

**Incapable to aspire: A conceptualization of Ethiopian youths' well-being using the capability approach and exploring its consequences on life course plans**

Abstract:

This paper explores the consequences of youths' manifested and perceived well-being on their life course plans. Using the Capability Approach, I identify five dimensions of social well-being of 2,083 youth aged 13 to 17 years in Jimma, Ethiopia. These five well-being dimensions are: food security, health and life longevity, bodily integrity and decision-making autonomy, access to sources of knowledge and information, and opportunities for extra-familial social interactions. I then use Trivariate Probit models to delineate the effect of well-being on three concomitant life course decisions namely educational and occupation plans, transition to independent household, and marriage. The results find evidence for bounded strategic action, by which youths use their well-being as a signal of opportunities and obstacles in their life course. Also, the results show that Ethiopian youths follow a socio-culturally construed normative sequencing of life course transitions. Finally, I investigate the differential strength of the impact of well-being on life course plans across varying biographical and social contexts.

***Optat H. Tengia***

Brown University

Sociology Department and

Population Studies and Training Center

***Mailing address:*** Brown University Box 1916, Providence, RI 02912, USA.

optat\_tengia@brown.edu

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The question of how socioeconomic progress can be generated internally within societies has recently been at the forefront of the development discourse. For example, Amartya Sen, in his more recent seminal work *Development as Freedom*, declares that a fundamental premise of people-centered development is when individuals are considered “as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs” (Sen 1999:53). This new paradigm in human development research does not only seek to explore ways through which well-being of individuals living in socioeconomically deprived societies can be improved but it also attempts to assess how aspirations for improved well-being are engendered within these societies. In doing so, this people-centered development perspective brings into the forefront choices that individuals and societies have as they strive to expand their well-being (Streeten 1994).

In the same vein, in this paper I investigate how youths’ perceived social well-being in Ethiopia affects their life course plans, plans that are associated with improved social well-being in adulthood, such as high human capital investment. I conceptualize social well-being using the Capability Approach (Sen 1985, 1993, 1999). Construing well-being using the Capability Approach allows for incorporation of its multifaceted dimensions (Clark 2003, 2008). The Capability Approach considers well-being as partly being embodied in freedoms which individuals have to achieve and expand their well-being (Sen 1985b, 1999) in addition to their ability to command resources to attain basic physiological, social, economic, and psychological functioning. Sen’s ideas of capabilities and agency freedom (Sen 1985b, 1993) invite us to look beyond inequalities

in access to resources when we are attempting to delineate causes and consequences of individuals' well-being. Following the Capability Approach, I devise five dimensions of youths' well-being in Ethiopia. These dimensions are: command of balanced nutrition and food security, health and life longevity, bodily integrity and decision-making autonomy, access to sources of knowledge and information, and opportunities for extra-familial social interactions.

Then, I examine the consequences of the youths' low well-being to social outcomes in their adulthood by highlighting the impact of the youths' score on the dimensions of wellbeing on their life course plans. I focus on three interrelated life course plans that include anticipated timing of completing formal educational training, expected timing of establishing independent household, and anticipated timing of entry into marriage.

The analysis in this paper thus attempts to expand our understanding of youths' aspirations for expanded socioeconomic well-being in adulthood within the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. I highlight how family formation norms may hinder or foster aspirations for improved well-being through investment in human capital. In this paper I also endeavor to enrich the available quantitative socio-demographic literature that explores the multifaceted nature of well-being beyond the basic needs. I envisage expanding the available research on well-being and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, which at times has a narrow emphasis based on well-being dimensions related to access to primary goods and services. While the analysis in this paper recognizes the relatedness between different dimensions of well-being, the consequences of each dimension is highlighted separately.

I adopt a Life Course approach to explore the impact of youths' perceived and manifested well-being on their life course agency and consequently their life course plans. In the context of this paper, life course agency entails a process through which individuals *actively* plan the trajectory of their life course (Shanahan 2000). I speculate that Ethiopian youths portray bounded strategic action in their life course planning through which low well-being. Low well-being signals to limited opportunities and hence diminished agency dampening youths' occupational and educational aspirations.

Since the sequencing and timing of life course events, such as completion of educational training, marriage, and parenthood are normatively prescribed within societies (Hogan and Aston 1986, Hogan 1978), I posit that diminished life course agency leads to inability to digress from the expected life course trajectories. In other words, youths' inability to delay transitioning to competing adult social roles, for example by delaying forming their own independent household and marriage, may extenuate their inability to invest in human capital. Hence, I hypothesize that in addition to the effect of youths' well-being, their family circumstances, and the level of socioeconomic development of their community, perceived inability to negotiate through the transition to adulthood timetable by delaying marriage and parenthood also diminish occupational and educational aspirations.

I use data from the first round of Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth (JLFSY) conducted by the School of Public Health at Jimma University in Ethiopia and the Population Studies and Training Center of Brown University. The JLFSY, which was conducted between October 2005 and February 2006, includes 2195 youth aged between 13-17 from 3,716 from Jimma Town in northwest Ethiopia, with a population of 120,000,

and in three nearby towns and surrounding rural settlements. The survey included a household background information questionnaire on household structure, resources endowment, participation in networks of exchange, and migration. The survey also includes an adolescent questionnaire that collected information on schooling, employment, perceptions of parents' expectations, educational and occupational aspirations, gender values, fertility and marital plans, health status and health care access, and nutrition.

The organization of this paper is as follows: In the next section, I present background literature subdivided into two subsections. In the first part I review the literature on life course agency, transition to adulthood, and life course plans. The second subsection of the literature review covers a brief overview of Capability Approach and how it can be applied to conceptualize well-being. In the third section I provide a brief contextual overview of educational enrolment trends and transition to adulthood trends in the Ethiopia. I then present a brief description of the survey data and sample used in the analysis followed by two sections on variables and measures. A section on research questions and hypotheses follows, and precedes a section on statistical analysis which applies Trivariate Probit models to delineate the impact of distinct dimensions of youths' well-being on life course plans. Finally, I present concluding remarks and implication of the results.

## **2. BACKGROUND LITERATURE AND THEORY**

### ***2.1 Adolescents' Life Course agency and later life outcomes***

Motivation and beliefs in ones' abilities to affect change in their life, which are developed during adolescence, have major consequences on adult well-being outcomes

(Elder 1974). For example, the Oakland and Berkeley cohort study showed that a segment of adolescents manifesting “planful competence,” a phenomenon characterized by high motivation and conscientiousness in academic and career planning, were more likely to put themselves in life course trajectories that led to relatively higher socioeconomic success in their adult life (Clausen 1993). Furthermore, the adolescence phase demarcates social transition to adulthood which is marked by school completion, entry into active economic production, marriage, and parenthood (Hogan and Astone 1986). Individual’s life plans and aspirations during this transitional life phase therefore provide a convenient backdrop in understanding their likely social outcomes in adulthood.

Youths form their life course plans, such as their educational and career goals and family formation plans, in continuous negotiations with their societies’ norms that may impose competing expectations dictating appropriate life course trajectories and timing of transitioning into adult roles. Societies have normative expectations regarding the appropriate age for a youth to transition into adult roles; these transitions are typically marked by finishing school, embarking on full employment, and leaving parents household o establish own household (Hogan and Aston 1986, Elder 1974, Hogan 1978). Sometimes, within a given society there may exist a more acceptable ordering and timing of these life course events (Shanahan 2000, Hogan 1978). For instance, age-appropriate timing of marriage and onset of parenthood is typically socio-normatively prescribed with varying degrees of severity on its enforcement across societies.

Contrastingly, it has also been argued that regardless of the seemingly standardized norms of transition to adulthood within societies, idiosyncratic experiences,

such as individual social psychological predispositions and contextual constraints during adolescence may lead to divergent patterns of trajectories towards adulthood (Mortimer 1994, Elder 1998). Furthermore, when individuals envision the trajectories of their life course other than taking into consideration social norms of transition to adulthood they make choices and take actions that are shaped by opportunities and constraints underlying their specific historical and contextual social circumstances (Elder 1995, 1997; Shanahan, Elder, and Miech 2002).

Life course agency is an important dimension in understanding how youths' contextual socioeconomic circumstances, such as their perceived and manifested well-being, may impact their life aspirations and expectations. Life course agency is an active process through which individuals actively plan the trajectory of their life courses (Shanahan 2000). I argue that in addition to the socioeconomic circumstances of youths' family, the socioeconomic development context of communities where they live, and socio-historical contingencies in their life, youths' life course agency is influenced by how they perceive the ability of their "selves" in pursuing the life trajectories of their choice. I contend that their perceived and manifested well-being plays an important role in informing them about that ability.

As I already stated, social norms that dictate the appropriate life stage for transitioning to adult roles, e.g. appropriate age to terminate schooling and start a family, vary from one society to another and such norms are embedded within cultures. As a result, individuals internalize them and organize their life course accordingly (Hogan and Aston 1986, Shanahan 2000, Hogan 1978). When there is a shift in social structure, for instance, massive expansion in educational opportunities, the question that remains is: to

what extent does an individual's life course agency influence her ability to navigate through those changes and benefit from them in the face of the social-cultural constraints? The extent to which individuals are affected by (or bring about) the given structural changes depends on their ability to accordingly interpret and respond to such changes (Elder 1998). Furthermore, individuals vary in their perceptions of the ability, as individuals, to surmount such structural barriers and other constraints to affect change in their own lives, a phenomenon referred to as self-efficacy Bandura (1982, 2001).

In this paper I use youths' perceived social well-being as an indicator of agency and self-efficacy, factors that are likely to affect how youths envision barriers and opportunities in their adulthood. This notion of youths' ability to pursue life trajectories that they deem necessary for their future well-being is congruent with Sen's ideas of agency freedom, which he defines as "freedom to achieve whatever the person, as a responsible agent, decides he or she should achieve" (Sen 1995 p 202-3). I therefore conceptualize youths' life course agency drawing from related themes of empowerment and agency freedom from the human socioeconomic development literature, mostly using the Capability Approach.

## ***2.2 Well-being as a crucial variable in the new socioeconomic development paradigm***

The socioeconomic development scholarship is increasingly valorizing multiple dimensions of human well-being beyond the easily quantifiable material and money-metric ones. Alternative modes of thinking such as the Capability Approach proposed by the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1985, 1999, 2003) have been embraced as potentially more effective frameworks for analyzing the multifaceted nature of human well-being. Furthermore, beyond material basic needs for survival, these multidimensional frameworks pay a particular attention to opportunities and freedoms those individuals as



they strive to expand their well-being. Also, the development discourse has grown to incorporate empowerment of disadvantaged populations and their participation in planning and improving their well-being as an essential goal of the development agenda.

### ***2.2.1 Conceptualizing well-being using the Capability Approach***

Amartya Sen's capability approach asserts that the evaluative focus of well-being should be what individuals are able *to do* or *be* rather than their material possessions. In addition to ensuring access to basic necessities, improving well-being of disadvantaged populations, for example, entails reducing obstacles (*unfreedoms*) that hinder peoples' independence to be or to do what they consider valuable (Sen 1999). The capability approach looks at two sets of dimensions known as *functionings* and *capabilities* (Sen 1999). Functionings are "things that a person may value doing or being," which may include fundamental human needs such as health, life longevity, and literacy but also may include non-material aspects such as personal liberties and freedoms to achieve certain aspired to social outcomes (Sen 1999 p 75) . On the other hand, capabilities are sets of resources that a person may command to attain functionings (Sen 1999). In *Development as Freedom* Sen adds that, capabilities, which constitute the "freedom" to achieve these functionings (i.e., the valuable *beings* and *doings*), should take a center stage in development.

The capability to translate materials and services into functionings (e.g. converting food access to being well nourished, medical care access to being health, or to translate school access to become an informed and cultivated individual) differs across individuals (Sen, 1999). Individuals with similar access to a set of materials and services may achieve different levels of functionings because they command different capabilities

(Sen, 1999). According to Sen (1985), well-being is tied to their ability to achieve these functionings. Therefore, Sen argues, to evaluate a person's well-being we must look at: "What kind of life is she leading? What does she succeed in doing and in being?" (Sen 1985 p 195). Sen elaborates on this notion:

"The capability approach to a person's advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as a part of living. The corresponding approach to social advantage –for aggregative appraisal as well as for the choice of institutions and policy – takes the set of individual capabilities as constituting an indispensable and central part of the relevant informational base of such evaluation" (Sen, 1993: p 30).

Empirically, capabilities, i.e., the *possibility set* of freedoms and opportunities that individuals command, are not observed. Researchers use realized functionings as a proxy for capabilities. In terms of the attainment of basic well-being one may look at indicators of *realized* functionings such as life longevity and literacy, as manifestation of this key latent variable, which Sen refers to as capabilities.

Even though in his earlier work in poverty and inequality Sen addressed general "universal" capabilities, such as literacy and life longevity, in his later formulations of the Capability Approach he does not provide an exhaustive list of essential must-have functionings. This open-endedness makes the Capability Approach applicable in a wide variety of well-being analyses, but at the same time the very same quality has been a source of criticisms (see for example Nussbaum 1999, 2003).

Martha Nussbaum, another notable scholar of the Capability Approach, proposes a list of universally relevant capabilities that she uses to examine gender inequality (Nussbaum 2003). Given her research focus in liberal political philosophy, Nussbaum (2003) envisions a list of irreducible essentials of life for an individual's ability to lead a "good life" (Tobias 2005). However, Nussbaum's (2003) list of capabilities has been

questioned for imposing universalistic assumptions regarding life essentials and for its prescriptive nature, which some have argued deviates from Sen's original formulation (Robeyns 2003, Alkire 2005). Other researchers, such as Ingrid Robeyns have reformulated Nussbaum's list by designing criteria that can be used to create context-specific and non-exhaustive list of capabilities; these criteria also allows researchers to take into consideration the available data and the methodology that they plan to use (Robeyns 2003).

The polemic on whether there should be a prescribed list of capabilities has not completely hindered attempts to use the Capability Approach theoretical framework in quantitative analyses. For instance, Di Tomasso (2007) uses the Capability Approach to investigate children's well-being in India whereas Phipps (2002) uses the approach in a cross-country comparative study of well-being of children from Canada, United States, and Norway. Also, Kuklys (2005) suggests empirical techniques that can be used together with the Capability Approach and applies it to explore poverty and inequality in the United Kingdom. Also, authors of The American Human Development Report, which culminated with the publication of *The Measure of America*, use the Capability Approach to investigate the disparity in well-being by geographical region, gender, and race/ethnicity across the United States (Burd-Sharps *et al.* 2008).

The existing empirical studies that use the Capability Approach have typically focused on populations from the developed nations with few exceptions, such as David Clark's studies in South Africa (Clark 2008, 2003). Partly, this research trend is attributed to the fact that in most low income nations, low well-being and social disadvantage is by and large a function of scarcity of resources such as health and education infrastructures.

Therefore, well-being facets unrelated to material access, such as the ones which the Capability Approach endeavors to highlight, are typically seen as inconsequential in these low incomes societies. However, changes are taking places in low income societies and new opportunities for social mobility are emerging as a result of development initiatives such as the Millennium Development Projects, which aim to expand education access in developing nations among other things. In view of these structural changes that are taking place in developing nations and the undoubted social transformations which will ensue; perhaps, well-being, poverty, and aspirations for social mobility in these societies should also be examined beyond the basic life necessities approach. The Capability Approach provides a theoretical context for such an investigation.

### **3. THE ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT**

Ethiopia is ranked among the world's least socio-economically developed nations. In 2007, Ethiopia ranked 169<sup>th</sup> among 177 countries categorized by the United Nations Development Program in accordance to the Human Development Index (UNDP, online). The Human Development Index (HDI) is a normalized average on aggregate indicator of socioeconomic well-being including life longevity (life expectancy), education attainment (literacy rate), and economic performance (Gross Domestic Product). Given Ethiopia's poor socioeconomic performance as HDI and other aggregate indicators show, understanding the determinants of well-being and the way plans for future well-being are constructed among the youth in this country is a matter of immediate concern.

In addition, Ethiopia has experienced growing expansion in educational opportunities in the past decade. Between 1991 and 2006, primary school enrollment rose from 31 percent to 83 percent, secondary education enrollment rose from 13 percent to 27

percent whereas enrollment in tertiary education rose from 1 to percent to 2.43 percent (World Bank, 2007). As figure 1 shows there has been a steady improvement in secondary school enrollment in Ethiopia since 1999 even though the gap between secondary school enrollments rates for boys and girls has persisted overtime. Given this increase in post-primary school enrollment, Ethiopia has a suitable population to investigate (i) how the youth are planning to reap the benefits of these improvements in educational opportunities, (ii) what may be impeding their ability to do so, and (iii) how are life course and family formation impacted by such changes.

(Figure 1 goes here)

According to data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), there have also been changes in timing of transition to adulthood, especially entry into marriage in Ethiopia. As figure 2 shows, there has been a steady increase in the median age at first marriage for females. Figure 2 show that the median age at first marriage for married women aged 20 to 24 years was 18.1 years in 2005 compared to 15.8 years for women aged 45 to 49 years. In other words, the age at which women are entering into marriage has been increasing over time in Ethiopia. For men, age at first marriage has also been increasing albeit less monotonically compared to that of women.

(Figure 2 goes here)

With these two period trends, which are improvements in educational opportunities beyond primary school and increasing age at first marriage, I use youths' well-being to characterize their life course plans. I take into consideration the fact that plans on educational investment and human capital are interrelated with family formation

plans, such as anticipated timing of creating independent household and anticipated timing of marriage.

#### **4. DATA AND SAMPLE**

The data for this paper come from the Jimma Longitudinal Family Survey of Youth (JLFSY) conducted by researchers from the School of Public Health at Jimma University in Ethiopia and the Population Studies and Training Center of Brown University. The JLFSY includes 3,716 randomly selected households located in the city of Jimma Town, with a population of 120,000, and in three nearby towns and surrounding rural settlements.

A household questionnaire was completed with the household head and spouse of the head. Up to two youth age 13-17, one male and one female, were then randomly selected from each household for individual interviews. A total of 2,194 adolescents were interviewed in the first round of the survey conducted between October 2005 and February 2006. Sample details are provided in Table 1. The study design includes the re-interview of households and adolescents every twelve months for a period of at least five years. In this paper, I use data from the first round of the household and adolescent interviews (see Table 1).

The adolescent questionnaires collected information on schooling, employment, perceptions of parents' expectations, aspirations for the future, health and health care access, health risks and vulnerability, nutrition, gender values, fertility, and marital plans. The complimentary household questionnaire collected background information including migration experience for all current household members and adult children of the household head who have established independent households. The questionnaire also

collected information on the residential location of relatives of the head and spouse, participation in exchange networks, and measures of economic assets and well-being.

(Table 1 goes here)

## **5. VARIABLES AND MEASURES**

### **5.1 Outcome Variables: Life Course plans**

I investigate the effect of five separate dimensions of well-being on three life course plans: (1) educational and occupation aspirations measured by anticipated timing of completion of educational training, (2) anticipated timing of marriage, and (3) anticipated timing of moving to an independent household.

#### ***5.1.1 High educational and occupational aspirations***

Acquiring formal education contributes immensely to individual's well-being. In both the developed and developing societies individuals' level of education determines their income and their socioeconomic status. I create a binary measure that combines high educational and occupation aspiration. This measure identifies youths who plan to attain more than 14 years of education coupled with a professional, an associate professional, or a technical career. In Ethiopian education system 14 years of education entails completion of primary education, secondary education, and at least 2 years of post-secondary education at technical college or an institution of higher education. I devise the occupational categories following International Labor Organization (ILO) occupational prestige rankings using the youths response on the survey question that asks them to name an occupation which they would like to have as adults. I identify youth with high ambitions using both education and occupation aspirations because I intend to focus on youth who have a clear understanding of the returns to their education investment.

#### ***5.1.2 Delayed transition to independent household***

Moving out of parents' house signals independence from parents and is generally considered one of the makers of transitioning to adulthood (Hogan and Astone 1986). This life step is usually taken at the moment when young adults feel secure economically to be on their own; for example, after acquiring certain level of education and accumulate skills that could lead to paid employment. I therefore design a measure of this important life course event which identifies youth who plan to delay formation of own household. Youths are defined as having plans to delay formation of their own household if they anticipate doing so at an age higher than the median age of the entire cohort.

### ***5.1.3 Delayed transition into marriage***

In most African societies marriage is almost universal meaning that almost everyone takes at least one spouse at some point in their lives. Plans regarding marriage and parenthood, which typically follows after nuptials, is a crucial component of youths life course plans. I define a binary measure of late marriage plans which categorizes youths as having plans to delay marriage if they anticipate marrying at an age that is higher than the anticipated median age of first marriage of their sex in the entire cohort.

### **5.2 Predictor variables: Well-being dimensions conceptualized by the capability approach**

I devise a list of capabilities to operationalize youths' well-being by adapting Nussbaum's list of essential capabilities for "truly human functioning" (Nussbaum 2003 p 40) with amendments following Robeyn's (2003) criteria. Di Tomasso (2007) applies a related methodological application of the capability approach to investigate children's well-being in India. Thus, I formulate a list consisting of five capabilities which include (i) command of sufficient and balanced nutrition, (ii) bodily health and life longevity, (iii)



bodily integrity and decision making autonomy, (iv)access to knowledge and information, and (v) extra-familial affiliations and interactions.

### ***5.2.1 Command of sufficient and balanced nutrition***

This well-being dimension captures the ability to command sufficient and balanced nutrition which is an important aspect of youths' well-being in Ethiopia given the endemicity of chronic food shortages and famines in the country. I therefore create a composite index of malnourishment that combines both youths' perceived food insecurity and diversity of her diets. Details of the components and the construction of the index are on Table 2.

### ***5.2.2 Bodily health and life longevity***

This capability captures youths' well-being related to perceived health risks and future vulnerability to poor health by taking into account health status at the time of interview and perceived vulnerability to debilitating conditions in the future. Using principle component factor analysis, I compute a health vulnerability index which takes into account youth's current health status and their self-evaluated future expectations of contracting: night blindness, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diabetes, and malaria. I categorize youths whose health vulnerability score is in the fourth quartile of the vulnerability index distribution as having high perceived health vulnerability.

### ***5.2.3 Bodily integrity and decision making autonomy***

Nussbaum (2003) defines having bodily integrity as “being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction,” (p 41). Drawing parallels from this definition I include two indicators in this dimension. The first indicator embodies the notion of bodily integrity by measuring

degree of agreement with traditional gender norms. The agreement with gender equality index is based on agreement with six statements (0=Agree, 1=Disagree, 0.5=Don't know) regarding gender roles that included questions on whether: a woman should always listen to her husband, normally a man should not have to do housework, marriage by abduction is acceptable, the husband should have the final say in all major family matters, there is nothing a woman can do if her husband wants to have a mistress, and whether female circumcision is a practice that should continue.

In addition, I also include autonomy in decision-making as another indicator for this well-being dimension. I specifically pay attention to decisions regarding youths' employment and family formation plans. As detailed on Table 2, for this indicator, I create a dichotomous variable based on the youths' score on a decision-making autonomy index, which looks at whether they will choose a career or a spouse who their parents do not approve.

#### ***5.2.4 Access to knowledge and information: "Sense, Imagination, and Thought"***

Access to sources of knowledge and information fosters sense, imagination, and thought, which are important for mastery of one's environment. In addition, access to sources of knowledge and information, such as education, is a crucial investment for the youth's future well-being. The capability for sense, imagination, and thought, entails "being able to use senses, to imagine, think, and reason –and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic and mathematical and scientific training" (Nussbaum 2003, p 41).

In spite of the documented expansion of mass education in Sub-Saharan Africa, access to schools is still a setback especially in rural areas. Also, regular school attendance in Sub-Saharan Africa still remains haphazard partly due to competing commitments that youth may face such as pressures to participate in household economic production given the economic hardships which remain prevalent in the region. I devise a measure for school attendance which looks at whether youth misses school several days a week or several days in a month.

Furthermore, for this well-being dimension, I also include a measure of literacy in Amharic. Amharic is the official language of business and government in Ethiopia. Amharic literacy is therefore crucial for youths' ability to access general the media and other sources of information. Non-Amhara youth, such as those from the Oromo ethnic group, which is one of the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia, may be disadvantaged as they only get a full exposure to the language once they begin school.

#### ***5.2.5 Extra-familial affiliations and interactions***

I define a measure of social interaction that takes into account the youths' ability to interact with peers outside his/her family. This capability assesses youths' opportunity for leisure and recreational activities. The indicator for this dimension is a dichotomous variable that categorize youths depending on whether they belong to social clubs or not.

#### **5.3 Mediating covariates: Biographical and contextual factors**

I include three sets of biographical and contextual factors that may potentially affect youths' well-being and life course plans. These factors are: social demographic attributes household structure and resources, and the level of community socio-economic development. The first set of the mediating covariates are social demographic attributes including age, sex and birth order.

The second set of mediating factors includes household resources and household structure. As a measure of household resources, I include an index of household assets as a proxy for family's socioeconomic status. Table 2 provides details of the computation of this index. Finally, I measure youths' household structure using the number of siblings that they have. Large family size, especially where economic constraints are commonplace, has adverse effects on children's well-being due to dilution household resources. I include covariates for household resources and structure because some of the life course plans in question in this paper, such educational investment, depends on youths' households' abilities to cover for the related expenses.

Lastly, I also include a measure of the level of socioeconomic development of the community in which the youths reside. The level of community development provides a measure of access to institutions such as educational and health facilities that may affect youths' well-being and life course aspirations. The community socioeconomic development measure that I include is a composite index created at the community/neighborhood level from factor analysis that aggregates mean values of three household-level indices, which include socioeconomic status, housing quality, and sanitation facilities. In addition to the community SES index; I also incorporate indicators of the characteristics of the place where the youth resides categorized as rural, small town, or city.

(Table 2 goes here)

## **6. HYPOTHESES**

Youths envision and plan for their life course trajectories through active negotiations between their "internally motivated purposive action," also known as agency, and structural constraints. The constraints may include cultural norms that dictate the timing

and the sequencing of transition to adulthood markers, such as completion of education, marriage, and parenthood. Sometimes, normative expectations regarding appropriate timing and sequencing of life course transitions may compete with ones' ability to pursue life trajectories that they believe will enhance their well-being in adulthood. For example, stringent social norms dictating early transition into adulthood, such as marrying or starting a family at an early age, may impinge on youths' ability to stay in school beyond adolescence to invest in human capital. In other words, the set of impediments such as cultural norms, which are unrelated to youths own personal abilities, also play a major role in determining how youths envision and plan for their future and as a result may determine their eventual long term social outcomes.

I therefore hypothesize that Ethiopian youths' life course plans are a manifestation of *bounded strategic action* that happens through a dynamic interplay between youths' personal attributes and the social context (Shanahan 2000). The socio-cultural context signals to the youths the sense of opportunity available to them and barriers that may impede their life course aspirations. I thus posit that youths' manifested and reported low well-being, measured by dimensions related to both personal attributes and social context, affects adolescents' life-course agency negatively, leading to low educational and career goals and hence early transition to adulthood. In hypothesis 1, I thus propose:

*H1. Youths with low well-being are less likely to have high educational and occupational aspirations and are more likely to have plans to transition early into adult roles by anticipating moving to their own household earlier and marrying earlier than those manifesting higher well-being.*

Furthermore, I posit that youths are following a *normative sequencing* of life course events (Hogan 1978, Shanahan 2000) by anticipating completing education training before entry into marriage followed by parenthood. In the context of the Ethiopian society, I consider early transition to adulthood as the prevalent norm. Hence, I propose that delaying transitioning into adulthood in order to prolong education training beyond adolescence is in competition with this family formation norm prescribing early transition adulthood. In hypothesis 2, I thus posit:

*H2. Youths' high educational and occupational ambitions are contingent on perceived ability to delay transition to adulthood; i.e., there is a positive correlation between anticipated timing of completion of educational training and timing of transition to independent household and marriage, holding other predictive covariates of the three life course plans constant. That is, youth who plan to prolong educational training also plan to delay transition to adulthood.*

The converse of this normative sequencing hypothesis would be the interlocked transition or the *multiple roles configuration* transitions by which individuals combine different “social roles,” for instance by being a student and a parent at the same time; or even at times move in out of the social roles in a cyclical manner. Such a pattern has been observed in developed countries (Elder 1995). I assume that given the novelty of the massive opportunities for advanced education (secondary level and beyond) in Ethiopia, such patterns have not yet taken roots. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of these hypothesized relationships.

(Figure 3 goes here)

## **7. ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUE**

To explore the impact of youth’s well-being on life course plans, I take into consideration the interdependency between the three life course outcome variables (timing of school completion, timing of moving out of parent’s household, and timing of marriage). I

therefore use a *Trivariate Probit* model, which is an analytical technique that allows for a joint estimation of the three concurrent binary dependent variables. I use the five dimensions of well-being as the predictors of the three life course outcome variables while controlling for youths' socio-demographic attributes, their family structure and resources, and characteristics of their place of residence. The simplified equations underlying the models which I estimate are as follows:

$$y_1 = \beta_1.X_1 + \varepsilon_1$$

$$y_2 = \beta_2.X_2 + \varepsilon_2$$

$$y_3 = \beta_3.X_3 + \varepsilon_3$$

where  $y_1$  is a dichotomous variable indicating whether a youth plans to attain more than 14 years of education and a professional or semi-professional career,  $y_2$  is a dichotomous variable for whether a youth plan on forming an independent household late or not, and  $y_3$  is a dichotomous variable for whether youth plans to delay marriage or not. Then,  $X_1$ ,  $X_2$ , and  $X_3$  are vectors of indicators of the aforementioned five dimensions of well-being and the mediating biographical and contextual covariates; which include socio-demographic attributes, household structure and resources, and community characteristics. On the other hand,  $\varepsilon_1$ ,  $\varepsilon_2$ , and  $\varepsilon_3$  are random error terms. The Trivariate Probit models are based on the typical assumption that the error terms are multivariate normal distributed with means equal zero and variances equal to one. The model however allows for estimation of correlation between the error terms as follows:

$$\text{Cov}[\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2] = \rho_1$$

$$\text{Cov}[\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_3] = \rho_3$$

$$\text{Cov}[\varepsilon_2, \varepsilon_3] = \rho_3$$

These three correlation coefficients;  $\rho_1$ ,  $\rho_2$ , and  $\rho_3$ , provide information on the extent at which the unobserved heterogeneity in the models determining the three joint outcomes varies jointly. In a way, these correlation coefficients therefore provide an indication of the degree to which plans for the three life course events are interdependent. I estimated all models with the statistical analysis software *STATA*, using a specially designed simulation-based module for Trivariate Probit equations (details can be found in Terracol 2002).

I estimate three sets of trivariate probit models with the three life course events as joint dependent variables using as predictors the five well-being dimensions and the mediating biographical and contextual factors. In the first set, I estimate two models: one with well-being dimensions alone as predictors to be compared with the second model, the main model, which uses the well-being dimensions combined with the mediating biographical and contextual factors as predictors.

Then, I estimate second and third set of models which are stratified by gender and place of residence respectively. The second set includes stratified models separating boys and girls to delineate gender differences. The third sets of models include models stratified by characteristics of youths' places of residence which separates rural, town, and city residents.

Finally, to investigate further whether gender and place effects exist, I estimate the main model including two sets of interaction variables, female interacted with well-being dimensions and city interacted with well-being indicators.

## **8. RESULTS**

### ***8.1 Summary statistics***



Table 3 shows means of the covariates by categories of the dependent variables. On average, a higher proportion of youth with low well-being appear to have low educational and occupational ambitions than those manifesting and reporting higher well-being. For the two dependent variables representing transition to adulthood, the patterns of the magnitude of the means of the well-being indicators are rather similar: youth planning to move out of their parents' household late and marry late have high mean scores on malnourishment, school absenteeism, and low social interaction with peers. On the other hand, youth who plans to move out of parents' domicile early and plan to marry early have high means scores on low decision making autonomy, high adherence to traditional gender values, and Amharic illiteracy.

(Table 3 goes about here)

## **8.2 Results of the trivariate probit models**

I estimate two trivariate probit models in order to separate the effect of the well-being indicators on three joint outcomes; i.e., educational and occupational plans, timing of formation of independent household, and entry into marriage. The first model (model I) includes only the well-being dimensions as predictors of the three life course outcomes whereas the second model (model II), in which model I is nested, includes as predictors the well-being dimensions in addition to biographical attributes of the youth combined with family and community contextual factors.

A likelihood ratio test that compares model I, the nested model with well-being dimensions only as predictors, with model II, which in addition to the well-being dimensions also includes the biographical and contextual predictors, show that that model II has a better overall model fit ( $\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = 0.0000$ ). This result implies that the biographical and contextual factors are crucial determinants of the youths' life course

plans as we would expect. But also this result illustrates that the well-being dimensions have a separate effect on the youths' life course plans, an effect which is statistically separate from the effect of the contextual factors. Adding the biographical attributes and the contextual factors as predictors does not attenuate the strength of the effect of the well-being dimensions on the joint dependent variables providing another indication of the mediating role of these covariates. Especially, for educational and career plans, adding biographical and contextual factors leave the strength of the effect of well-being predictors virtually unchanged (Table 4).

On the other hand, adding the biographical and contextual factors as predictors produces a slight variation on the effect of two well-being indicators on youth plans regarding formation of own household and marriage. Adding these contextual factors renders the effect of high perceived health vulnerability on timing of formation of independent household and timing of marriage statistically insignificant. Also, the effect of adherence to traditional gender values on marriage plans is nullified once biography and context is controlled for. Such an attenuation of the effect of some of the well-being dimension, which may hint to a possibility of a confounding effect through the contextual factors, will be explored further in a subsequent subsection using stratified-sample models and interaction models. Before exploring these differences I present the results of the main model (model II).

(Table 4 goes here)

### ***8.2.1 Educational and occupational ambitions***

Low well-being discourages youths' occupational and educational ambitions. The results from the trivariate probit analysis show that all five dimensions of low well-being affect

youth occupational ambitions with an exception of the capability to command balanced and sufficient nutrition (model II results on Table 4). High perceived future health vulnerability, low decision making autonomy, adherence to strict gender values, high frequency of school absenteeism, illiteracy in Amharic, and low social interaction with peers decreases the probability that youth has high education and occupational ambitions (at  $p < 0.05$  level of statistical significance).

Also, among the biographical and contextual factors, gender and characteristics of the community in which youth resides affects their future occupational and educational plans. Girls are less likely to manifest high educational and occupational ambitions than boys. In terms of the characteristics of the youths' place of residence, it appears that youths who reside in the city of Jimma are also less likely to manifest high educational and occupational ambitions than those residing in the surrounding small towns and rural settlements. However, youth who reside in more socioeconomically developed communities are more likely to show high educational and occupational ambitions.

### ***8.2.2 Transition to independent household***

Only two of the dimensions of well-being appear to determine whether youths plan to establish an independent household late. These two dimensions are the capability to command sufficient nourishment and the capability for bodily integrity and decision making autonomy. Malnourished youth are more likely to plan on establishing independent household late (model II on Table 4). Since malnourishment is directly linked to economic insecurity, especially low agricultural productivity, this result implies that youths' plans and ability to transition to adult roles are contingent on their evaluation of their economic welfare. Also, the negative association between low autonomy and

plans to delay transition to independent household suggests that low autonomy youth are more likely to implement their parents' early transition to adulthood preferences.

### ***8.2.3 Transition to marriage***

Similar to plans on formation of independent household, only two of the well-being dimensions appear to have bearing on these life course plans. Lack of capability to command sufficient nourishment and lack of capability to be guaranteed bodily integrity and autonomy affect youths' plans on timing of marriage. As it is the case with formation of independent household, the malnourished youth are more likely to plan on delaying marriage. Also, youth with low decision making autonomy are less likely to plan on marrying late probably because they already anticipate following their parents' preferences, which are more likely to be early marriage.

### **8.3 Interdependency among the three life course plans.**

The youths' educational and occupational ambitions and plans on timing of life course transitions are interrelated. Results on the correlation of errors from the trivariate probit models show a positive correlation among the three life course outcome variables. The trivariate probit results for the main model, model II, show that coefficient of the error terms ( $\rho$ ) between the three outcomes; i.e., high educational ambitions, plans to delay forming own household, and plans to delay marriage, are 0.17 ( $P > |z| = 0.0000$ ), 0.15 ( $P > |z| = 0.0000$ ), and 0.68 ( $P > |z| = 0.0000$ ) respectively. Which implies that youths' desire to extend educational training to achieve a professional career are indeed associated with plans to delay transition into adult roles as hypothesis 2 conjectures. Also, a Likelihood Ratio test for the null hypothesis that the correlation between errors for the models

predicting the three life course plans equals zero is rejected ( $P > \chi^2=0.0000$ ), which supports further the speculation that plans on the three life course events are related.

#### **8.4 The mediating role of biography and place**

Social research in sub-Saharan Africa shows that social outcomes are by and large determined by gender due to gendered inequalities in allocation of resources and opportunities. Similarly, place of residence may determine a youth's access to various resources that are also expected to influence their life course plans. In sub-Saharan Africa especially, access to crucial institutions such as educational and health facility varies greatly between rural and urban locations.

Thus, in order to explore how biography and place interact with the aforementioned well-being dimensions in determining the life course plans, I estimate stratified models that separate girls and boys. In addition, I also estimate models stratified by place that separate residents of the city of Jimma, residents of the surrounding small towns, and residents of the rural areas. Furthermore, in order to establish whether there exists a differential effect of the well-being dimensions by gender and place, I estimate a separate model that includes interaction variables. These interaction models combine being female or a resident of the city of Jimma with the following four well-being indicators: high food security, high health vulnerability, high adherence to traditional gender values, and high frequency of school absenteeism.

##### ***8.4.1 Gender effects***

The effect of the well-being dimensions on educational and career ambitions differ between boys and girls. For girls, two wellbeing dimensions are crucial for their educational and career aspirations (Table 5). It appears that low extra-familial social

interaction and lack of bodily integrity and low decision making autonomy is strongly associated with low educational and occupational ambitions among the girls. For boys however, views on gender values do not appear to hinder their occupational and educational ambitions, as is the case for their female counterparts. These results imply that the value-based (tradition) well-being dimensions; i.e., gender equality norms and decision-making autonomy, and freedom to interact outside the family, appear to affect girls more so than boys in Jimma. For boys, high health vulnerability, low decision making autonomy, high frequency of school absenteeism, illiteracy in Amharic, and low social interaction with peers reduces their probability of having high educational and occupational ambitions. In other words, perceptions of own well-being appear to have more bearing on boys' ambitions than girls' ambitions. This result may also be due to the fact that given the existing gender disparity girls are already unlikely to anticipate high educational and career success. Therefore their perceived or manifested low well-being does not appear that much of a hindrance to them. By extrapolation, one could add that due to the existing gender bias girls educational and career ambitions are very low to begin with and hence other factors, such as their perceived well-being, exert little impact on their plans.

Similarly, the influence on well-being on transition to adulthood plans also appears to vary between boys and girls. As models III and IV on Table 5 show, malnourishment appears to increase the probability that a girl plans to establish her own household late and to get married late whereas it does not appear to affect boys' plans. This result may be due to the fact that the responsibility of ensuring family's food access is relegated to women and therefore girls who feel vulnerable to food insecurity would

rather delay family formation. Boys with low decision making autonomy are less likely to plan on delaying transitioning to their own household and entry to marriage whereas this indicator does not appear to affect girls' plans. This result could be due to lack of variation on this variable among girls as they are more likely to have low autonomy already. Similar to its effect on occupational and educational plans, low gender equality values appear to reduce the probability that a girl plans to delay marriage but this dimension does not seem to influence boys' plans.

(Table 5 goes here)

#### ***8.4.2 Place effects***

The by-place stratified models highlight contextual differences of the impact of well-being on life course plans across dimensions of well-being. In comparison to the pooled-sample model when the sample is stratified by rural, town, and city, the direction of the effect of well-being indicators on life course plans remains the same (Table 6). However, for some well-being indicators the results of the stratified models show variation in strength of the effects across the three places of residence.

To start with the effect of well-being on occupational and educational plans, food insecurity, which does not have a statistically significant result in the main model has a statistically significant negative effect on educational and occupational ambitions for the youth who reside in the city. Adherence to traditional gender values has no impact for youth from rural areas, which could be due to lack of variation in this variable among the rural areas dwellers. High frequency of school absence does not appear to have an impact on occupational aspirations of rural youth whereas low social interaction with

peers appears to have no bearing on occupational ambitions of youth from towns and from the city.

In regard to transition to adulthood plans, health vulnerability and low social interaction are determining factors of plans on timing of establishing independent households for youth from the city but these well-being dimensions have no impact on rural and town youths' plans. Food insecurity and decision making autonomy the two well-being indicators which impact youth's plans on timing of marriage also differ by the characteristics of the place where youth lives. Food insecurity affects marriage plans of rural youth only. This observation signals that the previous speculation that this variable captures youth sense of economic well-being and readiness for family formation is indeed plausible as here again it shows that life course plans of rural youth, whose main economic activity is linked to agricultural production, are more responsive to food insecurity.

Also, since traditional values are more likely to be upheld in the rural areas than the more urban locales, the impact of decision-making autonomy on marriage plans is stronger for youth from rural areas than for youth from the city of Jimma.

(Table 6 goes here)

#### ***8.4.3 Gender and place interaction effects***

Given the observed differences on the effect of well-being dimensions on life course plans by gender and place, I explore interaction effects between these two variables and youths' well-being. I excluded the results of the interaction variables from the results tables for brevity sake.



According to the results of the interaction models, there exists a gender differential effect of sense of food insecurity and adherence to tradition gender values on occupational and educational ambitions. For plans on timing of establishing own household and timing of marriage, the effect of adherence to traditional gender values also varies by gender.

The interaction models also confirm that the effect of the well-being dimension varies across geographical space in the Jimma zone. Among the well-being dimensions, two indicators especially appear to have a statistically significant interaction effect with the dichotomous variable for place of residence, which separates youth who reside in Jimma city from other youth. High frequency of school absenteeism has a positive interaction effect with being a residence of Jimma across all three life course plans. High adherence to traditional gender values has a negative interaction effect with being a resident of Jimma city in predicting high occupational and educational ambitions and plans for late marriage.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the analysis in this paper is to identify dimensions of youths' well-being and to investigate their impact on life course plans while paying particular attention to differential effects across gender and place of residence. Using the Capability Approach allowed drawing a clear distinction between varied dimensions of youths' well-being, thus making it possible to call to attention the diverse consequences of each facet of social well-being on youths' long-term life course plans. Using the Capability Approach also shed light on non-material aspects of the youths' well-being and permitted an

emphasis on latent *dimensions* of well-being, such as perceived vulnerability and decision-making autonomy.

The results of the analysis in this paper show that youths' well-being influences their choice of life course trajectories as related to occupational and career ambitions, timing of formation of independent household, and entry into marriage. As I posited in hypothesis 1, the analysis finds an evidence of life course planning that is symptomatic of bounded strategic action (Shanahan, 2000). Youth manifesting or reporting low well-being -- measured by indicators of capability for physical health and life longevity, capability for bodily integrity and decision making autonomy, capability to access sources of knowledge, and capability for extra-familial social interactions -- are less likely to have high educational and occupational ambitions.

Furthermore, as I conjectured in hypothesis 2 regarding normative age-graded sequencing of transition to adulthood, the analysis in this paper show that youths' aspirations for prolonged formal education training to attain a professional career are contingent on their perceived ability to navigate through competing family formation norms by delaying transition to adulthood and family formation. The results in this paper indicates that Jimma youths who would like to attain more than 14 years of education to pursue a professional career also plan to delay marriage and formation of independent household. Conversely, these results show that inability to plan on delaying these markers of transition to adulthood may also discourage ambitions for advanced educational training leading to a professional career, in addition to the effect of low well-being.

Finally, the analysis that uses samples stratified by gender and characteristics of place of residence (city, small town, and rural) has shown marked heterogeneity on the

effect of different facets of youths' well-being on life course plans. Well-being dimensions that are related to value systems, such as those based on degree of deference to gender values and those based on decision-making autonomy; appear to impact girls' life course plans at a greater degree than boys' plans. This result implies that the existing gender disparity in social outcomes, for example, the persisting gender gap in educational attainment in Ethiopia, is not only an outcome of biased resources allocation in favor of boys within household as most researchers have argued. Such a disparity may also be a product of different gendered expectations that the socio-cultural norms impose on youth. In terms of place of residence, it also appears that the value-based well-being dimensions have more impact on life course plans of rural youth, presumably where traditional values are more likely to be strongly upheld, than in the city of Jimma.

## **10. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Substantively, the results in this paper have direct implications for initiatives that endeavor to improve human socioeconomic development. The results in this paper hint that the success of initiatives that aim at improving socioeconomic well-being in the developing nations, such as educational opportunities expansion programs, is contingent on addressing competing commitment that may attract the targeted population from these initiatives. As I mentioned, for example, the evidence in this paper suggests youths' ambitions for attaining more than 14 years of formal education training leading to a professional career in Ethiopia depends on the ability to negotiate with socio-cultural norms of family formation, which dictate appropriate age for marriage and formation of independent household. Inarguably, over a period of time as more youth shift their aspirations in congruence with the emerging educational and occupational opportunities,

the normative expectations that the socio-cultural milieu impose will also shift. However, at the moment of the critical juncture when the sudden structural changes happen, such as the ongoing massive expansion in educational opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa, it appears that such initiatives could be more fruitful if they are designed to equally address these competing expectations that the socio-cultural milieu may impose.

Thus, one could suggest that expanding educational opportunities in the developing world entails more than just increasing access to schools. The analysis in this paper suggests that planning on attaining advanced education and hence staying in a student role well beyond adolescence may be in opposition with other social roles, such as spousal and parenting roles, which individuals are required to assume when they reach certain age. Addressing these competing social roles within the socio-cultural normative framework in which they are embedded may enhance the success of educational expansion program and similar development initiatives. For example, an educational program trying to reduce the gender gap should address the fact that girls are more likely to be expected to marry considerably earlier than boys and hence design the education program in a manner that does not penalize those who decide to adhere to such a cultural norms while also aspiring to benefit from the emerging opportunities. In Sen's capability approach mode of thinking, the educational expansion program must not just take increasing proportions of educated individuals as an *end* and increasing access to schools as the *means* of attaining it. The program must also empower the individuals, such as girls, whose capability to attain advanced education may be to a large extent be affected by other factors in addition to school access.

Methodologically, the analysis in this paper has an explicit implication for human socioeconomic development research. As the results have shown, it appears that each distinct facet of well-being has a somewhat varied consequence on life course plans. This observation implies that human development research should also aim at separating these diverse dimensions of well-being. Even more important is the fact that these variations are also magnified by biographical attributes and contextual factors such as ethnicity and place of residence. The evidence in this paper thus also suggests that utilizing multidimensional approaches, such as the Capability Approach, to explore social well-being, is warranted for better understanding of the nature and consequences of social disadvantage.

Lastly, the analysis conducted in this paper is subject to some methodological limitations worth pointing out. First, the survey data used was not designed for direct evaluation of perceptions of well-being; especially, it was not designed with the Capability Approach in mind. The survey however included indicators that are related to well-being such as health status and perceived vulnerability to health risks, youth's sense of food security, perceived gender equality, decision making autonomy, and social interaction with peers. And most importantly, the survey directly inquired on youths' life course plans making the data highly suitable for the main part of the analysis regarding the impact of well-being on life course outcomes. Furthermore, the upcoming data from subsequent data collection rounds of the longitudinal survey will provide more information on the changes of the youths' life aspirations over time as opposed to the one-time snapshot responses used here. The subsequent data rounds, for example, could provide more information on the interplay between the changing structures of educational

opportunities and shifts in individual strategies to incorporate such structural *changes* in their life course plans. For instance, inferences on *temporal dynamism* of the negotiation between individual agency and a changing social context could be investigated further using longitudinal data from the upcoming data collection rounds of the survey. Therefore, regardless of the limitations of the data used this paper still provides a valuable foundation for such further work.

Also, this paper could be criticized for its total reliance on the notion of agents' rationality as construed within the "Western" social scientific literature. One could argue that rationality in the sense of youths planning and strategizing as individualistic purposeful actors who set out to change the courses of their lives, as implicitly assumed in this paper, does not exist in a society yet to fully "modernize" such as the mostly rural Jimma zone in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, I deliberately made this extrapolation of circumstances that may influence young modern social agents when they plan their life course trajectories and applied them to investigate Ethiopian youths, who without doubts face entirely different sets of socio-cultural supports and hindrances. In doing such an extrapolation, I intended to highlight how the emerging aspirations in responses to new opportunities that modernization brings in the developing world may clash with cultural norms.

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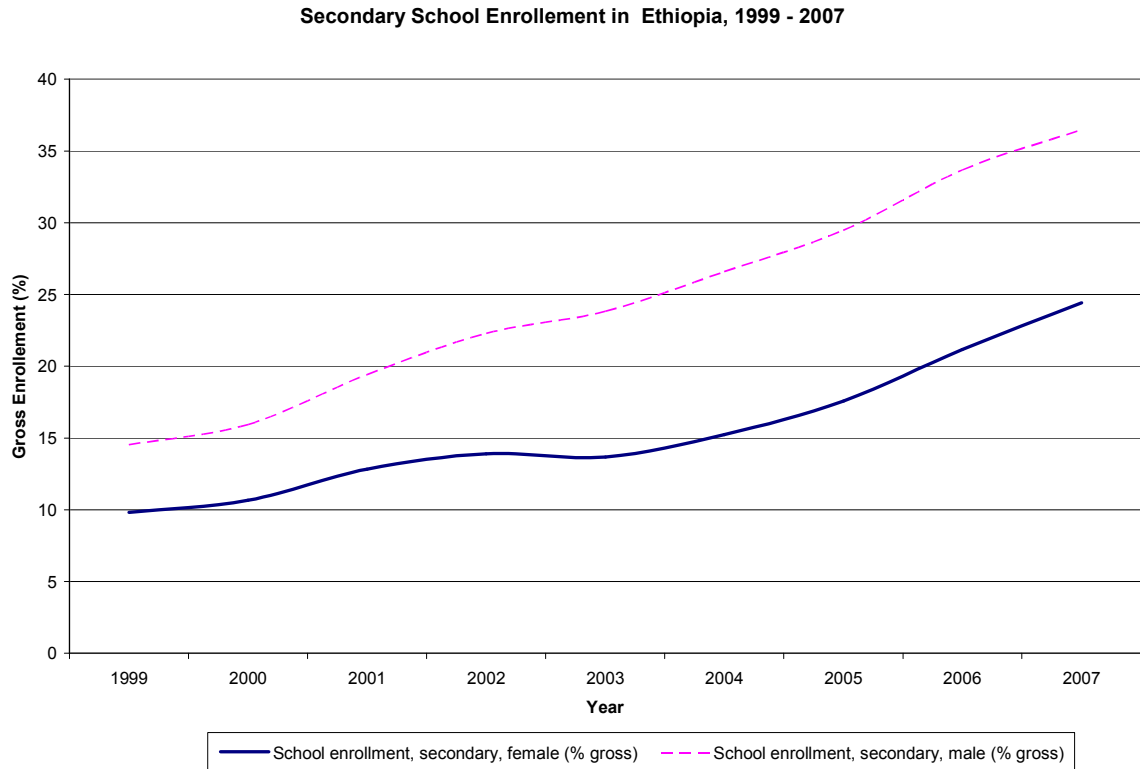
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## Appendices

Fig 1:

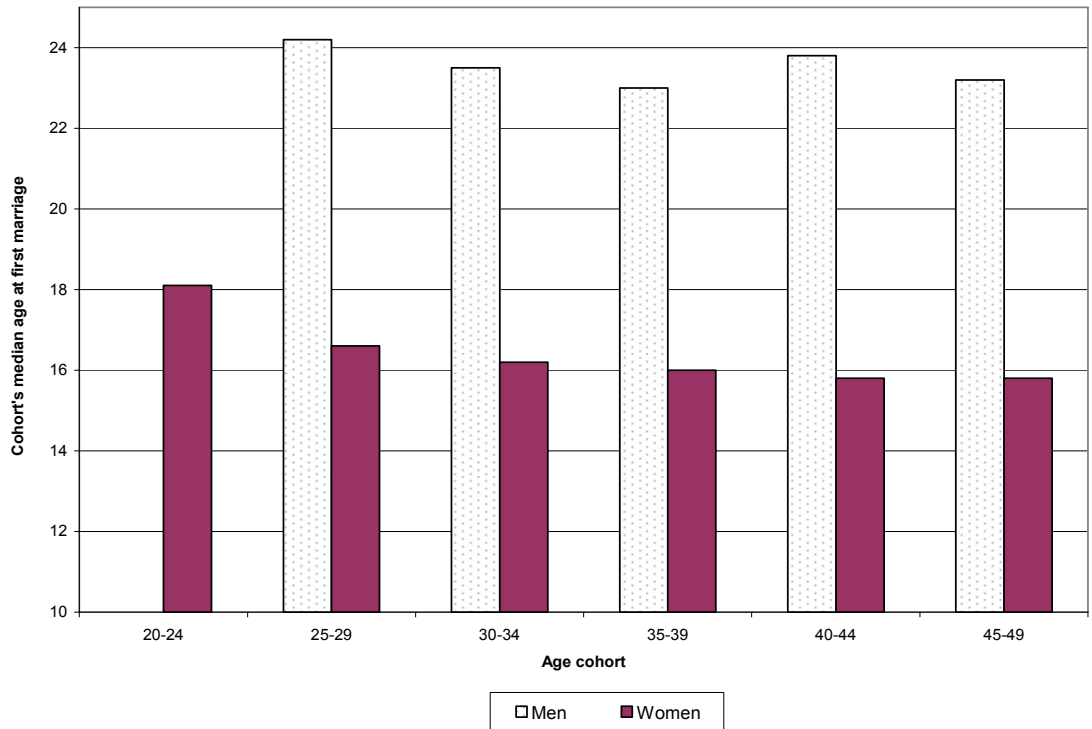


**Source: World Bank Development Indicator, 2007.**

Gross enrollment ratio “is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Secondary education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level, and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction using more specialized teachers” (World Bank, 2007).

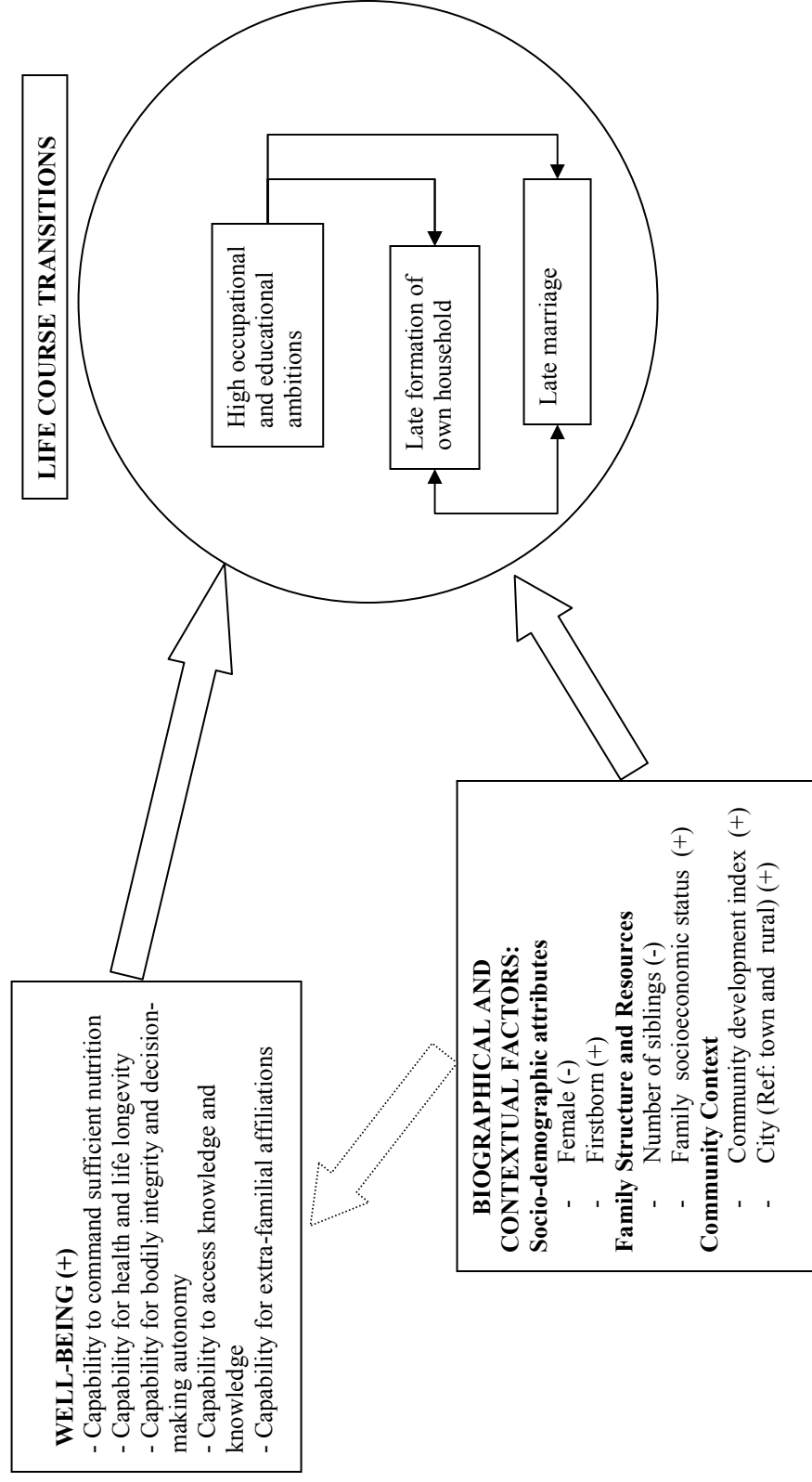
Fig 2:

A Comparison of changes in age at first marriage across age cohorts, Ethiopia, 2005



**Source:** Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia] and ORC Macro. 2006. *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro

Fig 3: The association between youths' well-being, the mediating biographical and contextual factors, and life course transitions.



**TABLE 1. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS, JIMMA LONGITUDINAL FAMILY SURVEY OF YOUTH, JIMMA ZONE ETHIOPIA, 2005-06.**

	Population	Sample Size		
		Households	Boys 13-17	Girls 13-17
<u>Urban</u>				
6 neighborhoods	120,000	1,404	353	393
<u>Semi-urban</u>				
3 towns	3,000-5,000	1,061	303	287
<u>Rural</u>				
9 peasant associations	2,000-4,300	1,226	404	345
Total		3,691	1,060	1,025

**TABLE 2. VARIABLE AND MEASURES DESCRIPTIONS, JIMMA LONGITUDINAL FAMILY SURVEY OF YOUTH, JIMMA ZONE ETHIOPIA, 2005-06.**

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**JOINT DEPENDENT LIFE COURSE VARIABLES:**

High educational and occupational ambitions

A binary variable recorded as 1 if a youth has high occupational and educational aspirations, and recorded as 0 otherwise. Youths are defined as having high educational and occupational ambitions if they plan to attain a professional, semi-professional, or a technical career coupled with plans to attain more than 14 years of education.

Delayed transition into marriage

A binary variable recorded as 1 if youth anticipates delaying marriage, and recorded as 0 otherwise. Youths are defined as planning to delay marriage if they anticipate marrying at an age later than the anticipated median age of first marriage of her/his sex. For boys anticipated median age of marriage is 30 years, hence boys planning to marry after their 29<sup>th</sup> birthday are categorized as having plans to delay marriage whereas for girls median age is 25 years and hence girls planning to marry after their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday are categorized as having plans to delay marriage.

Delayed formation of own household

A binary variable recorded as 1 if a youth anticipates delaying moving to own independent household late, and recorded as 0 otherwise. Youths are said to have plans to delay forming her/his own independent household if they plan to do so at an age equal to or higher than the median age of the whole sample. The median age for formation of independent household was 25 years; hence those planning to move out of their parents households after their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday are categorized as planning to delay moving to their own household.

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:**

**A: Well-being Dimensions**

***Capability I: Command of sufficient and balanced nutrition***

Malnourishment

A binary variable recorded as 1 if the youth is malnourished defined as reporting experiences of food insecurity in the last three months preceding the interview or having poor diets.

- Food insecurity

Youths are considered having experienced food insecurity if in the three months preceding the interview they spent days without eating due to lack of food, they reduced size or number of meals due to food shortage, or they had to ask for food outside the household.

- Poor diet

Youths have poor diet if they score below the median on the dietary diversity index, an index constructed using factor analysis looking at the composition of four major food groups in the adolescent's meal, which includes grain, animal, vegetable, and fruits (Cronbach's alpha: 0.66).

***Capability II: Bodily Health and life Longevity***

Poor health vulnerability

A binary variable recorded as 1 if a youth health vulnerability score is in the top quartile of the distribution of the health vulnerability scores. The health vulnerability index is computed using factor analysis of factor loadings of self-reported expectation of having in the future: night blindness, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diabetes, and malaria. Cronbach's Alpha for the five items is 0.72. High values of the index correspond to having more serious illness or health conditions and perception of greater future health risks.

***Capability III: Bodily Integrity and Decision Making Autonomy***

High Adherence to traditional gender values

Youths hold traditional gender values if their score on the egalitarian gender values index lies in the lowest quartile. The egalitarian gender values Index was created from factor loadings for agreement with six statements (0=Agree, 1=Disagree, 0.5=Don't know) regarding gender roles and gender equality: The index

included questions on whether a woman should always listen to her husband, normally a man should not have to do housework, marriage by abduction is acceptable, the husband should have the final say in all major family matters, there is nothing a woman can do if her husband wants to have a mistress, and female circumcision is a practice that should continue. Cronbach's Alpha for the six items is 0.58. High values of the index correspond to approval of more egalitarian relationship.

Low decision-making autonomy

A binary variable recorded as 1 if the youth score on decision-making autonomy index is in the lowest quartile of the distribution. Decision-making autonomy index is created using factor loadings of responses on two questions: Could you take a job that your parents did not approve of? Could you marry someone that your parents did not approve of? Cronbach's Alpha: 0.46. Higher values correspond to more autonomy.

***Capability IV: Access to knowledge and information***

High frequency of school absenteeism

A binary variable recorded as 1 if youth misses school several days a week or several days a month, and recorded as 0 if a youth never misses school or only misses school few times in a semester.

Amharic illiteracy

A binary variable recorded as 1 if youth can not read and write Amharic and recorded as 0 otherwise.

***Capability V: Extra-familial affiliations***

Low social interaction with peers

A binary variable recorded as 1 if youth has low social interaction with peers, that is, if she/he does not belong to a social club.

**B: Mediating predictors: Biographical and contextual factors**

**(i) Socio-demographic attributes**

Age

Chronological age, the youths were aged between 13 to 17 years.

Female

Coded as 1 for females, or zero otherwise.

First born

Coded as 1 if youth is a firstborn or zero otherwise.

**(ii) Family structure and resource**

Number of siblings

Household socioeconomic status (SES)

An index of household assets created from factor loadings for ten household items: radio, television, electric stove, bicycle, motorcycle, electricity, protected drinking water, toilet, non-dirt floor, owns home. Cronbach's Alpha for the ten items is 0.56. High values of the index correspond to high economic status.

**(iii) Community context**

City resident

A binary variable recorded as 1 if the youth is a resident of the city of Jimma or and recorded as zero otherwise.

Community development index

Composite index created at the community/neighborhood level from factor loadings for mean values of four indices: household socioeconomic status, housing quality, sanitation, and egalitarian relationship index. Cronbach's Alpha for the four mean indices at the community level is 0.81. High values of the index correspond to higher levels of development.

**TABLE 3: DIFFERENCES OF MEANS OF THE BINARY INDICATORS OF THE WELL-BEING DIMENSIONS (INDEPENDENT VARIABLES) BY CATEGORIES OF THE THREE LIFE COURSE PLANS. JIMMA, ETHIOPIA. 2005-2006. (n=2084).**

	Educational and occupational ambitions		Anticipated timing of formation of own household		Anticipated timing of marriage	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Early</i>	<i>Late</i>	<i>Early</i>	<i>Late</i>
<i>Low Well-being dimensions</i>						
<b>Capability 1: Command of sufficient and balanced nutrition</b> Malnourished	0.58	0.54	0.54	0.58	0.52	0.59
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b> High perceived vulnerability to poor health	0.26	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.28	0.24
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b> Low decision-making autonomy High adherence to traditional gender values	0.35 0.29	0.19 0.19	0.33 0.27	0.26 0.24	0.35 0.29	0.25 0.23
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b> High frequency of school absenteeism Illiterate in Amharic	0.20 0.45	0.13 0.26	0.16 0.39	0.17 0.35	0.16 0.39	0.17 0.36
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b> Low social interaction with peers	0.67	0.54	0.60	0.62	0.61	0.62



**TABLE 4. RESULTS OF TRIVARIATE PROBIT MODELS OF THE IMPACT OF LOW WELL-BEING ON JOINT LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUTH HAS HIGH EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AMBITIONS, PLANS TO DELAY FORMING INDEPENDENTHOUSEHOLD, AND PLANS TO DELAY MARRIAGE. JIMMA, ETHIOPIA. 2005-06. (n=2084).**

	I	II
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<i>High educational and occupational ambitions</i>		
<b>Joint Dependent variable 1:</b>		
<i>Well-being dimensions:</i>		
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>		
Malnourished	-0.083	-0.054
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>		
High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.119 *	-0.154 **
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>		
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.423 ***	-0.444 ***
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.156 **	-0.159 **
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>		
High frequency of school absenteeism	-0.344 ***	-0.336 ***
Illiterate in Amharic	-0.424 ***	-0.216 **
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>		
Low social interaction with peers	-0.203 **	-0.165 **
Constant	0.369	
<i>Biographical and Contextual factors:</i>		
<b>Socio-demographic attribute</b>		
Age		0.021
Female		-0.118 *
Firstborn		0.050
<b>Family structure and resources</b>		
Number of siblings		0.007
Household socioeconomic status		0.060
<b>Place</b>		
Resident of city of Jimma		-0.226 **
Community development index		0.202 ***
Constant		-1.56E-05

**Joint Dependent variable 2:** *Plans to delay formation of own household*

***Well-being dimensions:***

**Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition**

Malnourished

0.123 \*\* 0.115 \*\*

**Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity**

High perceived vulnerability to poor health

0.113 \*\* 0.093

**Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy**

Low decision-making autonomy

-0.228 \*\*\*

High adherence to traditional gender values

-0.046 \*\*\* -0.037

**Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information**

High frequency of school absenteeism

0.075 0.103

Illiterate in Amharic

-0.082 -0.019

**Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations**

Low social interaction with peers

0.069 0.072

Constant

0.300

***Biographical and Contextual factors:***

**Socio-demographic attribute**

Age

0.058 \*\*

Female

-0.059

Firstborn

0.089

**Family structure and resources**

Number of siblings

0.002

Household socioeconomic status

-0.005

**Place**

Resident of city of Jimma

0.105

Community development index

-0.004

Constant

-0.613 \*

	<i>Plans to delay marriage</i>	
<b>Joint Dependent variable 3:</b>		
<b><i>Well-being dimensions:</i></b>		
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>		
Malnourished	0.165 **	0.161 **
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>		
High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.116 *	-0.041
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>		
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.306 ***	-0.211 **
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.139 **	-0.070
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>		
High frequency of school absenteeism	0.065	0.054
Illiterate in Amharic	-0.051	-0.045
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>		
Low social interaction with peers	0.064	0.066
Constant	0.459	
<b><i>Biographical and Contextual factors:</i></b>		
<b>Socio-demographic attribute</b>		
Age		0.052 **
Female		0.353 ***
Firstborn		0.061
<b>Family structure and resources</b>		
Number of siblings		0.010
Household socioeconomic status		-0.035
<b>Place</b>		
Resident of city of Jimma		-0.048
Community development index		0.058
Constant		-0.573
<b>Rho( Dep. Var. 1, Dep. Var. 2)</b>		0.170 ***
<b>Rho( Dep. Var. 1, Dep. Var. 3)</b>		0.150 ***
<b>Rho( Dep. Var. 2, Dep. Var. 3)</b>		0.680 ***
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-3762	
<b>Number of cases</b>	2084	

TABLE 5. RESULTS OF TRIVARIATE PROBIT MODELS BY GENDER OF THE IMPACT OF LOW WELL-BEING ON JOINT LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUTH HAS HIGH EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AMBITIONS, PLANS TO DELAY FORMING INDEPENDENTHOUSEHOLD, AND PLANS TO DELAY MARRIAGE. JIMMA, ETHIOPIA, 2005-06. (n=2084).<sup>#</sup>

	<i>High occupational and educational ambitions</i>	
	Girls (III) $\beta$	Boys (IV) $\beta$
<b>Joint Dependent variable 1:</b>		
<i>Well-being dimensions:</i>		
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b> Malnourished	-0.131	-0.040
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b> High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.0971	-0.255 **
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b> Low decision-making autonomy	-0.364 **	-0.423 ***
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.363 **	0.018
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b> High frequency of school absenteeism	0.075	-0.935 ***
Illiterate in Amharic	-0.199	-0.325 **
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b> Low social interaction with peers	-0.172 **	-0.172 **
<b>Joint Dependent variable 2:</b>		
<i>Plans to delay formation of own household</i>		
<i>Well-being dimensions:</i>		
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b> Malnourished	0.161 *	0.026
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>		

High perceived vulnerability to poor health	0.0397	0.109	
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>			
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.122	-0.233	**
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.084	0.051	
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>			
High frequency of school absenteeism	0.487	-0.328	**
Illiterate in Amharic	0.109	-0.111	
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>			
Low social interaction with peers	0.038	0.096	
<b>Plans to delay marriage</b>			
<b>Dependent variable 3:</b>			
<b>Well-being dimensions:</b>			
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>			
Malnourished	0.192	0.091	**
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>			
High perceived vulnerability to poor health	0.1033	-0.149	*
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>			
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.152	-0.207	**
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.290	-0.032	**
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>			
High frequency of school absenteeism	0.285	-0.244	**
Illiterate in Amharic	-0.087	-0.032	
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>			
Low social interaction with peers	0.056	0.099	
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-1657	-1958	
<b>Number of cases</b>	1025	1059	

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$

# The coefficients of the biographical and contextual predictors are omitted from the tables for brevity sake

**TABLE 6. RESULTS OF TRIVARIATE PROBIT MODELS BY PLACE OF THE IMPACT OF LOW WELL-BEING ON JOINT LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUTH HAS HIGH EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AMBITIONS, PLANS TO DELAY FORMING INDEPENDENTHOUSEHOLD, AND PLANS TO DELAY MARRIAGE. JIMMA, ETHIOPIA, 2005-06. (n=2084).#**

	Rural V	Town VI	City VII
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Joint Dependent variable 1:</b>			
<i>Well-being dimensions</i>			
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>			
Malnourished	0.106	-0.026	-0.237 **
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>			
High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.216 *	-0.155	-0.186 *
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>			
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.264 **	-0.694 ***	-0.490 ***
High adherence to traditional gender values	0.059	-0.329 **	-0.348 **
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>			
High frequency of school absenteeism	-0.112	-0.333 **	-0.513 ***
Illiterate in Amharic	-0.246 *	-0.387 **	0.311
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>			
Low social interaction with peer	-0.297 **	-0.097	-0.120
<b>Plans to delay formation of own household</b>			
<b>Joint Dependent variable 2:</b>			
<i>Well-being dimensions</i>			
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>			
Malnourished	0.112	0.064	0.123
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>			

High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.025	0.095	0.284	**
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>				
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.201	* -0.425	-0.232	**
High adherence to traditional gender values	0.040	-0.077	-0.136	
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>				
High frequency of school absenteeism	0.215	0.188	-0.014	
Illiterate in Amharic	0.006	-0.169	0.055	
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>				
Low social interaction with peer	-0.068	-0.027	0.238	**
<b>Joint Dependent variable 3:</b>				
<i>Plans to delay marriage</i>				
<b>Well-being dimensions</b>				
<b>Capability 1: Sufficient and balanced nutrition</b>				
Malnourished	0.194	** 0.104	0.087	
<b>Capability 2: Physical health and life longevity</b>				
High perceived vulnerability to poor health	-0.056	-0.024	-0.098	
<b>Capability 3: Bodily integrity and autonomy</b>				
Low decision-making autonomy	-0.220	** -0.222	* -0.165	
High adherence to traditional gender values	-0.003	-0.202	-0.130	
<b>Capability 4: Access to knowledge and information</b>				
High frequency of school absenteeism	0.282	* 0.062	-0.189	
Illiterate in Amharic	0.038	-0.139	0.054	
<b>Capability 5: Extra-familial affiliations</b>				
Low social interaction with peer	-0.146	0.130	0.196	*
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-1305	-1060	-1296	
<b>Number of cases</b>	749	589	746	

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$

# The coefficient s of the biographical and contextual predictors are omitted from the tables for brevity sake





