequency of empowerment-oriented programming, field workers often interpreted disempowerment as unintended consequences of programming or project failure. For instance, field workers were concerned that women would be disempowered if they could not use their new skills or knowledge outside of the training. For instance, Abasi described how the educational program could be disempowering vis-a-vis SGBV if participants left the program without identifying that SGBV was a problem that needed to be addressed in their communities.

Beyond failure to reach program goals, field workers were concerned that their empowerment-oriented approaches could disadvantage women participants by questioning traditional gender roles. Joseph was concerned that culturally, women would be “hated” if they
were empowered and tried to change conservative cultural values. Furthermore, women’s empowerment could lead to the family unit’s destruction if “a lady goes back to her husband and told him now we are equal,” causing the family to break up (Abasi, 2015). Abasi defined an empowered woman as someone who “is able to talk where men are.” “Talk sense,” Eric added, emphasizing that men appreciated women who showed that they deserved respect and attention from men and that signified women’s empowerment. Phillip (2015) argued that “gender mainstreaming is [a] better term” because an empowered woman, who was successful, would not be able to find a husband. “It’s difficult for women to marry a man who is below her… so [being empowered] is a disadvantage to women.” Phillip, Abasi, and Eric all emphasized women’s cultural roles in families and in relation to men, fearing that empowered women would lead to less functional households.16

Alex was the only field worker to identify pedagogy as possibly disempowering. He was particularly aware of different pedagogical techniques, a factor he attributed to his educational background, experience teaching blind students, and as a preacher. Through this knowledge, he was critical of the lack of hands-on activities in the workshop for parents of children with disabilities. He was also critical of his own teaching, which he thought was unnecessary as he led the lecture on the 13 types of disability. This lecture did not recognize that learners already had ways of identifying disability in the camp. Alex emphasized cultural understanding and local interpretation as necessary to empowerment, without which the program deemphasized and devalued participants’ experiences and world views.

16 Field workers and women interviewees solely assumed heterosexual relationships throughout data collection.
Interdependence. One key attribute to women’s empowerment in Dadaab was refugee status and dependency on UNHCR and NGOs for food, water, health services, and other basic needs, which I explored here as it related to refugees’ interdependence. Dependency was the most frequently cited example of disempowerment. Vincent defined disempowerment through what he and John, respectively, called the “dependency syndrome” or “dependency thing.” Both referred to women’s dependency on agencies and UNHCR to provide resources. This dependency, Vincent argued, was internalized, where women had trouble seeing how they could succeed, especially in individual endeavors like entrepreneurship and business, without the support of agencies or collaboration with others in the community. At the same time as he critiqued women’s dependency on agencies’ services and resources, Vincent hoped to foster collaboration between women’s groups.

Field workers described in depth how dependency was not merely surface level, dependent for food or water, but also structural within the refugee camps. Outcomes from programs were limited due to the structures of the camps, which limited refugees’ opportunities. For instance, parents of children with disabilities were not able to change educational institutions or social norms and often were forced to send their children to schools far from home to protect them from community members’ harassment. Refugees were dependent on NGOs to provide teachers, educational access, and other services. Alex (2014) described this from the parents’ perspective: “For children with special needs, if he's [the teacher] the only person who's teaching our children, if he goes away, will we get another person? So, we are empowering them but our hands are still tied.” Without control over local issues, like school administration, refugees were thought to be powerless.
For Monika, the risks of disempowerment were also connected to the bureaucratic systems in the camps. For instance, women were required by camp regulations to set up shops in the newly constructed market to sell their products rather than inside their homes. Within the market, competition between more established vendors and newly trained tailors was steep. But participants had no control over what regulations applied to whom and how they were enforced.

Field workers were critical of “handouts” and refugees who solely depended on organizations for resources and material goods. However, in opposition to the “dependency syndrome,” both Abdirizack and Omar were insistent that the tailoring program would not empower anyone without the distribution of materials, particularly start-up kits that included sewing machines distributed by the NGO in the tailoring program, because otherwise the training is like “giving a phone without a sim card,” meaning that participants would not be able to use their skills without the right materials. “When you teach the person the skill, but they don’t have the tool, they are not empowered,” Abdirizack explained to me. For these two incentive workers, disempowerment was related to dependency inversely, where refugees would be disempowered if NGOs did not provide materials and resources, rather than the more typical description of dependency detailed above. Abdirizack and Omar were unique field workers in this study, presenting a very different position of power within the camps, not as outsider field worker who lived in relative luxury, but as insiders to the refugee camps who negotiated with NGOs as “incentive,” somewhat marginalized, staff.

Although field workers emphasized women’s self-reliance in interviews and program goals, they included interdependence as a means for women to end the “dependency syndrome” in refugee life. Recognizing women’s interdependence with NGOs to both sustain programming and receive materials, Abdirizack and Omar questioned more common assumptions about
refugees’ reliance on “handouts.” Another aspect of women’s interdependence was the emphasis on collaborative work described by field workers throughout programming. Most NGOs’ programming goals included women’s collaboration through business groups, political groups, or other collaboratives so that women could identify their own skills, the skills of others in the groups, and could learn to work together to “have a better voice” (Vincent, 2016).

Phillip emphasized how women were especially adept at building functional commercial groups, or business groups, to work together to sell their products. Phillip had observed that “women in this community are a bit marginalized, and they will try as much as possible to look for something. When they get that small opportunity, they try as much as possible to make a difference. And as individually they are marginalized, when they come together at least they find strength.” Like Phillip, Joseph found that the group work was particularly empowering because women were stronger in groups. Vincent also believed that “we empower them [women participants] in the sense that they are able to see the advantage of working together within a group.” For Vincent, Phillip, and Joseph, empowerment was related to self-reliance as much as it was tied to collaboration. Although field workers highlighted women’s interdependence with others through the efficacy of business groups and in community development activities, they struggled to identify how women could be empowered while dependent on NGOs for the provision of goods and services. Independence, or self-reliance, preceded empowerment in field workers’ definitions.

**Chapter summary**

Although I approached this study emphasizing power and empowerment, I recognized during my field work that much of the work conducted by agencies was not intended to address “complex interactions of political, social, and economic factors in the broader society”
The nature of the refugee camps and funding cycles of agencies restricted organizational goals of social change. However, through interviews with field workers, it became evident that part of what the field workers thought was empowering about the training was based on social change and linked with larger interactions. For instance, when Alex emphasized that parents could feel empowered to question their children’s teachers and to demand services, he was referring to exerting power in social systems that were outside the family domain. Empowerment was also related to collective (Prins, 2008) and interdependent activities such as women’s business groups and engagement with systems.

Field workers believed they were empowering women broadly in their pedagogy though more specifically through the act of providing training and learning opportunities. By emphasizing learning as inherently empowering, field workers could achieve programmatic women’s empowerment goals without interrogating what women particularly identified as empowering. For field workers, women’s empowerment was related to participants’ ability to use what they learned and to make changes in their daily lives, whether as community advocates or by generating income. It was also tied to self-esteem and self-reliance, connecting empowerment with women’s understanding that they could make changes in their lives and that they, ideally, did not need to depend on agencies for resources or other services to do so.

Meanwhile, field workers were aware that legally refugees were trapped in a dependent position and often referred to how participants could use their new knowledge and skills upon repatriation, rather than immediately within the camps. Chapter six provides women’s views of empowerment, similarities with field workers’ intentions, and specific interpretations that occurred from the NGO discourse, through the field workers and translators, to women’s daily lives.
Chapter 6

Women participants’ narratives

*Home by Warsan Shire (2016)*

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well  
your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body  
you only leave home  
when home won’t let you stay.  
no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it’s not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under  
your breath ...  
you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land  
no one burns their palms  
under trains  
beneath carriages  
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than journey.  
no one crawls under fences  
no one wants to be beaten  
pitied  
no one chooses refugee camps  
or strip searches where your  
body is left aching  
or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire  
and one prison guard  
in the night  
is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father  
no one could take it

no one could stomach it  
no one skin would be tough enough  
the  
go home blacks  
refugees  
dirty immigrants  
asylum seekers  
sucking our country dry...  
they smell strange  
savage  
messed up their country and now they want  
to mess ours up  
how do the words  
the dirty looks  
roll off your backs  
maybe because the blow is softer  
than a limb torn off  
or the insults are easier  
to swallow  
than rubble  
than bone  
than your child body  
in pieces.  
i want to go home,  
but home is the mouth of a shark  
home is the barrel of the gun  
and no one would leave home  
unless home chased you to the shore  
unless home told you  
to quicken your legs  
leave your clothes behind  
crawl through the desert...  
be hunger  
beg  
forget pride  
your survival is more important  
no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice  
in your ear  
saying-  
leave,  
run away from me now  
i dont know what i’ve become  
but i know that anywhere  
is safer than here
Field workers’ empowerment definitions and goals helped frame the data from women participants in educational programs. However, women’s experiences and histories of trauma, described by Kenyan-born Somali poet Warsan Shire at the start of this chapter, provide for definitions much more relevant to women’s daily lives and activities than the programmatic goals and personal missions of field workers. Through autophotographic interviews, I sought to identify how women interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested empowerment vis-à-vis their participation in the camps’ educational programs. This chapter explores empowerment from these narratives, identifying themes from interviews and the photographs. Given my feminist theoretical framework, I presumed that women represented and recognized their own personhood and had the possibility of being powerful subjects in their own lives. Feminist and postcolonial frameworks helped me understand these expressions of power that were often denied by field workers and within the structures encompassing life as a refugee. Women viewed empowerment as a process toward “the good life,” emphasizing changes in their lives both visible in the photographs and related to the training programs. An empowered woman was defined as someone recognized in her community and having the power to provide for herself and her family.

This chapter first presents themes from all the visual narratives, including identity and relationships, security, and access to resources (particularly education). I explored the visual narratives, coding for common elements to better understand women’s daily activities and frame how they interpret empowerment. I then explored how women in each educational program connected training content with empowerment and their everyday lives. Finally, I summarized the definitions and interpretations of empowerment and analyzed women’s internalizations, (re)appropriations, and contestations of the term.
Visual narrative themes

The photographic visual narratives situated where and how women felt empowered in daily activities and social spaces. However, not all photographs directly related to empowerment in women’s narratives. Some presented women’s frustrations and feelings of deprivation while others were simply photographs of family and friends that the women did not necessarily identify as having anything to do with “empowerment.” Through their descriptions and photographs, I identified themes related to empowerment and learning, specifically highlighting resources and skills, as framed by field workers in chapter five. Here, I posited that there are common elements and divergent experiences that women captured in the visual narratives to explain their daily lives and how women’s empowerment is interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, and contested in the refugee camps. Common photographic subjects included women’s photographs of family members, selling products and the market, moving through the camps on public paths, showing individual and family owned resources, and critiquing community projects, including access to water at tap stands and the quality of NGO projects and constructions in their communities. Women’s experiences diverged in their views of whether NGO-led activities and services were successful or not, views about repatriation, and family economic security.

Upon coding photographs, I created a visual narrative of women’s daily lives to situate their definitions of empowerment in both narratives and physical locations. In total, 24 women shared 3,695 photographs with me. Almost half of the photographs (n = 1,430) were taken in their home compounds, which supported many field workers’ claims that women’s spheres of influence and most of their activities occurred at home. For instance, Zeinab, a tailoring program participant, took her photographs in the training center and her home (field notes, 2016). Given the timing of the photography, immediately after the various educational programs, it was not
surprising that 447 photographs (13%) showed a formal training setting, either the program I observed or a training center in the community like the livelihoods center in Kambioos. Similarly, 410 photographs (11%) were of production related to the livelihoods programs or other income-generating activities in the camp. 388 photographs (11%) were of crafts produced by refugees, such as beaded water can covers and woven mats, separate from the production associated with the educational programs. The locations and items that women chose to photograph related to how they understood the learning outcomes of educational programs and applied them in their daily lives such as women in entrepreneurship programming photographing their products for sale. From photographs of home to the training center, women showcased how educational programming in Dadaab influenced their daily lives. The emphasis on products and crafts also related women’s experiences in livelihoods programs, the most frequent sites of NGO empowerment goals, to direct tangible products for sale.

Women’s homes were generally structured with a courtyard in the middle, one to three bedrooms around a communal space, and a kitchen (see Figure 23 and 24).

*Figure 23. Example of compound structures.*
As evident in Figure 24 where home compounds are demarcated by a low stick fence that look like a rough border, the home compounds in the refugee camps range in size, roughly between 2,000 and 7,000 square feet. Kambioos, depicted in Figure 24, and Ifo 2 have the most grid-like structure, with rectangular compounds, but the older camps, Hagadera, Dagahaley, and Ifo, have all developed over the years into maze-like blocks of compounds with rounded edges.

Within women’s home compounds, the kitchen usually had the lightest weight construction, such as the picture Salatho took of her kitchen in Figure 25.

Figure 24. GoogleEarth image of compounds in Kambioos (retrieved January 2, 2017).

Figure 25. The outside of Salatho’s kitchen (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).
Salatho’s kitchen in Figure 25 was not unique among the women interviewees here and showed the continued construction and poor materials available in the community, with old tarps stretched over a stick frame. Reusing material was an initial code for photographs but was almost universally present in women’s home compounds. Given resource constraints and the longevity of the camps, reusing materials is an example of women’s ingenuity but also reiterates field workers’ views of women as dependent on resources provided by NGOs, such as tarps. The fencing, behind the kitchen, uses the same brambly sticks gathered from the area surrounding the camps and discussed further below.

There were 111 photographs (3%) depicting latrines, but Dhuuxo from the SGBV program was the only one to showcase her compound’s latrine purposefully in her visual narrative (see Figure 26 and 27). In the photographs by other participants, latrines were incidental or in the background, not the photographic subject.

*Figure 26.* Inside Dhuuxo’s home toilet (SGBV program, 2015).
Dhuuxo’s sister covers her nose at the entrance of the toilet (SGBV program, 2015).

Dhuuxo said that she took these photographs to show what was on her compound (Dhuuxo, 2015). The women who participated in the SGBV program were also involved in sanitation and hygiene campaigns and had several pictures showing a “clean environment” (Dhuuxo, 2015). Dhuuxo discussed her household latrine considering these campaigns where sanitation was a community-based, shared responsibility. Most importantly, women proudly showed off their homes and the resources they had on their home compounds.

Men and women did not sleep in the same rooms, but both shared access to any of the spaces in the home compound during the day. Some women took photographs of their sleeping areas, especially at night while their children and other family members slept (see Figure 28).

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Figure 27. Dhuuxo’s sister covers her nose at the entrance of the toilet (SGBV program, 2015).

Figure 28. Home and bedrooms (Farhiyo, entrepreneurship program, 2016).
Figure 28 and women’s other photographs of family members at home helped explain women’s daily routines to identify and understand how they conceptualized power and empowerment in relation to others in their families and communities. Over 60% were photographs of people or with people in them (n = 2,271), showing both the population density in Dadaab and the importance of community for women research participants. In addition, 778 pictures were taken in the community (21%), including 245 at the market (7%), and 204 at the water tap or fetching water (5%). More generally, 52% (n = 1,173) of the photographs with people were solely of women, 35% (n = 800) were solely of men, and 13% (n = 298) were of both men and women. This also verified the field workers’ perspectives that women spent most of their time with other women and family members. Dhuuxo (2015) emphasized that she and her mother and sisters live without any men: “There’s no husband or father who’s [in the camps] on the ground” (Dhuuxo, 2015).

Women identified 479 (21%) of the photographs of people as family members. Twenty-two women also took 622 photographs (17%) of neighbors, showing the extent of social networks and communal life in the blocks and compounds. Some of these neighbors, undoubtedly, were distant relatives or associated through marriage, although we did not focus on these intricacies of relationships in the interviews. All the women took some photographs of themselves, with younger women posing for “selfies” and older women generally posing with family members, totaling in 160 photographs where participants appeared (7% of photographs with people). The social networks that women presented and their daily activities at home framed discussions defining empowerment.
**Identity and relationships.** Women prized their familial relationships and community networks, often boasting about their families through photographs of their siblings, children, neighbors, local leaders, and Imams. In addition, 49 photographs (1%) also included the field workers and 38 photographs (1%) included mentors associated with the educational programs observed, some posed and others clearly taken as the women tested their cameras for the first time. Twelve of the women also took 50 photographs (1%) of other NGO field workers they met throughout their days. The prevalence of field workers in women’s daily activities influenced how they engaged in educational programs, both during the courses themselves and outside of the learning environment. Field workers and participants built relationships outside of the learning environment, encouraging participants to follow programs and work with specific organizations. More broadly, the three main themes that I identified related to identity and relationships in visual narratives were associated with gender roles, disability, and play.

**Gender.** In interviews, all the women emphasized female relationships and work with other women. Several of the programs targeted only women, and all of them intended to have women participants in the majority. Also, the interviews were conducted in a group setting, where all the women could see each other’s pictures and discuss. Although this responded to the limited time we could spend together, due to the structural obstacles discussed in chapter three, it also provided a space for women to speak freely with each other – especially in 2016 with the contribution of Nadifo as our female interpreter.

In each interview, we discussed gender roles. The women in the soap making program agreed that they were the ones who made decisions in the house, not their husbands. They did not define what decisions they were making, however. Even the younger women in the entrepreneurship program in 2016 who did not have households of their own reported that they
attended the training “to support my family” (Mako, 2016). Women clearly felt responsible for providing for their families and felt some autonomy and leadership in their households. Some of the older women in the tailoring class spoke about how generations ago, men were the breadwinners in the family, but now they “are rude” and do not contribute to the household (Nadifo interpreted, 2016). Previous studies with women in Dadaab also found that men were viewed with some reproach, that they were not providing for their families (Abdi, 2004).

Women’s roles in the community and relationships with male family members were in flux. In the discussion of women’s empowerment below, I questioned women’s claims about changing gender roles and views of men in their households and communities.

Disability. The most commonly discussed identity markers for the women related to gender, unsurprisingly, and then disability, including 28 photographs (1%) by six women of people with disabilities. Disability, reportedly has higher incidence in refugee camps (Karanja, 2009) and thus it was not surprising the women encountered people with disabilities frequently throughout their days. Inspired at least in part by NGO programming, there was also a growing emphasis on accepting and adapting to people with disabilities, who historically were shunned within the camps. This was depicted best by Medina, who showed a family photograph including her son with a disability that could not be translated for me (see Figure 29).

Figure 29. Medina holds her son with a disability in her lap (entrepreneurship program, 2015).
Salatho and Fardowso (2015) also took photographs of disabled boys in the camp, as did Dhuuxo (2015) in the SGBV training. These photographs, like Figure 29, showed that the women participants frequently took photographs of people who had disabilities and noted during interviews that these were family members or neighbors (field notes, 2015). At no point in the introduction to the autophotography data collection or the interviews did I mention or ask about disability; rather, it arose from women’s daily lives rather unexpectedly.

To identify why women took photographs of people with disabilities and mentioned them during interviews, I looked closer at the context in which they described each photo. Based on Salatho’s description of why she took the photograph of a deaf boy, she explained that it was a treat for the boy, and seemed somewhat like a charitable action. Similarly, the women took photographs of many boys playing who wanted to pose, but paid special attention to children with disabilities who were playing with the others (Fardowso, 2015; Salatho, 2015). When women noted disability, they highlighted difference within the communities, while also showing sameness, such as Salatho’s (2015) photograph with many boys posing in the frame, one of whom had a disability that she identified (see Figure 30).

*Figure 30. A boy with a disability playing with others and posing for a photograph (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).*
Interestingly, none of the photographs that depicted disability included women or girls, potentially signifying a low survival rate of females with disabilities in Dadaab or more traditional approach to disabled girls, such as confining them to the home, out of sight.\textsuperscript{17}

**Play.** Relaxing and playing were themes that came out of women’s photographic narratives that related to how they viewed themselves, their families, and their communities. Part of narratives about identity and how women achieved the “good life,” these photographs were particularly relevant to notions of empowerment discussed more below. Since women and families in Dadaab were often described as wanting and destitute by field workers, the presentation of play and joy was a clear contrast. Women contested the narrative of life as a struggle for survival by showing their attempts to thrive. Not only did women take repeated photographs of children playing (Salatho, 2015, see Figure 31), but also included photographs of adults’ leisure time (e.g. Fardowso, 2015), as well as pleasure in their craft and production of tie and dye materials, for example.

*Figure 31.* Boys playing and joking for her camera (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).

\textsuperscript{17} In general, there were few girls in the pictures of children playing football or flying kites because girls have more household responsibilities than their brothers.
In Figure 31, Salatho shows neighbors playing and enjoying her camera. Community and family members often posed or requested photographs from women interviewees here, with many photographs of groups smiling or posing. Zeinab showed her children playing and posing for the camera, taking mostly videos (Zeinab, 2016, see Figure 32).

Figure 32. Her children playing and posing for her (Zeinab, tailoring program, 2016).

Zeinab’s photographs of her family relaxing and posing were like many women’s photographs of their families at home. Asho took 53 photographs of her children playing with her cats, whom she treated as pets and housed within her compound (see Figure 33). Cats were common animals in Dadaab, though rarely kept as pets by refugees or field workers.

Figure 33. Asho’s daughter holds one of their cats (Asho, soap making program, 2016).
Ijabo described taking photographs of her children as playing: “the pictures are about making fun with children and family” (2016). Many of the photographs showed the women enjoying themselves, laughing with friends, teasing their family members, or showing off their work and home. The emphasis on play related to identity and relationships because it contested field workers’ views of refugees as struggling to survive, while also showing family roles. Nussbaum (2000b) describes how women’s capacity for play is often confined due to social demands such as income-generation and household duties. Women identified that play, security, and resources particularly related to how they defined the “good life,” or a life that allowed for leisure and comfort.

**Security.** Security was a common theme across the women’s interviews and photographic narratives. For instance, during the 2015 apprenticeship program, women were nervous that they would not be able to enter and leave the UNHCR compound in the Dadaab Main Office (DMO). After the training program, which was also held at DMO, they took a minibus back to Ifo, where they all lived. Along the road, their car was stopped and “the driver was arrested” (2015 apprenticeship interview). At that time, there were frequent reports of Al-Shabaab arriving in Dadaab from various, mostly unreliable and unsubstantiated sources, that nevertheless must have been taken seriously. The women were scared they would have to stay on the DMO compound or in Dadaab, where they “did not know anyone” and it would be both expensive and scandalous to stay without family members¹⁸ (field notes, 2015). The women highlighted these everyday security challenges, not least of which occurred in their blocks and

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¹⁸ Women in Dadaab rarely slept away from home unless they were accompanied by family members or chaperoned in some way, such as when Nadifo went to Nairobi with an NGO-sponsored program.
communities, but also were an ever-present risk when they moved between the camps, markets, and the DMO compound.

Associated with housing and resources, I coded photographs related to safety, including photographs showing stick fences (n = 698, 19%), wire fences (n = 94, 3%), public lighting (n = 57, 2%), doors that lock (n = 12, .3%), fire safety (n = 4, .1%), and law enforcement (n = 2, .05%). I paid attention to markers of security given the long history of trauma of almost all the refugees in Dadaab, particularly women. SGBV was well documented in Dadaab both in UNHCR reports (e.g., 2014) and scholarly literature (e.g., Kumssa, Williams, Jones, & Des Marais, 2014). Specifically, firewood collection, which occurred beyond the camp boundaries in the bush or forest, was a risky activity for women in Dadaab, who were often sexually assaulted by opportunistic men while isolated far from others (see Figure 34).

Figure 34. Women returning from firewood collection (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016)

Despite projects to curb women’s collection of firewood outside the camps, participants in this program took 35 photographs (1%) of women collecting firewood (see Figure 34). No women described participating in firewood collection themselves in their visual narratives but
rather took photographs of firewood collection or described its dangers. Although this practice was well studied and UNHCR had implemented firewood distribution to curb the risk women face, it was unclear in interviews how frequently SGBV assaults during firewood collection happened or to how many women.

In addition, wire fencing was used almost solely around NGO compounds or food distribution spaces in the photographs. With only 94 photographs of wire fencing (3%), it was clear that women did not use wire fences at home. Instead, stick fences were used, with 698 photographs (19%) showing stick fencing, the most accessible and common fencing around compounds, also gathered by women venturing into the bush. Finally, the lack of latching or locking doors was apparent in almost all women’s compounds, with only 12 photographs showing housing with locking doors. Rukio, who participated in the 2015 SGBV program, presented photographs of the UNHCR protection center for victims of sexual and gender-based violence to highlight the lack of security in the community (see Figure 35). Rukio explained that the protection tents had no doors at all and were merely fabric intended to protect victims of assault within the community.

Figure 35. A woman from a minority group who lived at one of the UNHCR protection centers (Rukio, SGBV program, 2015).
The protection tents were one of many attempts that UNHCR and organizations made to support a safe, secure environment with limited resources and temporary structures in the camps. Solar lights and electricity were also valuable resources for security and status at the household level. Fifty-seven photographs (1%) showed solar-paneled public lighting, although in interviews women often remarked that those lights did not work. Otherwise, at night the camps were almost totally dark, with very few generators in the blocks. Some women had solar lights for studying or cooking at home, which were charged during the day and used in their rooms or kitchens at night. Twelve women took 32 photographs (1%) showing electricity or solar paneling in their home compounds or shops. Two women also emphasized the importance of radios in their daily activities, showing the radio in the kitchens as they prepared food (see Figure 36 and discussion below).

*Figure 36. Listening to the radio as she prepared breakfast (Mako, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

The use of electricity, such as solar panels at home and radios sharing news about repatriation, was one example of the overlap between women’s access to resources and their comfort and security.

Over the three years of data collection, attitudes about repatriation became more urgent, leading to many conversations about what would happen when the camps were eventually closed. Nadifo, Mako, and the other women in the 2016 entrepreneurship training talked at
length about the next steps of repatriation, telling me they were scared for the day they had to return to Somalia. Ifrah even took a photograph of the family’s packing process (Figure 37).

Similarly, Salatho photographed an NGO-sponsored call center (see Figure 38) that the refugees could use “in case you have relatives [to call], you come here and they give a free call back home. It is called free call center.” The call center, used mainly to contact family outside of Kenya, also exemplified NGO-provided resources, a common theme in the camps.

Planning for repatriation was a theme for both women and field workers who were unsure of when and how relocation would occur during data collection. The women’s description of
their use of electricity both for security and as a community resource also related to their visions of “the good life” that they tied to empowerment, discussed further below.

**Resources.** The photographic narratives spoke to some elements of “the good life,” or of being successful, happy, and comfortable through access to resources and positive circumstances. As described below, the good life was linked to interpretations of empowerment. Most immediate to women’s daily lives, their home construction was associated with comfort and resources (e.g., Medina, 2015; Farhio, 2015). 475 photographs (13%) showed buildings with stick walls, with 395 (11%) showing fabric walls and only 54 showing mud walls (1%). Medina explained in her photographic narrative that mud walls were preferred by describing the old stick home she use to live in and compared it to her current house (see Figure 39).

![Figure 39. Medina’s old home (right) is now her kitchen, compared with the newer building (left) with tin walls and roof (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).](image)

19 Noland’s (2006) work with autophotography emphasized how photographs can allow research participants to show how they construct themselves, including presenting their self-concepts in a positive light. Women participants in this study clearly presented how they worked to create a good environment for themselves and their family, emphasizing moments when they were joyful, in contradiction with narrow notions of vulnerability mapped onto refugee women by field workers.
Resources at home were only one example of development in the photographic narratives. Ijabo (2016) emphasized how many items were available in the market, taking a series of photographs of well-stocked shops run by women (Figures 40 and 41).

![Fabric sold at the market](image1.png)

*Figure 40. Fabric sold at the market (Ijabo, tailoring program, 2016).*

![A well-stocked shop](image2.png)

*Figure 41. A well-stocked shop (Ijabo, tailoring program, 2016).*

The market was the source of most of the women’s resources, because most refugees lacked space for livestock, the most common traditional Somali livelihood source, or agriculture. Like the immediate concerns regarding construction materials for housing, 17 women took 143 photographs (4%) of preparing food or eating at home. There were also 63 photographs (2%) of food distribution, likely due to the timing of the photography project. Distribution was a common activity where women dominated the public space, but it only occurred at set monthly times for
each camp and block (see Figure 42). Distribution was one of several community-based activities provided by NGOs and UNHCR.

![Figure 42. Women waiting in line during food distribution (Falhado, entrepreneurship program, 2016).](image)

Falhado’s picture (Figure 42) showed how distribution was immediately turned around at the market, with recently distributed food on sale (see Figures 43). Deka also described how food from distribution, marked with United States flags in white bags, was being sold in the market as an example of how refugees found alternative income sources with limited resources.

![Figure 43. Food for sale in the market immediately following distribution (Deka, tailoring program, 2016).](image)

Medical care was also a resource that UNHCR and associated NGOs provided to the community. Although women only took 16 photographs (.4%) related to medical care, mostly of
ambulances (see Figure 44), there were common concerns about access to this vital resource both from women and field workers, who described the closure of hospitals and other medical facilities as repatriation loomed (Vincent, 2016). Hodan notably documented an ambulance as it picked up a woman in labor at her neighbors’ compound. A crowd formed around the ambulance, both signifying the importance of medical care and the interest in the community in each other’s health and well-being.

![Ambulance picking up a woman](image)

*Figure 44. Ambulance picking up a woman (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

The water tap stand was also a space frequented by women, with 204 photographs (6%) from 14 women showing a visit to the tap stand. Falhado noted that all family members participated in fetching water, but the photographs show mostly women at the tap stand (see Figure 45). Dhuuxo noted that the water was provided by NGOs and there was little community ownership of taps and other resources.

There were only 14 photographs (.4%) showing a washing tap, all of which were located on NGO compounds or schools because home compounds had no independent water sources (see Figure 46). During analysis, I coded washing taps with other signifiers of health, such as mosquito nets, cleaning, and medical care. There were 26 photographs (.7%) showing mosquito
nets, most of which were taken inside women’s rooms, although some also showed repurposed mosquito nets used to enhance fencing or walls.

Figure 45. The tap stand where mostly women and some children fetching water (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).

Figure 46. A washing tap at her school (Hodan, entrepreneurship program, 2016).

Cleaning was a common theme amongst refugees both in formal interviews and informal conversations. Cleaning, often called sanitation, was related to water access, resources, and community collaboration. Given the camps’ longevity, and the lack of a sanitation system, for over 20 years refugees have been disposing of waste in various ways, sometimes burning it
within their compounds, in central locations with deep holes dug for waste (see Figure 47), or along the outside camps’ edges, where the newest and often poorest refugees build shelters. Women took 75 photographs (2%) of themselves and family members cleaning their compounds, showing both a regular activity and reflecting their concerns about disease and poor sanitation that were common concerns in camp life.

*Figure 47. A communal waste tank, most of which is underground (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).*

Access to housing, water, and sanitation all related to women’s use of space in their communities. Contrary to the view by many field workers that women’s lives were restricted to their home compounds, the photographs showed access to diverse spaces. One unexpected example came from Salatho (2015), who showed the main form of transportation in the camps: a photograph of a woman sitting side saddle on a motorcycle kicking up dust as it drove through an open path in the middle of the camp (Figure 48).
Access to motorcycles and motorcycle taxis related to wealth and income to cover fares and fuel. Access to transportation was also a marker of comfort and income, with 12 women taking 55 photographs (1%) showing transportation that they, a family member, or neighbor use. Given the heavy restrictions on refugees’ movement, transportation was particularly important, from the donkey cart to the NGO-labeled vehicles and private buses.

Markers of wealth were particularly associated with women’s views of empowerment, including the mud walls described above. Based on these data, I coded 753 photographs (20%) related to income-generating activities, 410 of which (11%) focused on women’s products that they described making themselves. There were also 310 photographs (8%) of the market and 33 photographs (1%) of someone selling.

Mako in the entrepreneurship training in 2016 described how she and her mother were now the bread winners in the family, showing off their work in tie and dye that they sold in different markets to reduce competition and distribute income (see Figure 49 and 50). The ability to increase family income was a common conversation with women involved in livelihoods projects, however they never described income as individual or belonging to one family member.
Beyond leisure and play described above, another marker of comfort related to resources within the home, such as animals and material goods. Fourteen women took 85 pictures (2%) of goats and five women took 21 pictures (1%) of chickens in their compounds. Both chicken and goat were the most common source of meat in refugees’ diets and valuable possessions. For material goods, 11 women took 76 photographs (2%) of wheelbarrows, valuable resources in transporting water and the large sacks of food distributed by UNHCR and affiliated agencies. Wheelbarrows were clear marks of wealth, as were donkey carts, with eight women taking 34 photographs (1%) of these. There were 164 photographs (4%) of fabric, which was usually
correlated with women engaged in tie and dye livelihoods activities, but also related to how women dressed and were responsible for laundry in the home.

**Schooling.** During the interviews, women connected education and learning with their access to resources, discussed further below. Nine women took photographs related to formal education, although many of the women were well beyond school age and had no formal schooling available to them. Salatho’s (2015) photographs of a boy on the way to school and girls in uniform going to school were also coded as formal schooling (Figures 51 and 52).

![Figure 51. Her son on the way to school (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).](image1)

![Figure 52. Two school girls walking to school in the morning (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).](image2)
Of the photographs in formal education, the five younger women interviewees in the 2016 entrepreneurship program also took 139 photographs (4%) of their classmates and school buildings, emphasizing the importance of these relationships and school itself. Some women included photographs of themselves or family members reading the Quran (n = 64, 2%).

For Dhuuxo (2015), education was crucial for children’s success in life because “when they become old, or they grow up, they won’t know what is going on in the world for lack of education” (Dhuuxo, 2015). She presented photographs of children who were not in school in the hopes that she could convince them to (re)enroll (see Figure 53). Farhiyo (2016) also took photographs of school “because that’s where we learn something” (field notes, 2016, Figure 54).

*Figure 53. Children playing who were out of school or had dropped out (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).*  

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20 The boy in the bottom left corner of this image appears to be on crutches, which Dhuuxo (2015) did not mention in the interview.
Education and religion were intertwined in women’s lives through reading and *duuksi* (see Figure 47), a day school run by an *Imam* or other respected community members that is an alternative to formal education in the camps. *Duuksi* enrolled younger children and was less advanced than *madrassa*, which was also available in the camps (field notes, 2015). Several women took photographs of the students and Imams, one of whom was a relative of a woman participant. Six women presented 44 photographs (1%) of *duuksi*, showing alternate forms of education for boys and girls in the camps. Reading the Quran was the most common form of literacy in the photographs. Of the 50 photographs (1%) of someone reading, 14 (.4%) explicitly showed the Quran, such as Salatho’s (2015) picture of her son and children studying before and after *duuksi* below (see Figures 55 and 56).

*Figure 54. Classmates at school (Farhiyo, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

*Figure 55. The Imam teaching a lesson at *duuksi* (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).*
Figure 56. Her children studying for duaksi (Salatho, entrepreneurship program, 2015).

**NGO-sponsored resources.** Dhuuxo’s (2015) photographs emphasized the importance of NGO-sponsored facilities in her daily life and as sites for future work. NGO programming, as part of the quasi-state apparatus, is pervasive in all aspects of life, from access to water (see Figure 57) to schooling and religion. Halga also noted the importance of NGO-sponsored water tanks.

Figure 57. NGO-sponsored water tank (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).
Duaksi’s, madrassa’s, and other schools also were often funded by or supported by NGOs. She showed a series of photographs about a shop funded by an NGO and run by her neighbor (see Figure 58). Although this shop was originally supported by an NGO, after the support ended “the shop is going down” because it was far from the market center (Dhuuxo, 2015). Dhuuxo said that she took the photograph to show that this shop had failed despite initial NGO support.

![Figure 58. Neighborhood shop, originally supported by an NGO (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).](image)

NGO programming and distribution were also intertwined with housing and other buildings, cited as aesthetically beautiful by several of the women (see Figure 61). Medina (2015) talked about how in general, people’s lives had improved and they could live in better homes: “These are original house where people use to live (see Figure 59), but these days they at least have iron sheets … but some of them are still living … in this kind of house, for example … [her neighbor] was living [in] one of these houses but now you can see houses like this constructed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), supported by UNCHR” (see Figure 60).
Farhio (2015) also highlighted how her neighbor’s house had a tin roof, which was a sign of wealth. Kowsar (2016) focused on NGO-sponsored construction beyond housing, taking photographs of well-constructed NGO-sponsored buildings through barbed wire (see Figure 61). Kowsar was proud of the work NGOs had done in her community, citing specific projects that had “brought development” (field notes, 2016). She identified a working security light and her school as part of these successful development projects.
Figure 61. Good construction (Kowsar, entrepreneurship program, 2016)

The photographs of NGO-supported activities, from water taps to schools and businesses show the pervasiveness of NGOs in women’s daily lives. As such, women had no trouble connecting learning outcomes, training activities, and what they perceived as the empowerment program goals to their daily lives. The following section explores women’s interpretations of empowerment related to their participation in educational programs.

**Empowerment definitions: Educational programs linkages and themes**

Women participants defined empowerment related to their participation in programming and in daily life. Below, I describe how women related empowerment to each observed program, exploring nuanced and diverse understandings of empowerment. For each program where autophotography was used, I present the women’s narratives about empowerment as a collage, with an emphasis on the common themes between women’s experiences and identification of empowerment.

Foundational to women’s understandings of empowerment was that “empowerment is the same for men and for women, because it makes them able to do the same things” (Hodan, 2016). The emphasis on equality in action raised by Hodan exposed a liberal feminist understanding of gender roles and relationships. Men were not the only ones with abilities. Coming from Somalia
where women had little access to education and sometimes were unable to even meet socially to share with, connect, and learn from other women due to insecurity, restrictive gender norms, and gender-based violence, the recognition of equality in ability was fundamental to women refugee research participants’ conceptions of empowerment or accessing power.

**Teacher’s training and training for parents of children with disabilities.** Although field workers in the teacher’s training and training for parents of children with disabilities were available for interviewing regarding views of empowerment, I struggled to attain women’s perspectives. In the 2014 portion of this study, I was not yet using autophotography and attempted to interview women using the same video-cued technique as with field workers. In a borrowed office at an agency compound in Kambioos, I conducted the group interview with women participants from the training on children with disabilities. My field notes were littered with concerns about the women understanding my questions: Was the interpreter describing this correctly? Why was the interpreter summarizing the participants’ points rather than translating their words? Was I understanding what they wanted me to? Since these doubts plagued the data analysis of the group interview, it was not used here.

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21 In the 2015 and 2016 study iterations, I used stricter interpretation guidelines, such as word-for-word interpretation as opposed to summaries, and emphasized gathering women’s voices through autophotography to address risks in interpretation. Even so, interpretation and translation in 2015 was not as rigorous or verbatim as I hoped because I worked with two male interpreters, Aden and Abass, and had a team of translators whom I could not meet with before they began translation. In 2016, I met with all translators and handpicked who would translate interview audio for transcription. I also recruited Nadifo through the first two years of snowball sampling to serve as the interpreter during all interviews. The stricter translation and interpretation in 2016 yielded results with much more direct quotes from women and clearer understanding during interviews.
SGBV Advocacy. Dhuuxo, Fartuun, Halga, and Mahala (2015), participants in the SGBV program, were all in their early 20s and had spent most of their lives in the refugee camps. Their age and associated family roles (daughter and sister, rather than mother and wife) informed their discussion of empowerment and its linkages with the educational program (see chapter five for more information about the SGBV program). Dhuuxo (2015) believed that the training itself was “a kind of empowerment” because it was morally important to engage in community work to stop or decrease incidence of SGBV. Aden, the interpreter (2015), described that “they now feel like they have the power to convince the community and are equipped with knowledge about SGBV.” The women felt like they could be more persuasive regarding SGBV practices in their communities. Despite the field workers’ attempts to minimize potentially threatening cultural change described by Faith, Eric, and Abasi in chapter five, the women interviewees were explicit in identifying patriarchal patterns, or “a different culture that gives less value to female as to male” that existed in the camps (2015). Part of this movement is increasing awareness about the harms of female genital mutilation (FGM), a common practice in the Somali community in Dadaab reinforced by mothers and female family members who see the process as a necessity for their daughters to have a good life (field notes, 2015). Youth in the SGBV educational program identified FGM as one example of violence in their communities that women’s groups could play a significant role in decreasing. In doing so, they hoped to address cultural narratives that valued women solely for reproduction, emphasizing that women could contribute more to the household and community, if given the opportunity. The women interviewees identified that beyond direct violence, there was “a physical gap and an opportunity gap” between men and women and sought to address this gap through their participation in programs like the SGBV training.
Pointedly, the women agreed that they were empowered because they were confident, supported, and equipped with new knowledge to enhance their survival following the training, all interpretations related to psychological dimensions of empowerment. This emphasis on psychological aspects of empowerment and survival was not unique to women participants in the SGBV program, but also evidenced in other interviews described below, including the emphasis on income generation and livelihoods.

**Livelihoods Programs.** Like the SGBV program participants, livelihoods program participants clearly connected the educational program subject matter and their interpretations of empowerment. First, I explored data from the two entrepreneurship programs, tailoring classes, and soap-making program to frame how women related empowerment to learning outcomes and fieldworkers’ goals, if at all. I then presented women’s visual narratives connected to empowerment and the tailoring and soap-making programs. I presented livelihoods educational programs separately here to look more specifically at how the programs themselves, which had very different pedagogy and goals, related to empowerment from the women’s perspectives and experiences. However, clear common themes arose, particularly related to abilities, independence, and recognition from women’s narratives in all the livelihoods programs as well as the self-actualization and potential implementation of learning described by the SGBV program participants.

**Entrepreneurship.** I attended three entrepreneurship classes, two sessions in 2015 with different facilitators, and one session in 2016 with a third facilitator. Abass (2015) interpreted in 2015, switching between words meaning empowerment and encouragement in the translated transcript. In 2016, Nadifo used word-for-word interpretation, thus helping to collect more detailed data. The women interviewees in the 2016 entrepreneurship program were younger, all
in their late teens and early twenties, and had more English skills than the 2015 cohort. This section includes women’s narratives from the 2015 and 2016 entrepreneurship programs interwoven to focus on themes relating empowerment to the educational program.

Women described empowerment as self-reliance and the ability to “do something” to succeed in their businesses (field notes, 2015). They at first connected empowerment with learning, emphasizing what they had learned from the program, such as how to start a business. Similarly, Kowsar (2016) felt empowered when she recognized that she could “do something” and grow up to be a successful woman. Ifrah (2016) had a slightly different view of empowerment. Rather than being able to “do something” she thought empowerment was “the ability to have something to do,” (field notes, 2016) and: “I feel that I can do something when I grow up so as to help myself, parents and also the community.” She connected empowerment with both personal aspirations and what she learned in the program. Hodan and Farhiyo (2016) also connected empowerment with learning related to the training and her formal schooling. Hodan built on the correlation of learning and empowerment when she emphasized that empowerment also meant “working with different people and talking to new people, meeting new people, [and] trusting each other” (field notes, 2016). The emphasis on individual actions combined with cooperation and building social networks related to power to and power with approaches to empowerment and reflected field workers’ goals. Part of these interpretations related to autonomy, that women gained skills to do something on their own, but Hodan also emphasized that the collaborative elements of her work as well as the learning environment itself was part of her definition of empowerment. Collaboration and group work particularly highlight the spectrum between self-reliance and dependency, emphasizing that women may increase their self-reliance by coordinating with others, and depending on their community for support.
Young women in the 2016 entrepreneurship training defined empowerment as “building a person up, giving them training so women can do things” (field notes, 2016). Empowered women are “active, living a good life” (Mako, 2016; field notes, 2016) and have abilities and power. The women in the 2016 program thought everyone had power in the camp and connected their personal power with their human rights, which they saw as the source of power (field notes, 2016). Mako (2016) thought power and rights were intertwined, or that “the person who has power acts like she has the acquired rights” and “the person has the right to be there because she is powerful.” The training was perceived as empowering because it helped the women generate income to support their families and “an opportunity that can change society” (field notes, 2016). I tied women’s power as their “right to be there” to presence and recognition, or community and women’s own acknowledgement of their value and quality of their work.

**Tailoring.** The women who participated in the tailoring program in 2016 identified similar definitions of empowerment as women in the 2015 apprenticeship training. Ijabo, Lul, Deka, Falhado, and Zeinab were excited to participate in the interview, speaking quickly and settling into the air-conditioned office space comfortably from the interview’s beginning. This was in part due to Nadifo’s excited and relatable presence, as she guided and explained the interview’s purpose and what we would do next. This interview seemed like “a morning off from regular life to sit in an air-conditioned office (by good luck the team was all out when they arrived) and talk about their lives, from their point of view” (field notes, 2016).

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22 NGO programs emphasized human rights in Dadaab, creating a large Somali diaspora with robust understandings of human rights discourses, questions and positions about gender roles and rights’ violations like SGBV (fieldnotes, 2016).
Ijabo (2016) defined empowerment as support to women “so that they can expand their views and get more opportunities,” thus equating empowerment, exposure, and learning (field notes, 2016). Deka (2016), who appeared to be the oldest in the group and had a daughter who also participated in the tailoring program, expanded on this subject by emphasizing how empowerment meant creating livelihood programs for mothers and the older women so they could continue learning. She mentioned helping mothers do domestic work to improve the community at large (field notes, 2016).

The tailoring program was particularly helpful, they described, because “it can help people do work, help children, and see women’s work recognized by others” (field notes, 2016). Ijabo added that through tailoring she could compete with men, who were typically tailors in the camps, and that women and men could do the same quality work (field notes, 2016). Deka agreed that her tailoring would be impressive to other people, and, importantly, that she could “compete with men” in their work: “When men see the clothes that we have made they say it is impossible this thing to be done by a woman.” Not only were women emphasizing gender equality as aspects of empowerment, but they also emphasized recognition – or that women’s work was impressive and competent. Community recognition was a common theme throughout the women’s interviews and included and expanded on women’s self-confidence, described by field workers, to include social value and community contribution.

Deka found tailoring empowering because women were doing their own work and they found the work interesting (field notes, 2016). Lul defined empowerment as it related to tailoring through her freedom to participate as she chose and that no one was pressuring or controlling what she did. Deka and Lul highlight self-satisfaction and self-direction. In the refugee communities, where there is extensive oversight of women’s daily actions even as they have
control over and responsibility for most of the household activities, the freedom to participate in a program like tailoring, a traditionally male dominated field, related to these women’s understandings of empowerment.

Falhado agreed that the tailoring was empowering, but only when she had the materials to do the work. She could not understand what empowerment meant without the materials to do or to make and felt like she needed further training beyond tailoring so she could “be empowered so we can teach the children and people will come to us for [tailoring] work” (Falhado, 2016). Zeinab agreed that she was “empowered through new skills” but “still need support for those skills,” such as equipment. Zeinab connected tailoring specifically to power “because it is a source of work” (2016). Falhado’s and Zeinab’s emphasis on the need for continued support from UNHCR and NGOs reflects the “dependency syndrome” field workers highlighted, and the restrictions on and access to resources in the camps and surrounding communities.

Deka’s entrepreneurial spirit in expanding her work with “other mothers” both reinforced field workers’ goals and showed her autonomy and confidence to expand her work and build a community of tie and dye craftswomen in the community. Similarly, Ijabo said, “Empowerment is when you change from someone who doesn’t know anything to now knowing something. You can do things for yourself. You can do anything and make your own business. You can get your daily bread” (field notes, 2016). This definition relates to psychological approaches to empowerment that include both learning and confidence as well as economic empowerment to provide for your own food. Deka pointed out changes in her daily life: before she had to buy things but now she can make her own dresses. Both Deka and Ijabo were wearing dresses they made. Ijabo even showed off the V-cut at the top of her dress that she made specifically to ease her ability to breastfeed, a unique adaptation of a style she learned in the tailoring program.
Lul concluded that because of their participation in the tailoring program, they were educated people, were “better than before,” and their lives had improved (field notes, 2016). Tailoring was particularly part of this empowerment process, as Ijabo (2016) explained: “We see tailoring as a great help, we support our children with the tailoring, we are exemplary people in the society, so we see tailoring as a big thing. Even tie and dye [is big]. All technical skills are important for women.” Deka (2016) reiterated that “tailoring is a way of helping our children in terms of income.” The women in the tailoring program emphasized social recognition of their work, learning, confidence, and the power to change their circumstances.

**Soap-making.** The soap-making training was an example of ongoing informal learning following a traditional educational program. The training occurred almost two years before my observation. Instead of observing a formal training environment, the soap-making training I attended was more informal practice of the women’s skills and “learning by doing” (field notes, 2016). Hawo, Kusow, Kimo, Asho, and Aden arrived daily to practice making soap and sell their products in the market. The training did not have lecture or a step-by-step approach but instead the women’s work was observed and field workers made suggestions and recommendations to improve their work’s quality.

Hawo, the most outspoken and youngest women in the interview (born in 1981), argued that the soap-making training was not empowering because it was not something she could do without the NGO’s support. Overall, the women agreed that empowerment was not possible in the soap-making or other activities that produced items for sale, if they did not have training or access to resources such as the heavy soap-making equipment and machinery they learned to use through the NGO educational program.
The group was light-hearted, laughing at my questions about empowerment and gender roles. They specifically thought that my question about decision making in the home was funny, pointing out that “they [the women] are the ones who make the decisions” (field notes, 2016). They implied, although they did not directly state, that they oversaw all household decisions, including finances. Whether they also decided who accessed school or who worked was unclear, but the implication was that they presented themselves as controlling the resources they brought into the household.

However, they did not believe that empowerment was the same for men and women because women played a more important role in providing for the family. Men, who traditionally played this role, were not empowered, the women agreed, because there was no work for them. Instead, women “are running up and down looking for the daily bread for the family” and are more often targeted in NGO programming such as the soap-making program. To compensate for men’s lack of support for their families, women “work more than men and have more opportunities. Men don’t have things to do so women look for more education” (field notes, 2016). Field workers and women commonly noted that men had fewer opportunities in the camps, and perhaps in Kenya, because of increased emphasis on girls’ education and increased programming on women’s livelihood activities. Mohamed (2014) and Vincent (2016) provided the organizational rationale for why NGOs would target women more than men: women would be more likely to contribute their earnings to the household, whereas men may take a second wife or use their earnings for personal purposes rather than for the good of the family.

In summary, women connected their definitions of empowerment to their experiences in the educational programs. From the women’s narratives, an empowered woman was someone
recognized in her community as strong and effective, who could make changes in her life and the lives of those around her, particularly to make life more comfortable and stable.

**Opportunities for community engagement.** The women in the SGBV training focused on how the program’s content equipped them to make changes in their community related to SGBV and other issues they identified. Being able to make these changes was part of this group’s definition of empowerment. For instance, Dhuuxo and Fartuun (2015) introduced took photographs of potential sites of future SGBV campaigns such as the football field and water tap stand (see Figures 62 and 63).

*Figure 62. The football field and potential site for SGBV campaigning (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).*

*Figure 63. A long line of water cans at the tap stand (Fartuun, SGBV program, 2015)*
Both Mahala and Halga (2015) talked about the confidence they gained from the training as well as from the photography project to more directly engage in their communities. Despite the women’s perceived gains in confidence, Dhuuxo (2015) was the only woman who said she took a photograph of elected community leaders. She took one photograph of community decision makers, elected officials with whom they would need to work on any SGBV campaigning or organizing, as intended in the training program (see Figures 64 and 65). The photograph shows six men sitting and standing in conference at the other end of a large open space.

*Figure 64. Community leaders (Dhuuxo, SGBV program, 2015).*
Although Dhuuxo (2015) knew the leaders with whom she would work, she was not comfortable approaching them at the time she took this photo. Yet, empowerment meant “to get confidence” (Dhuuxo, 2015) and Dhuuxo felt more confident to engage in her community, even if it was by photographing community leaders from afar. Mahala and Dhuuxo (2015) both believed they could “address the problems in the community” and make change related to SGBV (field notes, 2015). All the women emphasized the need for more resources to do this work, knowing that the organization that sponsored the training would not provide resources for community organizing or mobilizing, instead encouraging them to find resources locally and build community ownership of their campaigns. The SGBV training program was unique in this study because it emphasized youth leading projects to address pressing concerns that they identified in their communities. Women’s interpretations of empowerment from the SGBV program was tied to their ability, even with some discomfort, to conduct the activities they learned about during the training program.

*Toward the “good life.”* A recurring theme in all the women’s photographic narratives was change, such as the social changes like those envisioned by the women who participated in the SGBV program or individual and household change toward the “good life.” For example, Farhio (2015) took the photographs she did because “they show development” or “areas where
things aren’t very good and are now better off,” highlighting this comparison within the community and noting that NGO programming was helping to improve her community. Specifically, in the entrepreneurship program, women wanted to show what their lives had been like prior to the opportunities they gained from participating in tie and dye production and the entrepreneurship training, including production of goods for sale. For instance, Medina (2015) explained how her life had changed from engaging in business activities through the program. “This is her current house,” Abass (2015) interpreted to me, “and before she was living in a bush in a small house” so her life had improved from her work and ability to make an income (see Figure 39). Interestingly, much of the evidence that women used to support how they were becoming more empowered and moving toward the “good life” was directly through NGO-sponsored programming, highlighting the contradictions in field workers’ aims to make refugees independent of NGO services.

Hawo took a series of photographs of her children, an NGO scarf, and her products, showing them with pride during the interview. Hawo’s pride in her family, in her work, and even in her scarf given to her by my host organization, speaks to her perceptions of the good life (see Figures 66 and 67). A happy family, secure home compounds, and the ability to produce goods for sale were all evidence that women were both empowered and improving their quality of life.

*Figure 66. Children playing and posing for her, daughter wearing an NGO scarf (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).*
Related to how women conceptualized empowerment as moving toward a “good life,” every stage of production was shown with pride through women’s photographs. For example, Farhio (2015) showed off her products like Hawo’s picture above, including an image of her mentor, Rahmo, selling fabric to a man from their community (see Figure 68). Farhio (2015) talked about her experience in selling materials, not only at a home compound but at a community shop run by her mentor. By showing off her products being sold, Rahmo presented the value of her work and proudly talked about her collaboration with her mentor and business group who were successfully making sale in the community.
The participants in the entrepreneurship program highlighted change in their personal circumstances and their autonomy to produce goods for sale. They presented photographs with pride, showing their work and successful businesses in their community. They also highlighted the struggles in daily life, emphasizing that although they could make changes associated with their definitions of empowerment, life was still difficult. The women showed that they “were able to do something” and “had something to do” in the first place through their participation in NGO-sponsored programs. These interpretations of empowerment reflected women’s recognition of their own self-worth, which they tied to their participation in educational programs.

The women in the soap-making program focused less on the ability to do, and more on the ability to make. They agreed that empowerment was about their ability to make their futures as well as to produce goods for sale (field notes, 2016). Kusow posed with a bar of soap in her photographic narrative to make this point (see Figure 69).

Figure 69. Displaying her soap (Kusow, soap making program, 2016).

Empowerment was tied to the act of making, both making soap and other products for sale. It also related to solidarity within the group of “makers,” or that “empowerment has to do
with standing with people who make, being one who makes” (field notes, 2016). To exemplify this, Hawo showed a series of photographs showing a salon business (Figure 70) that she worked in with a mentor. She saw this work as particularly empowering because not only was this project independent of any NGO’s support, but targeted women and was women-run and founded (field notes, 2016). The beauty salon was the only example of a woman-run business that, allegedly, was not supported by an organization.

![Figure 70. Beauty supply business and mentor (Hawo, soap making program, 2016).](image)

**Change still to come: Deprivation narratives.** Although the women described positive changes they were seeing in their communities that they attributed to NGO programs and as evidence of women’s empowerment, they also frequently highlighted struggle. Ifrah’s (2016) local water tap was broken and flooding, and she photographed it to show the lack of resources in her community (Figure 71). She laughed as she told me that the broken water tap did not empower her. For Mako (2016), the water tap was full of hazards. She told a story of an elderly woman who slipped and fell at the water tap and said the tap was not a place where she felt empowered.
Hawo took pictures of a long queue that formed at the water tap as the tap dried out in the morning. She said wanted to show the world that there was no water, to highlight what needed to be changed in her community (field notes, 2016, see Figure 72).

Farhio (2015) began her narrative describing how poor her community was, they relied on food from the WFP, and often whole households had only one goat for milk. Although the women highlighted various signs of wealth and comfort, such as owning goats, they also depicted the difficulties and pressures they faced in reaching these goals of wealth. For instance, Kowsar (2016) showed homes that were in disrepair (Figure 73) and emphasized that livelihoods programs were important so that people could build better homes.
Farhio and Medina (2015) both emphasized the poor quality of housing and life in the camps, as well as opportunities that allowed them to succeed and survive more sustainably than some of their neighbors. Hodan (2016) also talked about the poor quality of the construction of her school. The school had no walls and the wind blew aggressively through the classrooms (Figure 74). Hodan wanted to take photographs of school because it was a site of learning but also because it was in disrepair. In that way, the school was both empowering as a place where Hodan learned but also she felt it was not empowering because it was in such poor condition (field notes, 2016).
Interestingly, Aden also highlighted challenges her family faced, with her first photograph in her narrative. She showed an image of her daughter’s hand which had an abscess (see Figure 75). She requested I print this picture so she could show her daughter how the wound healed over time. Aden related her photographs to empowerment first in the act of taking them, as many other women who participated in this study, but also in her ability to show her daughter that her pain was temporary (field notes, 2016).

![Aden's daughter's hand with an abscess](image)

*Figure 75. Aden’s daughters hand with an abscess (Aden, soap making program, 2016).*

Many of the photographs that highlighted deprivation related to women’s hope that they could show the world how they lived in Dadaab. Unexpectedly, women used autophotography in this study to “show the world,” through me, what life was like and what challenges they faced (field notes, 2016). This expression was part of some women’s definitions of empowerment, as they connected the autophotographic data with program empowerment goals. As an element of the study that related tangentially to empowerment in the original study design, I explored how women connected autophotography and empowerment below.
Autophotography and empowerment

Naively, I did not at first consider the role of giving cameras to women and their conceptualizations of empowerment. During the first autophotographic interview with participants in the 2015 SGBV training, I realized the complex web of power and empowerment I entered through my methods, beyond the programs I studied and understanding I sought. It also became clear that most of the photographs were not related at all to the concept empowerment, but more to women’s daily activities. These activities help me understand their explanations of empowerment related to their participation in educational programs, as described in the interviews. This section describes how women related empowerment to their participation in autophotography. Not only were their lives showcased visually but women described how they became experts and knowledge producers about life in Dadaab.

Dhuuxo (2015) described how her use of photography made her feel empowered: “I feel empowered because I took the photos, [they show that] yes I’m from this camp.” Dhuuxo described how she wanted to show me, and by association the world, what her life was like. Similarly, Fartuun (2015), who participated in the same SGBV program as Dhuuxo, said she “felt like a journalist” when taking the photographs as an expert about life in Dadaab. Hodan (2016) felt both happy and fearless taking photographs, such as when she illegally photographed the police car on her walk to school. Farhio (2015) talked about feeling happy taking the photographs and identified it as part of the learning process she associated with the educational program, despite my explanations that it was a separate process. These examples show the different interpretations women ascribed to the photographs, sometimes as an example of empowerment.
Ijabo (2016) described how using the cameras made her feel empowered and equal to men:

The other day you have given us this camera. Men say, how you can be given this while we don’t have [a camera] as men? We told them, we are human beings. We can do anything, but men don’t see that we have power of doing something, that is why men are saying that we are helped a lot by the agencies.

She described how when she had the camera, men would ask her why a woman would be given that kind of work to take pictures (field notes, 2016). “Men don’t see that women can even take photos,” she explained, laughing about the incident, and one man tried to take the camera away, but she took it back (field notes, 2016). She included a photograph of the men talking about her camera (Figure 76).

![Figure 76. Two men who tried to take the camera from Ijabo (tailoring program, 2016).](image)

Ijabo’s experience defending her photographic skills to the men in her community show her claiming space in gender power dynamics. Not only did she stand up to the men who wanted to take her camera, but she acknowledged her own power and role in her community. Ijabo also identified that men felt underrepresented and resentful that women had access to programming they did not, and that she felt the need to claim their humanity and equal rights. These two
interactions compete and can lead to teasing, frustration, or even violence between men and women, such as these men who tried to take the camera away.

Autophotography itself also helped women feel recognized in their communities. Deka (2016) told me that she had children lining up and making appointments for her to take their photographs while she moved around the market after food distribution. Kimo (2016) kept her photography studio small, taking portrait after portrait of her family members and neighbors. Medina (2015) also talked about how her family members and especially children in the neighborhood liked having their photographs taken: “As I was passing there they ask me if I can take their photo, they wanted at least their photograph to be taken” (Medina, 2015; see Figure 77). For women who regularly must claim their right to exist in some public spaces in Dadaab, being requested to take photographs, recognized as skilled, and sought out was a new and exciting experience that they described with pleasure, joking and laughing about taking the photographs.

![Figure 77. Children waving (Medina, entrepreneurship program, 2015).](image)

Beyond recognition, women also connected empowerment to changing their communities, and thus autophotography became intertwined with both community change and empowerment definitions. Mako (2016) showed how taking photographs helped her feel better
able to persuade a small boy to change his behavior (see Figure 78). The boy wanted to wash his hands but she told him he could not wash his hands at the tap because the tap was for drinking water and he would get dirt in the cans. He disobeyed her, resulting in a series of photographs that were taken as evidence and to shame him.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Figure 78. The boy with dirty hands using the tap (Mako, entrepreneurship program, 2016).*

Finally, autophotography itself provided some women a platform or “voice” to show the world what they wanted to share about Dadaab. They connected this to empowerment definitions because they could represent themselves both within and outside the community. Falhado (2016) took photographs of distribution, and I probed to see what she thought was empowering about that space (see Figures 42 and 43). She said she felt empowered because the other women recognized that she had a camera to document the community and distribution process.23

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23 In the same interview, Lul (2016) also took photographs of food distribution, but said she took these photographs to show her daily life, not for any reason related to empowerment or disempowerment. Lul and Flahado’s opposing rationale for documenting distribution showed that women had different experiences and ideas about how they wanted to present themselves, which autophotography uniquely allowed.
Kusow specifically identified how she represented herself and her community: “I am the spokesperson for the world. I will take these photos and tell others – it’s true, but I don’t know what good I will do” (field notes, 2016). Dhuuxo (2015), Fartuun (2015), Ijabo (2016), Lul (2016) and almost all the women who participated in this research, emphasized how the act of showing their daily lives made them feel empowered, equating empowerment with self-recognition and representation. Moreover, the women in the apprenticeship program bragged to me at the interview’s beginning that they all had returned their cameras and not broken them, emphasizing how the cameras themselves made the women feel recognized and, importantly, trusted, especially by an outsider who represented not only an international audience, but also life in resettlement and a field worker who may have viewed refugee women with distrust (field notes, 2015).

However, women in all the educational programs grew tired of my questions about empowerment. Mako, Hawo, and Asho emphasized that they took photographs of their houses and family members because it was fun and because it showed their daily lives, not because they were depicting anything about empowerment per se. The details in the photographic narratives, with most women taking photographs of their homes and the family members, imply that most of the women were also enjoying the cameras simply to take photographs without necessarily linking each photograph to their understanding of empowerment.

Discussion

Women’s photographic narratives showed their daily lives and helped explain their conceptualizations, interpretations, internalizations, (re)appropriations, and contestations of empowerment. At times, they defined empowerment solely at the surface, equating it with learning and “the good life.” Women clearly connected their understanding of empowerment through the educational programs to their daily lives. Especially when they related empowerment
to production and earning an income for their family, the educational programs were viewed as one tool to lead to grow their financial resources, which women equated with empowerment. In women’s narratives, education, coupled with access to resources, were prerequisites for empowerment. They appropriated the term to relate to any situation the showed change, whether led by themselves, their family, their neighbors, or NGOs.

Related to power, some women felt powerful just by being, by recognizing their rights, being recognized by others, specifically men, and by communicating about their lives through images to an international audience. The younger women in the entrepreneurship training described power simply as the right to live. These women were raised in the camps and had internalized the human rights discourse presented by NGOs and UNHCR in programming and signage. The rights women emphasized, however, were not political rights to participate in elections or governance, but the rights to life and work, which they perceived as restricted in their communities.

Beyond recognition of women’s right to life, for a woman to be powerful in Dadaab, she was in control of her family, providing for them both in daily ways such as preparing food, but also financially planning their future. The emphasis on work and production both from women and field workers related to economic empowerment discourses as primary motivation for empowerment programming. However, power was not solely an example of production. The women in the SGBV training, amongst others, emphasized power in terms of community change, where women could be leaders to improve not just their families’ lives but the lives of those around them. The women interviewees believed that powerful and empowered women improved families and communities.
They also, however, argued that powerful women were sometimes powerful at the expense of men. The women in the soap-making program specifically talked about how men in Dadaab had nothing to do, no opportunities to provide for the families, and were disempowered. These women, especially Hawo, equated women’s empowerment with men’s disempowerment, arguing that women gaining responsibilities negated their husbands’ chances of finding work and providing for their families. Hawo cited the lack of NGO-led programs for men as part of this disempowering process, but did not imply that men had to be disempowered for women to be empowered. Rather, women with this perspective presented men’s disempowerment as more of a systemic issue that came from being refugees. Although power and empowerment for women would not necessarily mean a loss for men, the women perceived that men were losing opportunities and thus power to contribute, as women were gaining them.

Women rarely identified political power as part of their empowerment, except for the SGBV community organizers who hoped to influence political figures in their communities. Women may not have seen themselves as political subjects to be powerful. However, they did take photographs of political leaders, some of whom were family members or local Imams, who could influence decisions.

Instead of focusing on political power, women equated power and empowerment with production and economic community change. Some community changes were often attributed to services provided by NGOs, such as improved water stands and school infrastructure. Due to restrictions in refugee life, women never described community development without mentioning or alluding to an NGO-sponsor. The NGOs and UNHCR were the quasi-state, providing services normally provided by state entities. But an empowered woman was defined as someone who was providing for her family and improving their well-being, with the help of services provided.
Overwhelmingly, empowerment was related to economic advancement, production, creative ownership of one’s own future, and the future of their families. Economic empowerment depended on women’s recognition of their own skills, as well as community recognition of women’s creative production.

Self-actualization and representation were common themes in the visual narratives in general and in women’s descriptions of empowerment. These themes related to Nussbaum’s (1997; 2000a) capabilities approach that focused on satisfaction as well as ability. The women’s descriptions of play and joy, in stark contradiction to common narratives of refugee women’s suffering and vulnerability, depict their experiences identifying their own capacities vis-à-vis economic production and finding fulfillment in life. The women showed me both the difficulties in their lives and the places where they felt most comfortable. These visual narratives were as much about how the women represented themselves to the world as about my questions of women’s empowerment in NGO programming.

Chapter summary

All the women interviewed prized their ability to provide for their families and the (often small) comforts they could access or obtain. Beyond the functional interpretations of empowerment, women presented fragments of daily life and described not only their aspirations, but feeling valued through autophotography and their participation in educational programs. Empowerment related to women identifying, making, and valuing their own contributions. This self-worth was tied to social recognition, or community acknowledgement of women’s contributions. The emphasis on recognition and women’s ability to represent themselves helps frame women’s empowerment from their perspectives following their participation in educational programs. Chapter six presented women’s concepts of empowerment to further
explore how they interpreted, (re)appropriated, or contested what empowerment meant in their lives related to NGO-led programming goals. In chapter seven, I analyze the main themes from field workers’ and women’s interpretations of empowerment connecting with power and empowerment literature and theories.
Chapter 7

Discussion and concluding thoughts

The purpose of this study was to explore how NFE programs in Dadaab aimed to empower women and how women interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested empowerment related to their participation. In this chapter, I discuss women’s interpretation, internalization, (re)appropriation, and contestation of empowerment from themes identified in interviews and photographic narratives. I also reflect on how NGO workers intended to empower women in these programs and how those beliefs compared to women’s perceptions of their own empowerment. Comparing educational programs, this chapter highlights the diversity of programming in Dadaab and multiplicity of stated program goals. I then discuss different interpretations of empowerment as a process, such as moving toward the “good life,” through creative production, and through pedagogy. I explore perceived and tangible limits to women’s empowerment in Dadaab described by field workers and women in interviews, focusing on dependency and the competing development and humanitarian program goals. Finally, I discuss interpretations of women’s empowerment in Dadaab that both challenge and reinforce gender roles. I conclude that field workers and women understand competing narratives in their definitions of empowerment, including dependency and solidarity, temporary camps and sustainable projects, and women’s empowerment in opposition to men’s opportunities that challenges traditional gender roles. These vastly different understandings of empowerment are bound within the refugee camp structure, including the missions of NGOs, Kenyan national politics, international refugee policy, and refugees’ transnational identities.

This study contributes to women’s studies by explicating women’s roles in Dadaab, one example of a protracted refugee environment. In Dadaab and other refugee settings, women are
responsible for keeping the household functioning, family members’ education and health, and other immediate needs of children. As Alex described, women are completely responsible for their children’s wellbeing and success in Dadaab, such as placing children with disabilities as “children of the mothers.” When family members face challenges, women, including mothers and daughters such as the young women in the tie and dye program, are responsible for finding solutions or ameliorating the problem. Women’s roles in family and social cohesion are not unique to Dadaab and women’s experiences studied here can further understanding in NGO programs aiming at women in refugee environments, living in poverty, and with limited access to state-provided social services. The programs studied here aim to empower women to capitalize on their social change potential, explicitly attempting to change social dynamics to increase economic security and decrease violence in the home and community. NGOs that target women ought to consider women’s varied roles in carrying out the organizations missions and goals. Both NGOs and the women with whom they work can actively seek to change gender-biased and unjust practices in the communities in which they work. By centering women’s experiences in this analysis, I emphasize how programming and policy can draw on women’s roles in refugee environments, particularly protracted refugee camps, to aid in their social cohesion goals.

The NFE programs in Dadaab aiming to empower women that I identified were diverse but focused on community involvement and trades, integration into formal schooling, psychosocial support related to experiences of violence, and health and disability programming for both awareness-raising efforts and improved day-to-day well-being. Throughout data collection, I found that programs focused increasingly on skills that women could use outside of the refugee camps as repatriation loomed. Drawing on Bartlett’s (2007) comparative approach to educational projects, comparing empowerment program aims in Dadaab presents programming
plurality while defining a dominant view of economic empowerment. Although this study did not seek to represent all NFE programs in Dadaab, these overarching themes reflect program goals broadly.

The sample of programs that I attended emphasized community and economic development. Trade-based, or livelihoods, programs used economic empowerment language, or the “power to” do something or make something. Similarly, both entrepreneurial and community development programs emphasized participants’ abilities to make change in their communities. Although I was not able to participate in psychosocial support programs that aimed to empower women, field workers described that the goals of these programs related to women’s empowerment both as overcoming past abuse and protecting against future abuses. The SGBV program I observed touched on these issues, without probing in depth the psychosocial impact of SGBV. Finally, health and disability programming also related to the “power to” in program goals, specifically women’s power to know more about healthcare and how to care for those with disability and people with disability’s power to actively participate in their own lives, exemplified in the program for parents of children with disabilities where field workers hoped women would gain confidence to send their children to school. Interestingly, NFE programs in Dadaab were diverse but interwoven, such as the connections between the training for parents of children with disabilities and formal education programs or the SGBV advocacy training and youth-led health and sanitation activities.

The way empowerment was discussed in introductions to each program, described in chapter four, clearly ground the problem statement of this research. Empowerment as a goal had no clear boundaries yet it was referenced in nearly all, and some field workers would say all, educational programming, leading to my overarching research questions interrogating how
empowerment was interpreted, internalized, (re)appropriated, or contested by women participants in NGO educational programming in Dadaab and how field workers believe they were empowering women. I began data collection investigating how empowerment was about change, and how that change was internal, social, and bound to being a refugee.

Drawing on literature relating power over, power to, and power with to empowerment, I identified women’s various definitions of empowerment, all centered on individual autonomy, action-oriented approaches, and collaboration, or solidarity in the literature (Benhabib, 1986). I drew on Allen’s (1999) feminist conception of power as “a positive social good, a resource, the distribution of which among men and women is currently unequal, …a relation—specifically, a relation of (male) domination and (female) subordination…[and] transformation [of] masculinist conceptions of social and political life that have been at the fore of Western political thought” (p. 7). I found that women emphasized power and empowerment as a social good and resource most frequently, and rarely critiqued the distribution of power except to bemoan the loss of men’s financial contributions to the household. Field workers’ views of power were more rooted in traditional notions of exercising political power in public spaces, emphasizing domination rather than power as a distributed resource.

Empowerment defined here also followed psychological, economic, and collective definitions (Stromquist, 2009), although political empowerment was rarely identified. The data, especially the visual narratives, elucidated how women sought recognition for their contribution to the success of their households and for their personal gains, such as becoming skilled in a trade. However, this recognition was almost entirely lacking in the field workers’ presentations of empowerment, which focused more on ending cycles of dependency between refugees and
NGO services. Field workers hoped all refugees would stop being reliant on NGO services, despite the refugee camp structure and limitations which required this reliance.

**Empowerment and “the good life”**

When I arrived in Dadaab, I presumed that empowerment was about change: “internal change, social change, ownership of their futures, etc.” (field notes, 2015). Women presented exactly what change they were looking for: a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities. General well-being and improvements in material circumstances were the main foci of women’s definitions of empowerment, which were rooted in what they did to make themselves a better life. For women interviewees, empowerment and power entailed being able to contribute to their households and plan their futures, which was intertwined with their autonomy and individual recognition of their own capabilities. Women’s narratives about what empowerment looked like centered on improving their well-being, particularly those of their households and families, toward a better life. The “good life” they defined related to the quality of life that was within their control, specifically in their homes.

In NGO programs, empowerment is also tied to well-being. For example, the skill-based programs such as tailoring and soap-making intended to build women’s skills to improve their daily lives. Livelihoods programs were rooted in the idea that when women produce an income for their households, the whole family has improved health, access to education, and general well-being. NFE was a tool NGOs used to frame and support women’s move toward “the good life.” Field workers emphasized women’s individual skills, freedom from depending on support outside the household, and potential for collaboration amongst themselves as the tools of processual empowerment toward “the good life.”
As a process, empowerment also related to how women were gaining new responsibilities, going to school, sending their daughters to school, and even considering an end to FGM in Dadaab. Many women in Dadaab have been exposed to NGO programming for generations and gender equality ideas from early in life. Even older women who brought families to the camps felt powerful in their homes, though they were often more critical of their husbands for not contributing to the household than the younger women interviewees.

**Joy narratives.** The photographs constructed a nuanced narrative about women’s empowerment by highlighting daily activities in which women felt empowered, such as preparing breakfast, making goods for sale, participating in formal education (both Islamic and secular), and even taking photographs of family and neighbors. This interpretation of empowerment directly related to “the good life” and includes comforts and joy. The photographs show smiling faces and women often bragged about their resources or close ties with family and friends, including other women participating in the interviews. Changing the narrative of women’s experiences in the camp from a focus on deprivation to creation, Ijabo’s description that the photographs showed her and her family “making fun” insightfully showed how women resisted stigmatizing refugee stereotypes. Women’s goals and dreams beyond the camps also signified that they normalized life in a transitional space, both as refugee and as agent planning their next steps beyond the camps.

Nussbaum’s (1997) capabilities approach helps frame Ijabo’s narrative that women are capable actors in their own lives. Stromquist (2009) also described psychological empowerment related to self-esteem and confidence. Women’s narratives about their work toward the “good life” and satisfaction in their homes contradicted deficit approaches in programming but also resonated with field workers, like Phillip and Vincent, who hoped to build on women’s skills
through programming. Phillip both saw that women had skills to build on and that they needed NGOs’ services. The combination of capabilities and dependency created a delicate balance between deficit approaches in programming and organizational goals and field workers’ missions discussed further below. Women furthered this sometimes contradictory narrative by identifying how the distribution of resources was part of their empowerment definitions and required support from organizations.

**Empowered women as makers.** Women’s interpretations of empowerment focused on new abilities, making products for sale, sharing knowledge, and working in groups to increase their income. Both field workers and women highlighted women’s productive capabilities and labor as evidence of their empowerment. Most of the women I interviewed emphasized increases in skills and abilities as tangible evidence of empowerment. For instance, Hawo described that “people who make” (produce goods on their own for sale) are empowered. Hawo and the other women identified making products for sale as both contributing to the household and creative expression, especially through tailoring, tie and dye, and sewing, as depicted in women’s photographic narratives. Autophotography also highlighted women’s empowerment related to community recognition of their work. Being seen as a maker, or someone who contributed to the household and community, was tied to women’s empowerment definitions.

Linking empowerment with production also reflects relational approaches to power in which women claim power in relation to others through their household contributions and goods for sale. This is part of the maintenance of social order (Habermas, 1981), where women’s production is necessary for the success of their families. As field workers described, empowering women to produce goods and earn an income had ripple effects for their households and communities. Field workers and women both frequently cited economic empowerment, a critical
element of international development literature and program goals (Murphy-Graham, 2012; Rowland, 1997; Sen, 1999; Stromquist, 2015), as the primary interpretation of empowerment, whether through production, selling, or autonomy gained from income.

Women highlighted, however, that without the requisite tools to conduct their work, economic empowerment was not possible, despite training. This finding is particularly relevant for NGO programming aiming at economic empowerment and an end to refugees’ dependency on NGOs. Without providing some resources, especially in environments where resources are limited or unavailable, educational programming aiming to support women’s economic empowerment could frustrate women’s and field workers’ goals by restricting the efficacy of the training and highlighting the disparity between what field workers believe women can do and what women feel capable of without accessible material resources.

Given the omnipresence of empowerment-oriented NGO programming, many interviewees offered surface-level definitions of empowerment. Empowerment became synonymous with good, such as when Ifrah (2016) giddily described how the broken tap stand did not empower her, teasing me for asking her such irrelevant questions. This appropriation of the term to apply to all situations was partly brought about through the style of interviewing, where I asked women to connect photographs to concepts of empowerment when they otherwise had only considered the photograph as evidence or even play. Beyond the photographs, women linked empowerment with skills gained through educational programs, although they did not describe any element of pedagogy as empowering.

**Learning, empowerment, and pedagogy**

As part of this comparative study, field workers, and some women, identified how pedagogy in different programs intended to empower participants. Pedagogy and field workers’
self-described goals drew on deficit and liberatory approaches, balancing participants’ needs and attempting, in limited ways, to change systems that kept refugees dependent on NGOs. However, field workers often simplified empowerment by equating it with learning in educational programs, but then in interviews described the linkages between the overall organizational objectives, set forth by international agendas, and specific forms of empowerment in the programs presented here. Whereas field workers often defined empowerment as learning, claiming that any exposure to new ideas that they perceived women lacked was inherently empowering, women went one step further to talk about making products, using their skills, and being recognized for the contributions as components of empowerment.

Empowerment was explained to me upon arrival in Dadaab as a goal of all NGO educational programming. It was ubiquitous and its ubiquity diluted the term. Unlike women participants in programs, however, field workers were reflective about whether pedagogy was or could be empowering or disempowering. This related not only to the community of practice as field workers, but also to women’s outsider status vis-à-vis NGO program planning. Field workers were more likely to think about how their programs were or were not empowering participants, whereas women passively accepted that programming was empowering, emphasizing that any educational opportunities were empowering. Women accessed programs by presenting themselves as needy of NGO services and training, which followed deficit approaches in programming and reinforced assumptions about refugee dependency.

The learning environment itself was a site where women could exert power outside traditional family structures and community obligations. For example, the women in Phillip’s program took control of the schedule, eventually ending early and expressing their displeasure at having to stay past lunch when they had other pressing tasks at home. Women in all the
livelihoods programs were also vocal about their needs for certificates and materials to be successful during and after programs. Although women expressing their needs in the learning environment could be an example of confidence and control, requests for materials and certificates conflicted with field workers’ hopes that empowerment would occur internally rather than through the provision of goods, which they saw as a dependency symptom. Field workers attributed disempowerment to participants’ dependency on handouts as well as when learning outcomes were not met. If women relied on organizations for goods, services, or materials for their own work, field workers feared their efforts would not be sustained beyond the refugee camps.

**Limits of empowerment: Dependency and refugee life**

In this section, I explore the equation of empowerment with self-reliance and independence, considering dependency related to *power over*, or subjugation and domination, including systemic control over refugee life (Escobar, 1984; Lukes, 1974). For fear of perpetuating NGO domination over refugees, field workers thought women could not be empowered or politically powerful without being independent from NGOs that provided goods and services. They argued that women must be self-sufficient to be empowered. Although complete self-reliance would be impossible in the camps, where refugees were not allowed to work or move freely, and the environment was inhospitable to agriculture, field workers viewed refugees’ dependency on assistance, including food, water, construction materials, education, and healthcare, as evidence that they were not empowered. Field workers believed that if refugees were in the camp system, they could not be empowered because they were receiving handouts from organizations and the UN. Refugee identities were tied to powerlessness, related not only to statelessness but past experiences of trauma and, often, poverty.
However, dependency need not be solely negative, as described by women who requested more materials and support to further their work. For women, empowerment involved accessing goods and services, such as women soap makers whose definition of empowerment emphasized the need for more materials from the organization to continue their work. The soap makers were not the only learners who emphasized that the organizations ought to be providing more resources. Rather than subverting the view of refugees as dependent victims, women’s conceptions of empowerment reinforced the obstacles they faced to self-reliance. In doing so, they acknowledged the reality not only that as refugees they were dependent on the governing entities in which they lived, but that in any society citizens have some dependency on the state, especially when they are in a vulnerable position. As stateless people, refugees were instead dependent on NGOs and the UN that served as a quasi-state.

Women’s awareness that they have needs that must be filled by NGOs acting as the quasi-state reflect Nussbaum’s (2004b) argument that all people are at times dependent on others and that dependency can be compatible with social recognition and capabilities. By identifying support as a part of empowerment, women emphasized that the provision of resources or materials did not necessarily contradict women’s autonomy, self-actualization, and learning. Especially as refugees, women needed resources that they could only access by navigating UN and NGO systems. Although some field workers recognized refugees’ tenuous position between dependency and self-reliance, the main programmatic concern was about what happened after the refugees left the camps.

Repatriation loomed in programming during data collection. As such, most of the programs aimed to empower women through trades that could be used outside of the refugee camps, like tailoring, soap-making, and tie and dye. These programs sought to circumvent some
of the restrictions on refugees to give them skills they could use without violating Kenya's law that forbids refugees to work. However, field workers were confounded as to how women could become less dependent on the refugee camp structures without repatriating, and most field workers were in favor of repatriation, assuming programs and NGOs followed the refugees to Somalia. This was partly due to field workers’ interest in keeping their jobs, but also because they doubted that there would be any support or functioning governing structures in Somalia, including basic services like education and healthcare. From field workers’ perspectives, NGOs and the UN would remain the quasi-state upon repatriation. Also, as humanitarian workers, field workers could not see sending hundreds of thousands of people out to struggle and possibly die without services. Field workers were less worried about women becoming engaged in their households and more concerned with women (and all refugees) stopping reliance on NGO services, despite the refugee camp structure that required this reliance. The balance between sustainability in programming and the humanitarian realities of refugee life were constant tensions in field workers’ empowerment goals and definitions.

For instance, empowerment, field workers hoped, would occur through community ownership and engagement in programs. Women participants particularly were intended to learn that they had the power to change their environment. Conversely, field workers were frustrated when women did not have this power, often due to what they argued was insurmountable dependency. The strict regulations on movement and employment of refugees, compounded by cultural restrictions on women’s activities, presented obstacles to field workers’ goals. Field workers and women agreed that empowerment was related to individual agency, or what women could do to make better lives for themselves (Faith, 2016). Empowerment was interwoven with
dependency and service provision, despite efforts by the international community, donors, NGOs, and field workers to create more individual autonomy within the refugee populations.

The humanitarian and development field workers’ goals, rooted in international development discourses, complicated how they understood empowerment and program goals. Rights discourses represented in field workers’ and women’s narratives reflected the universality critiqued by Benhabib (1986). Although both field workers and women contested master narratives about ideologies imposed from the outside, either through questioning the focus on women in women’s empowerment or by highlighting the quasi-state structures in Dadaab, field workers and women internalized some development discourses, including sustainability and individual autonomy. Field workers both hoped that the refugees would become self-sufficient and recognized that refugees had experienced tremendous trauma and needed services. This was the underlying tension in all field workers’ experiences: they could not empower women because these women were never going to be powerful due to their refugee status, traumatic experiences, and restrictive cultural norms.

Whereas the participants were eager for organizations to take a more active role in provision of service and goods, field workers were intent on empowerment being internally driven or community based. Many field workers had internalized discourses from international development on the importance of participation and local ownership. Refugees were not in the same position as other populations targeted by international development programming, due to restrictions on movement, work, and political participation. Field workers internalized empowerment through an assumption of individual autonomy that was not reflected by the women themselves.

**Challenging and reinforcing gender roles**
Women highlighted rights-based discourses in how they viewed their work, education, and participation in programs studied here. Women recognized that they had rights as part of their understanding of empowerment, positioning women’s rights as separate from what they had learned before participating in NGO-led programming. By doing so, and by recognizing their own value in contributing to their households and communities, they challenged traditional, restrictive notions of women’s roles. Field workers often came from a similar position, if women lacked voice in their communities and that programs would help them assert themselves and challenge restrictive gender roles. However, women’s empowerment concepts were not always viewed as a positive tool in challenging gender roles.

Both field workers and women participants feared that the emphasis on women’s empowerment was potentially detrimental to social cohesion, the family unit, and men in general. Globally, refugee life includes changing gender roles (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou, & Moussa, 2008) and women are often tasked with both ensuring maintenance of traditional social orders and taking on new responsibilities in the household and community. Women interviewed here acknowledged that men and women’s roles were different in their communities and had changed over time, lamenting men’s current perceived lack of opportunities. Some women, especially older women with families, described how their new abilities were disadvantageous to the family unit, which now relied solely on their work to function. Particularly for women involved in skill- and trade-based programs, empowerment was perceived as a zero-sum game in which gains for women meant the loss of their husbands’ empowerment, with some women and field workers going so far as to claim that men in the refugee camps were not empowered at all. These claims related to the direction of empowerment and who is empowering whom, with women being the most frequently targeted in empowerment
programming. Empowerment programming, many women argued, had over-privileged women, and now men were lazy or had no opportunities to contribute to the household. Field workers also thought that the emphasis on women in empowerment negated some of men's abilities and actions. At the same time, both field workers and women participants in programs recognized that Somali culture was patriarchal. In some ways, research participants’ critiques of women's empowerment was that it was destructive toward “culture,” or traditional gender roles and family structures in their current forms, replacing men with women as the breadwinners in the household.

**Powerful women in Dadaab.** Deficit approaches to empowerment assumes a vulnerable subject, but women may in some cases already be perceived as powerful in Dadaab. However, field workers and women had narrow views of powerful women in Dadaab not merely in the household or as victims of violence, but in politics and community involvement. Field workers regarded women in powerful positions in the communities with suspicion, as if they had gained power by being corrupt or exploitative. Moreover, both male and female field workers viewed a husband of a powerful woman as weak. At the same time, both women and field workers connected women’s power in the camps to boldness or the courage to speak, with many field workers lamenting that women lacked voice culturally in their communities. Thus, women navigated contradicting pressures, both to assert themselves and take on leadership roles in their households and communities, and to respond to doubts and suspicions when they did so.

Power was tied to voice, related to communicative actions. Voice relates to communicative actions, where power exists in relationships (Habermas, 1981). For example, women exerted power during training programs to make demands about programming, from course end times to certification and resources. Eric described women’s empowerment as their
ability to speak persuasively with men. Fundamentally, in each social interaction, both within and beyond the learning environment, women navigated who had authority to speak. Women presented themselves as powerful in their homes, but less so in the larger community. In all cases, women described pride in their leadership roles either in the family as a provider or actively involved in their communities. For instance, in the SGBV program, women described their positive associations and experiences of new leadership opportunities, while also recognizing the limitations of what could and could not accomplished in their communities. However, women’s relational power, or power that circulates between people in communities, was still limited, such as when women in the SGBV program took photographs of the community leaders from afar.

Although field workers hoped to instill both social and behavioral change, women interviewees were largely unsure if they could change social norms and be influential in their communities. They knew they could make changes locally, but they never spoke about social change beyond the refugee camps. The difficulty of identifying powerful women able to make social change also related to the lack of supportive institutions, such as a transparent, consistent justice system. Without a functional judicial system, field workers struggled to see what change women could make vis-à-vis the SGBV program. Field workers’ concerns reflected another confining element of the refugee camps: the lack of legal recourse and use of vigilante justice to solve community problems, leaving refugee women vulnerable to community pressures, reflected in the frequency of SGBV. Field workers and women participants in the SGBV program thought that women were powerful in their persuasive capacity, including convincing other community members of harmful practices or the need for social change related to SGBV.
Beyond leadership, power was rooted in collectives for both women and field workers interviewed here. Field workers believed that in groups, women would be able to pool their resources and break dependency cycles. For women, groups were also crucial to their success, though often related to recognition of their production and skills. Women and field workers both viewed empowerment through collective power, or *power with*, adding to international development literature and suggesting paths for future programming. Once political power was removed from the discussion, power and empowerment were interwoven for women and field workers, who connected empowerment with control of resources, collective action, and self-expression. Political power, often equated with *power over* or domination by field workers, was removed from women’s understanding of power in Dadaab.

**Implications**

Field workers and women included competing narratives in their definitions of empowerment, such as interdependence and dependency, temporary camps and sustainable programming, and women’s empowerment at the expense of men’s. Where group work and social recognition were signs of empowerment, there were other signals of dependency, such as women’s reliance on organizations to provide resources and education. Within refugee camp policies, NGOs served as the quasi-state, perpetuating dependency that field workers hoped to end. Field workers understanding of sustainability in programming also conflicted with restrictive refugee policies. Findings about competing narratives have implications on education practice, refugee policy, and future research.

**Practice implications.** Experiences of empowerment catalogued in this research present a platform to analyze educational programming for refugees within and beyond Dadaab’s camps. Forced migrants worldwide integrate into local environments (or not) through NGO
programming that is shaped by national policy. As field workers intend to empower women specifically, or refugees generally, women face similar obstacles to local integration, language barriers, and cultural understandings. This study calls for further understanding of women’s experiences to address practice that aims to improve refugees’ wellbeing. This research presented one case for analysis to better understand issues facing forced migrants worldwide.

The findings suggest that educators and field workers should consider how the women refugees themselves define empowerment. In this case, women included empowerment as social recognition of their contributions economically, related to group and community relationships, and abilities to change their own futures. This differed from field workers’ views that did not consider how women’s empowerment related to their power within their families and communities. To build and expand on women’s existing skills and abilities, field workers ought to assess how women already are or view themselves as powerful. Some of this is informally underway in the field workers’ narratives in this study, but could be strengthened and integrated more formally in programming to further support empowerment goals.

Dependency is a common issue in practice in refugee camps, whether related to education provision or other services. In this study, I questioned field workers’ views of dependent refugees, identifying how dependency exists in all societies and is particularly relevant in refugee camps, where trauma and a lack of resources are the norm. In addition, refugees have limitations on what they can do for themselves, such as few income-generating opportunities, no freedom of work, and tightly controlled freedom of movement. Practitioners should avoid stigmatizing refugees as solely dependent, while acknowledging the structures that perpetuate refugee dependency and building on refugees’ skills to promote future, more self-reliant, behavior, such as the income-generating activities described here. Instead, field workers in this study often
emphasized what refugees could do for themselves, such as building cooperative business
groups. Field workers in protracted refugee environments can go one step further to identify how
women can exercise more control over their lives and acknowledge that even by accessing NGO-
provided resources, women are taking steps to provide for themselves and their families. In sum,
although self-reliance was not possible given policy constraints discussed in more detail below,
educational practice that aims to empower women in Dadaab can emphasize the ways refugees
create and define their own power beyond individual autonomy to include relational and
capabilities approaches that recognize women’s contributions to their households and
communities as well as use of existing resources.

Policy implications. Becoming a refugee in Dadaab, especially for the younger women
who never knew a life outside the camps, presented unique challenges to women’s ability to
define empowerment outside of life as a refugee. Restrictive national and international policies
on refugees make field workers’ self-reliance goals all but impossible. Instead, empowerment
had more to do with self-actualization and recognition, than independence or complete self-
reliance for women interviewees. Policy-makers can aid in supporting refugees’ ability to
provide for themselves by loosening restrictive policies on freedom of movement and work.

The great risk presented by the refugee camps in Dadaab and worldwide is their
durability and replicability. Given growing forced migration crises worldwide, warehousing may
become more common (Shephard, 2015). The refugee camp structures, with NGOs and UNHCR
operating as a quasi-state, create an alternative social contract that limits what refugees can do
independently and the satisfaction of NGO programs’ empowerment goals that center on self-
reliance. These limitations are rooted in individualist discourses that emphasize self-reliance,
which may overlook social networks and natural dependency in regular social interactions
Refugees, who have almost uniformly faced obstacles in their displacement, including psychosocial effects of losing one’s home and uprooting one’s life, are in many ways in need of care upon arrival to receiving states, whether integrating into host communities or living in camps in the borderlands. The camps themselves are structured on this ethos of care, providing food, water, shelter, and other essential services to refugees through the quasi-state. The state and quasi-state structures should acknowledge that refugees are particularly in need of services and provide those services whenever possible, while also building on refugees’ skills and experiences. Drawing on findings about the limitations of field workers’ empowerment goals in this study, international policy could focus more on opening refugee camps with more freedom of movement and work. National encampment policy makers could also address humanitarian and development goals in refugee camps through coordination with quasi-state actors to allow, albeit in the confines of national political milieus, refugees to work and establish more tangible futures beyond camp borders.

**Research implications.** Acknowledging and building on refugees’ transnational identities in empowerment programming could address policy and practice limitations described by field workers in this study. Further research exploring how women use transnational social networks to grow businesses, access education, and build household capital is needed to identify best policy and practice approaches. For instance, empowerment related to self-esteem and community recognition has also been linked with identity expressions (Hall, 1992). Future research can further explore recognition as an empowerment source for refugees. Although self-esteem was frequently mentioned by field workers and refugees, no programs had identifiable measures for changes in self-esteem and further development is needed in monitoring and evaluation of these indicators in hard-to-reach populations like the Dadaab camps. Finally,
identity, particularly complex social networks in which Somali women in this study operate, may be further explored to understand how women understand power in their lives in more depth than presented here.

The scholarly literature on empowerment and refugee education could also focus on disability, overage learners, and pedagogy. Moving forward from this research, I will explore pedagogy in more depth, specifically, to understand how empowerment is enacted, or not, in refugee education presented here. Particularly, adult education provision for refugees who may have missed out on formal education is a growing service and further study of pedagogy and program comparisons is warranted. Future research in education programs in Dadaab beyond this data collection could include focusing on disability and overage learners in the classroom, particularly since these two issues were not expected but were part of each classroom environment analyzed here.

Methodologically, further research implications include exploring visual educational ethnography and comparative and international education in diverse environments. Visual educational ethnography in this study was a hybrid of more traditional educational ethnographic and visual ethnographic approaches. This combination deserves further study and connections with other ethnographic approaches, particularly using multimedia data collection tools. In addition, I adapted traditional comparative and international education approaches which often look at state-based education systems and compare across national boundaries. In doing so, I sought to answer Bartlett’s (2007) call to explore educational programs as comparative sites. Further research can develop these alternative comparative approaches to focus more on the diverse sites in which education and learning take place, particularly with refugees but also in low-resource environments.
Conclusion

Like this research’s implications, this studies’ significance follows its methodological innovations and builds on refugee studies literature. I explored visual educational ethnography and its utility in hard-to-reach environments. I also extended economic empowerment literature, particularly focusing on refugees and dependency. Findings signified that women’s empowerment includes social recognition, creativity, and resource utilization in Dadaab. This challenges individualistic approaches to empowerment that centralize self-sufficiency over community and creativity. I also add to pedagogical literature to consider how deficit and liberatory pedagogy coexist in refugee educational programming in Dadaab, concluding that emphasis on sustainability and local ownership in international development complicates program empowerment goals in this study.

This research contributes to visual ethnographies and educational ethnographies by combining methodological tools to co-create data with participants, who provided interpretations that would be unavailable in traditional interviewing or participant observation (Tobin & Davidson, 1990; Eisenhart, 2001). Visual educational ethnography allowed me to use existing tools with a hard-to-reach population. I built on Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa’s (2009) and Prins (2010) work by adding autophotography to highlight women’s lives, understanding their co-creation of visual data, and including multivocal data collection to further analysis. Importantly, women decided what defined empowerment in their lives, rather than programs, practitioners, or policy makers. Using visual tools and focusing on the learning environment allowed me to gather data with research participants as well as about women’s empowerment. This study provides a basis for further use of visual educational ethnography in hard-to-reach communities, particularly in conflict-affected and insecure environments where a preponderance of refugees live.
Unexpectedly, and significantly, this study also showed that women viewed autophotography itself as empowering, relating to their definition of empowerment through social recognition.

As a comparative study, I focused on comparing educational programs and field workers and women’s definitions of empowerment. Place and identity were interwoven in this study, with the refugee camps constructing and constricting how women perceived programming and planned their futures. Because I did not follow traditional comparative and international education methods and approaches that focus on state-based education systems, I could identify how local, national, and international spaces and networks were reflected and contested by women in educational programming. Women internalized some international discourses about empowerment and human rights, claiming local understandings of their right to be heard and recognized in their communities. However, xoojin, the Somali word for empowerment, was reinterpreted by women to include how they consolidated resources available from programs, complicating the notion that they were dependent on programs.

This research was based on theories that power circulates in relationships but each actor in those relations had different abilities to respond and influence (Habermas, 1981; Fraser, 2007). I found that in Dadaab, relational power circulates but was confined both by traditional gender roles and the restrictions imposed in refugee camps. Women navigated refugee structures in this study and identified how and when they were empowered, both as recipients of goods and services and as producers of goods and materials. Empowerment had to do with improving one’s quality of life and being recognized for one’s contributions, while navigating restrictive systems.

These findings contribute to the literature on empowerment by emphasizing action-oriented perspectives and recognizing women’s views as inherent to empowerment definitions in programs. The women interviewees in this study presented diverse views of empowerment, but
all focused on action-oriented approaches. They related empowerment to change and identified what had changed for them as they became more empowered. Importantly, and in contradiction to field workers, women viewed accessing resources provided by NGOs as an example of their empowerment, rather than their dependency which was often equated as disempowerment. I question to refugee studies that focuses on dependency (Abdi, 2004; Kisiara, 2015; McAlister, 2013; Wali, 2014; Zarowsky, 2000) by highlighting how women engage with NGOs as part of their self-reliance and self-directed learning. Drawing on Nussbaum (2004b), I added to dependency notions through findings that women actively sought out programs and reused resources provided by NGOs in their definitions of empowerment. I also questioned the role that refugee policy plays in perpetuating dependency notions among field workers and refugees.

Women also complicated literature on economic empowerment related to dependency and programming goals. For many women interviewed, social recognition of their creative production was fundamental to their view of empowerment, building on Rowland’s (1997) and Murphy-Graham’s (2012) work. This research builds on and furthers the economic empowerment literature by identifying that women are using resources available to them for their own gain, including services provided by NGOs, and view resource access and utilization as part of economic empowerment. In this way, this research challenges notions that refugees are dependent upon the quasi-state to highlight how women take advantage of programs and services offered and identify that self-direction as part of empowerment.

Defining empowerment in NGO educational programming allows for clarity between organizational mission, the field workers’ and participants’ experiences, and the policies that guide NGOs’ work. Women linked skills gained from training programs to daily experiences to present narratives about empowerment in their lives. They critically evaluated women’s
empowerment as a goal and many found it wanting further elaboration. The refugee environment that curtailed men’s participation as “bread winners” and women’s ability to further their work also limited their interpretations of empowerment. In a gender analysis, women clearly sought recognition from men in their communities as part of their interpretations of empowerment. This signified unequal relational power dynamics and reflected the threat that women’s empowerment could present to patriarchal gender norms that limited women’s ability to speak in public, much less contribute economically or politically. Women’s interpretations of empowerment involved improving their lives and the lives of their family members and required NGO support, contrary to field workers’ goals to decrease refugees’ dependency on organization-provided materials and services. Both challenging and reinforcing gender roles, women identified ways in which they are powerful, such as by making household decisions, persuading community members to change harmful practices, and as skilled producers of goods for sale.

In pedagogy, empowerment was assumed to be nebulous and context-specific. I added to educational theory in part by emphasizing alternative approaches to comparative and international education but also through analyzing program pedagogy and field workers’ empowerment goals. Pedagogy was diverse and not always established before the programs, but often reactive to participants’ needs and directions within the programs. Field workers hoped to foster participant’s self-sufficiency and abilities to create social change but at the same time approached programs assuming participants lacked some essential information, drive, or skills to improve their lives. Balancing liberatory and deficit approaches challenged field workers although women contextualized programming to better serve their own goals for themselves and their families. This study recognized how empowerment was in some ways related to power, though much of the internalized discourse on power related to political power and leadership
within the camps, rather than decision making in the household or collective power to accomplish goals and change circumstances. Ubiquitous in pedagogy, empowerment could be better defined to connect concurrent deficit and liberatory pedagogies and emphasize women’s skills and how they navigate refugee systems.

Program name:
Program location:
Date:

**Physical setting:**
- Space:
- Building:
- Room where activity is being held:

**People:**
- Number:
- Sex:
- Ethnicity/ language:
- Approximate age:

**What happened:**
- Instructional topics:
- Activities:
- Learner participation:

**Activity:** (e.g., specific topic of training)
**Time started & stopped** (total length of observation):

- Room setup:
- Physical layout: (people, tables, technology, etc.)

- Role: (teacher, student, guest speaker, etc.)
- “Protagonist” (who stands out? why? How?)

- Materials used:
- Staff involvement:
- What is happening around the training: (interruptions, sounds, weather, etc.)

What seems to be related to power? (relationships, dynamics, goals of training)
What seems to be related to empowerment? Is empowerment mentioned? If so, how?
Is women’s empowerment directly discussed? If so, how?

What seems typical about the training?

- Introductions
- Rule setting
- Objectives
- Small group work
- Lecture
- Learner led presentation
- PowerPoint / other technology

- Breaks/ lunch/ restroom breaks
- Large group discussion
- New skill development
- Reinforcing skills/ connecting skills to other topics
Appendix B: Training observation guide (2016)

Program name:  
Program location:  
Date:  
Activity: (e.g., specific topic of training)  
Time started & stopped (total length of observation):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical setting:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space:</td>
<td>Building:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room where activity is being held:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room setup:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical layout: (people, tables, technology, etc.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number:</td>
<td>Sex:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/ language:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles: (teacher, student, guest speaker, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Protagonist” (who stands out? why? How?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional topics:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner participation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials used:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff involvement:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is happening around the training: (interruptions, sounds, weather, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What seems to be related to power? (relationships, dynamics, goals of training)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What seems to be related to empowerment? Is empowerment mentioned? If so, how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is women’s empowerment directly discussed? If so, how?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What seems typical about the training?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions:</td>
<td>Learner led presentation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule setting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives:</td>
<td>PowerPoint / other technology:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group work:</td>
<td>Breaks/ lunch/ restroom breaks:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture:</td>
<td>Large group discussion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New skill development:</td>
<td>Reinforcing skills/ connecting skills to other topics:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Educational Program Participant Group Interview Protocol (2014)

1. [If I have received permission to video tape a class] Please describe what you see in this video?
   a. Is this a typical day in the class? Why or why not?
   b. What did you learn in this class?
   c. Tell me about you change after completing the training/ course/ workshop(s) here.

2. Please describe ‘empowerment’? What do you think of when you hear ‘empowerment’?
   a. Please describe ‘agency’? What do you think of when you hear the word ‘agency’?

3. Please describe how you think this training empowers after watching this video? How do you feel ‘empowered’ from this class?
   a. Describe an example of when your work does not ‘empower’ learners? Why?

4. Please describe how and when you feel empowered (from this video or another experience)?

5. Is ‘empowerment’ different for men and women? What are the differences? Similarities?
Appendix D: Educational Program Participant Group Interview Protocol (2015, 2016)

1. Why are you interested in this training?

2. What other trainings have you attended? Where they similar or different from this one? How so?

3. Please describe how you individually understand ‘empowerment.’ (use the pictures as cues)
   a. Tell me about how and when you feel empowered? When you don’t?
   b. Tell me about how and when you learned about ‘empowerment’?

4. Tell me about these photographs, why did you take these specific pictures? How does this picture relate to improvements in your life? To changes? To problems you have solved? (for each photo, reviewed individually)

5. Do you identify yourself as ‘empowered’? Why or why not? If so, how do you think you became ‘empowered’?
Appendix E: Group Field Worker Interview Protocol (2014, 2015, 2016)

1. [If I have received permission to video tape a class]

2. Please describe what you see in this video.
   a. Is this a typical day in your class? Why or why not?
   b. What did you want the participants to learn in this class?
   c. Tell me about how learners change after completing the training/ course/ workshop(s) here.

3. Please describe ‘empowerment’? What do you think of when you hear ‘empowerment’?

4. Please describe how education provides empowerment from this video? How does your class (refer to the video) ‘empower’ learners?
   a. Describe an example of when your work does not ‘empower’ learners? Why?

5. Please describe what a learner from your training or work who is empowered via training would look or act like (from this video or another experience)? How do you know?

6. Please describe an empowered woman.

7. Is ‘empowerment’ different for men and women? What are the differences? Similarities?

8. How do you/ the organization measure empowerment? What would you ask to measure empowerment?

9. Do you know of any other organizations who are providing education for women’s empowerment?
   a. If so, which organizations?
   b. Do you know the staff of those organizations who are involved in this training?
   c. Can you refer me to them?

1. When did you start working for __________ as a trainer?

2. What other experience do you have in training with the purpose or goal of empowerment?

3. Please describe how you individually understand ‘empowerment.’
   b. Tell me about how and when you feel empowered? When you don’t?
   c. Tell me about how and when you learned about ‘empowerment’?

4. Please elaborate on how your work ‘empowers’.

5. When does your work not ‘empower’? Why?

6. Please describe a training that you think is empowering, one you’ve worked on or what you would like to work on?

7. Do you identify yourself as ‘empowered’? Why or why not? If so, how do you think you became ‘empowered’?

8. Please describe how gender influences empowerment for learners in your training experience.
Appendix G: Multivocal Interview Protocol (2016)

1. [Show multivocal video cue from 2014 and 2015 programs]

2. Please describe what you see in this video. What do you think of the video?

3. What themes do you see in the NGO programs represented here?

4. What do you think is empowering about training? What do you think could be disempowering about training?

5. Who has power in Dadaab? What do powerful people in the refugee camps do? How do they behave? How do you know they are powerful?

6. What do you hope will change as a result of your work?

7. Why did you decide to work in Dadaab? (for field workers)

8. When do you personally feel empowered or disempowered?

9. Do you think empowerment is the same or different for men and women in Dadaab? How so?
Appendix H: Autophotography coding summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Photograph included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Own home</td>
<td>Participant’s home, including compound, outside space, and inside space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbor’s home</td>
<td>Neighbor’s home, including compound, outside space, and inside space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community shared space</td>
<td>Public paths, at the tap stand, or in other community shared space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>At least one subject was dressed in culturally appropriate male attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>At least one subject was dressed in culturally appropriate female attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male and Female</td>
<td>Culturally identifiable males and females were both present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Participant’s family member, described in the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Participant’s male relative not specifically referenced but dressed in culturally identifiable male attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Participant’s female relative not specifically referenced but dressed in culturally identifiable female attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Participant herself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Quran</td>
<td>Image of the Quran or someone studying the Quran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Someone praying or a prayer rug/ mat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imam</td>
<td>Image of an Imam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Duuksi</td>
<td>Duuksi or on the way to duuksi (traditional Islamic school).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal training</td>
<td>Formal training environment outside of primary or secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal schooling</td>
<td>Formal schooling environment including primary and secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Books or someone reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income-generating activities</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Someone purchasing goods or shopping at the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Someone selling goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Someone producing goods for sale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seller</td>
<td>Seller in the market or a seller trainer was visible in the photo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Food distributed by WFP during organized food distribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing food</td>
<td>Participant or a family member preparing food or water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeding/Eating</td>
<td>Participant or a family member eating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Fetching water</td>
<td>Participant or a family/community member fetching water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water storage</td>
<td>Water storage at home or while fetching water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Wire fences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public lighting</td>
<td>Image showed one of these items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stick fences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Public space use was identified as relevant to notions of empowerment because in interviews it became clear that some women had access to different public spaces than others. For instance, some Somali women described that they could not attend a football match in public, while others documented football matches in photographs. Also, the tap stand was frequently documented and subject to much discussion in interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items/Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement</td>
<td>Doors that lock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Latrines, Washing taps, Mosquito net, Disabilities, Cleaning, Medical Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image showed one of these items, actions or services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Tin roof, Stick walls, Mud walls, Fabric walls, Tent, Electricity, Firewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure in image had one of these attributes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>Neighbor, Trainer, Mentor, Phone/radio, Other NGO worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s neighbor, The NGO trainer from the program or the trainer, Mentor from the program or the mentor, Phone or radio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Movement, Play, Taking photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles, carts, or other transportation, Including kids playing football, flying kites, or older people relaxing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Cart, Cat, Chicken, Donkey, Fabric, Goat, Wheelbarrow, Craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image showed one of these items.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone making a product for sale or the products themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Education
2013 - 2017 PhD, Adult Education and Comparative International Education
Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania
2008 - 2010 MA, Interdisciplinary Studies in International Conflict Resolution, Human Rights
Law, and Public Anthropology
American University, Washington, DC
2003 - 2007 BA, Anthropology, Minors in Theatre and History
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio

Professional Experience
School of Professional and Extended Studies, American University, Adjunct Faculty (2014-
Present)
School of International Service, American University, Adjunct Faculty (2015-Present)
RESULTS Educational Fund, Senior Associate (2016-Present)
Goodling Institute for Family Literacy, Pennsylvania State University, Graduate Assistant (2015-
2016)
Learning and Performance Systems, Pennsylvania State University, Graduate Assistant (2014-
2015)
American University of Afghanistan, Instructor (2012-2013)
The Infectious Diseases Institute, Makerere University, Distance Learning Officer (2011-2012)
Center for Global Peace, American University, Project Coordinator (2010-2011)
Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning, American University, Advanced Learning
Technologies Trainer and Consultant (2008-2011)

Publications
education, immigration, and skills in Canada. Adult Education Quarterly.
Krupar, A. (Under review). Visual-cued ethnography in NGO-sponsored adult education programs in Dadaab, Kenya